

# The Pursuit of Holiness (Part 11)

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Date: 13 April 2011

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[0:00] What I want to do is just finish up what I did not get finished last week and not move! into the next section because there's something important that I wanted to get to last week and it really takes us away from Hebrews chapter 12 and takes us to Romans and we'll get to that in just a minute but just kind of by way of review, not just review but to kind of bring us back up to speed, back up to where we are and I've given you that outline and I've filled in the blanks for you in case you weren't here last time or in case you were and you didn't bring your copy from last week with you.

So I just want to walk through this real quickly. We're here in Hebrews chapter 12 verses 18 through 29 is the section that we're looking at and I've entitled this section, To Which Mountain Have You Run?

And so as we kind of step through here, we started with a few kind of initial observations, preliminary observations about the text so that we can understand what Paul is saying to us and teaching us.

And so I pointed out to you, and you didn't need me to because it's pretty obvious from the text, that in this paragraph or quite extended paragraph, Paul mentions two mountains.

Before you ever get into this text, you need to first see that. In fact, I would say to you that that's pretty good advice or reminds me of good advice for Bible study.

[1:55] When you just first read through a section of the text, be alert and notice some key things that seem to stand out.

Sometimes it's the repetition of words. In this case, it is the repetition of a word, the word mountain, and how very clearly the text makes a distinction between two very different mountains.

So there are two mountains mentioned here, Sinai and Zion. Those are the two referenced in the text. And the question that I believe ought to be asked, though Paul doesn't come out and ask the question in the text, but the text itself serves as a question.

And that is, to which mountain have you run for your eternal salvation? Is it Sinai or is it Zion? Sinai. And those are two very different mountains, two very different places to run.

And so, what two significant events took place in each of these mountains? And we covered this last week. Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments were given. So, if you're running to that mountain, then that mountain, Sinai represents the law.

[3:18] The other mountain, Mount Zion, is where the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. So, if you are running to that mountain, and I hope you are or have, then that mountain is where, or that mountain represents or signifies grace.

Grace. So, when it comes to eternal salvation, to which mountain are you running? Or to which thing are you trusting? Your ability to keep God's law, His Ten Commandments, or are you trusting in His grace?

In His grace. And I've kind of worded it this way, or conceptualized it this way. These two mountains represent two bases upon which God would judge the world.

Our own works of righteousness, that would be running to Mount Sinai, where you'll be judged by the law. Or, are you trusting, or He will judge on the basis of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

That's Zion, and that's grace. Now, that leads me, or brings us up to the first point, and really they're just two points, main points in the text.

[4:34] And this is the point that we're going to finish here tonight, and we'll get to point number two next time. The first one is the works that fail us. This describes, or defines, what it means, or the result, of running to Mount Sinai, or trusting works.

And so it's the works that fail us. And I'm not going to read the text again, but the text is a reference to Exodus chapter 19, and I have that there in your notes.

And the purpose of these signs, and he lists several kind of phenomenal things that took place.

Paul includes several of them here in Hebrews chapter 12.

We go to Exodus chapter 19, we see it described in more detail, and other details are added to it than Paul includes here. But these are all signs, and they represent something.

And they have a purpose, remember. And the purpose of these signs was, number one, to reveal the holiness of God. I'm talking about the smoke, and the thunder, and the trumpets, and the various things that took place.

[5:51] They reveal, because God was present there, they reveal then, these signs verify the greatness and holiness and glory of God.

At the same time, because every time God reveals His glory, His absolute holiness, every time He reveals that to man, it reveals something else.

And that is the sinfulness of man. And the sin, then, the idea here is that sinful man cannot approach a holy God.

That's the point here. And that's what was being conveyed to the people of Israel there in Exodus 19, as they were at the foot of Mount Sinai.

And they had come out of Egypt. You know, God had brought them out of Egypt. And God led them there to encamp, right there at the foot of Sinai. And He's about to give them His law.

[6:49] And all these phenomenal supernatural events that were taking place were meant to convey the idea that God is unapproachable by sinful man.

And so, what has all this to do with us today? Other than being interested in history, biblical history, and it is interesting and awesome when you study these passages and you just kind of sometimes try to immerse yourself into that event and try to imagine what it might have been like for the people of Israel there and seeing these things and being afraid and terrified.

And you kind of immerse yourself in this biblical history, historical event. But besides that, what good is it to us today? Well, and I gave you several things.

Number one, to stand at the foot of Sinai is to place your eternal hope in the terms of the old covenant, the covenant law. That's what we need to understand today.

It is to believe, number two, that your salvation, your eternal salvation can somehow be merited, deserved, earned by personal acts of righteousness and goodness or by your ability to keep God's law.

[8:16] The commandments that God gave Moses there in the top of Mount Sinai, you know, the idea is that we could somehow earn God's favor because we keep His laws.

And that won't work, will it? And that's what it means to run to Sinai. Third, to stand at the foot of Sinai is to stand under judgment. This is what this means to us today, to man today.

Putting aside or first understanding all of the events that took place and the significance of those events for the time, then we bring it into what it means for us today or how it's applied today and these things become clear.

To stand at the foot of Sinai means to stand under judgment and doom because sin, or rather Sinai, demands judgment for all infractions of God's law.

All of them. Even one half of one sin. You know, if it's possible to break it down that way, and of course not. Alright, so then that leads us to what good is Mount Sinai?

[9:23] And I think this is a logical kind of response. I mean, just thinking of it logically, well, if that's what it means, God gave His law to Sinai and all those things that took place there and to run to Sinai, if that means trusting your eternity and your ability to keep the law is not going to work, then what good is it?

What good is Mount Sinai? What was the purpose of that? That is, the giving of the Ten Commandments. Well, the purpose was not to offer a way of salvation.

And here's where we get tripped up, or man typically gets tripped up. Because we don't view this in the right way.

We don't think of it in our mortality, in our flesh, and in our place of sinfulness. It makes more sense to us that our salvation could be gained by keeping the law.

But Sinai was never meant God giving of the law, His giving of the law, was never meant to provide salvation. Never. Ever. You know, you see, some would say, well, you know, maybe way back

when, that was God's original plan.

[10:40] You know, that He gave His law and He meant for it to be obeyed and salvation would come through obeying His law, but it didn't work out, so He had to come up with plan B and send Jesus.

No, it was always His plan. Or, excuse me, before we get to the positive, it was never His plan to provide salvation through the giving of His law. Never. Never was His plan. The purpose of Sinai, rather, and again, let me make sure we're on the same page, when I say the purpose of Sinai, I mean the purpose of the giving of the law, was to bring us face to face with our own sinfulness. That was the purpose. To bring us face to face. And I gave you the analogy of a plumb line. And we talked a little bit about that.

But, number three, it's only when we see our sinfulness, when we see that, because the law reveals that, it's only when we see that, that we're able to see our desperate need for a Savior.

Apart from the law, we would never know that we needed a Savior. We would never know that we needed any kind of provision to take care of the sin problem in our lives, if we did not see our sinfulness.

[12:06] And so, then four, since the law of God provides no attainable Savior, then, we must look to God. And, I gave you that passage in Isaiah 45, 22, look to me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God and there is no other.

And so, we have to look to God. We can't look to the law for our Savior. It provides no Savior. We look to God. And, and that, then, brings me to number five.

The law serves, then, to use another metaphor, serves as a mirror. It serves as a mirror. And, we look to the law and we do not see a Savior.

Instead, we see a sinner. We see a sinner. And so, that leads us to Paul. Paul's testimony and that brings us kind of up to speed there and lays the groundwork so that we don't just kind of launch into what Paul had to say or his personal testimony about his life without having some background.

So, I think we're ready to look at that. The Apostle Paul, and you can go ahead and turn your Bibles if you want to to Romans chapter 7. The Apostle Paul was a lawyer.

[13:27] Did you know that? Not a lawyer in the sense that we have lawyers today. You know, trial lawyer or civil lawyer or something like that. But, Paul was a lawyer in the sense that he knew it.

And, we're talking about this law, God's law. He knew it and taught it and memorized it. And, I would even go so far as to say that he kept it, kept the law as well as any human being could.

Now, you know, I'm not saying that Paul was perfect. but, he even gave that testimony of himself that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews.

And, in touching the law, he was blameless. I mean, he kept every jot and tittle. He was not perfect, I'm not saying that. But, this is who Paul was.

so, even though that's true, and he knew the law, taught the law, memorized the law, lived the law, he had never ever really looked into the law.

[14:31] Never ever did see the law for what it really was and what its significance was in his life. He never did that until his conversion.

Until his conversion. And, it was then when he saw himself for who he really was. When he came face to face with God's moral law, and did not look to the law as a means of salvation, but looked into the law as a mirror of his own sinfulness and wickedness, then he saw himself for who he really was.

A sinner. And, he saw his own sinfulness. And so, in Romans chapter 7, verse 9, I just want to walk through these passages or just phrase by phrase. And, this is Paul's testimony.

testimony. And, it's very instructive for us. And, he said, I was, you just have to follow every word here.

He said, I was, he's speaking of his life prior to his conversion. I was alive once without the law. Now, what does that mean?

[15:47] I was alive once without the law. Well, it's kind of confusing. but, essentially, what he's saying is, he's talking about before he really considered the law for what it really is.

Before he really considered it, the law, the law that he'd been studying and memorizing and teaching, before he really considered it, he thought that he was living his life in a way that pleased God through keeping the law.

That's what he thought. And, that's what he means. But, I was alive or living once without the law.

Now, he had the law in his mind and on his lips and as far as his lifestyle, he was keeping it and living according to it. He cherished it.

But, he didn't really have it. Didn't really have it. He didn't see it the way he needed to see it. And, there are a lot of people today who think they're living. And, they're good people.

[16:57] But, they're like Paul in that their lifestyle or their works of goodness or in their works of goodness, they think somehow they are pleasing God by that.

and, that somehow at the end of the day or the end of life God is going to look favorably upon them because they have tried to keep you know, the moral law or some moral code or try to be moral people and good people and so when life is over they're thinking God's going to look favorably upon me.

And, this is what Paul thought. And, so he was living, he was alive once without the law. Because, he had not come face to face with the law yet and people today in our world have not yet come face to face with the law and really looked into the law.

That's what he means here. But, then he goes on to say but, and this is his personal testimony in a sense. If he were, you know, if we were to ask Paul to stand up and give his testimony you know, he would follow a model that you know, I think is probably a pretty good one and I advise people when they're writing out their testimony start with life before and something happened and now life after and this is kind of the way he's going.

I was alive once without the law but when the commandment came when the commandment came when I was that mean? He already had the commandment didn't he?

[18:32] In fact, the commandment was given you know, a long time several thousand years before Paul came along and so what does he mean when the commandment came?

Well, what he means is he came to a place and God brought him to that place where he truly understood the significance of God's law and the seriousness of being a law breaker and that's key to understand and that's why you know I would tell you that most people you meet out here who are unbelievers have been born again they have never really seriously looked at the law and have never really considered how serious it is with God that they have broken God's law and so what Paul is giving testimony to is that the Holy Spirit in a sense applied the law to his heart then that law he had studied and he knew backwards and forward and taught suddenly God applied it to his heart and it struck his heart with the reality of his sinfulness that he was a law breaker now I would imagine that prior to this time

I think it's safe to say that prior to this conversion this time Paul didn't think he was a law breaker and you go out here on the streets of Bartleford and just talk to people have you broken God's laws and some say well they might kind of hem-haul but there are people who say no I keep the Ten Commandments I don't murder and cheat on my wife and steal and these kind of things and so forth I don't think they're law breakers most would say I'm not perfect but I'm not a law breaker and even if they were to admit oh yeah of course I've broken the Ten Commandments they do not understand how serious that is with God and they have not come to the place where they would admit acknowledge the reality that they're in deep trouble with

God because of that and that there will be as the great R.G. Lee preached 800 times I think he preached his sermon 800 or 900 times payday someday they don't know that now they're not going to come to that knowledge just simply on their own God God is the one that strikes the heart but when the law is applied when they come face to face like Paul did come face to face with God's law his perfection and his demands then the first reaction is I see who I am and this is what what Paul says he says but when the commandment came sin revived and the sin was always there it's not not that suddenly Paul then became a sinner in that sense he was a sinner before but he didn't know it he didn't realize the weight of it sin revived literally

I think he's saying my sin came alive to me ever ever had an experience like that with someone you shared the gospel with him or maybe it's a family member and you have been there at that moment when that lost sinner suddenly his or her eyes were opened to my sin I am a sinner I've sinned against God now before that happens they might admit yeah I've sinned but that's not the same to say yes I have sinned that's not the same as coming to the realization that I am a sinner and I've sinned against the holy God I have broken his laws and I'm in big trouble deep trouble with him this is what Paul's saying sin revived and so Paul for the first time in his life saw himself for what he really was a sinner a sinner and all because of the law and the law that was applied to his life and to his heart that's why

[23:26] I would maintain that far from eliminating teachings about God's law we ought to do more of it and far from removing that from our evangelism it ought to be a part of our evangelism not to be mean or ugly or you know come off with some air of judgment we're not judging but God's law does and you know I think it ought to be a part of our evangelism every time I witness I start with sin that's not just enough to start with sin it needs to be explained what is that sin it's the breaking of God's laws and God is serious about his laws being obeyed and not that if you obey them you'll be saved but that you need to repent and trust God's provision for our law breaking and that is his perfect son

Jesus so sin revived and then he says and I died let's put all this together I was alive once before the law that is before God really applied it to my heart but when the commandment came when God applied it to my heart the sin it came alive in me I mean I realized it saw myself for who I really was and I died I died what does he mean by that well he means for the first time in his highly religious life Paul was more religious than any of us in this room prior to his religion for the first time in his religious life he realized that he was spiritually dead and all along he had been dead dead dead in sin and not alive he was dead dead in trespasses and sin and you know for all of his adult life to this point

Paul had looked at the law in the wrong way and he looked at the law in the way that many are in our world today he looked to the law or he focused what his focus was was not breaking God's law that was the focus of his life not breaking God's law that was the whole focus and purpose of his life not breaking God's law does that sound like a good focus well maybe maybe it does but it's the wrong one Paul then when he was saved realized or at the point of his conversion realized that the law was given to break him that's how we need to understand this the law the focus our our desire and the whole focus of our life is not to keep the law you know need to need to understand man we do need to obey God's laws now

I'm talking about the focus in regard to our eternity and our salvation we don't look to the law with this intent not breaking it we need to first look at it with the understanding that it was meant to break us because we're law breakers and that's what he saw in verse 10 and the commandment which was to bring life or ordained to life guess what Paul said I found to bring death to bring death that is what Paul for years had thought to be the means of gaining eternal life that is the law actually was responsible for producing spiritual death because he was a law breaker and listen the law cannot produce life it cannot has no power to give life the word is said you find no savior in the law and it makes no provision for salvation the law produces death the law only brings death and then Paul said for sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me deceived me the insidious nature of sin and not just in the context of pre salvation we understand it even on this side of our salvation the insidious nature and the deception of sin and sin had deceived Paul in the thinking that obedience to law to the law was the way to eternal life that running to mount sinai is the way to have salvation and Paul had bought into that concept or that deception hook line and sinker and by that deception he said sin slew me slew me and today all around us there are countless thousands thousands of people in this world today who are dead dead while they live and it ought to break our hearts they think they're living but they're dead they think they have eternal life and they think they have it because of their good works or because maybe

[29:06] God is some kind of understanding God or some other kind of concept that they have convinced themselves about but they're dead dead in trespasses and sin and what they need to do is take a deep look into the law of God and see themselves as they really are law breakers!

Sinners ever been to one of these fun houses at a carnival? I think I've seen some of these like maybe even Silver Dollar City it seems like but what you do is you go in to the fun house and there's kind of a hole in the wall you know and there are signs look in here at the most hideous creature in the world and you know you look in there and there is a in there and where its head is supposed to be there's a mirror and guess who's who's in the mirror you you know there are some people today who need to look into the to the mirror to deep into the law the law that they think saves them and and see themselves as the lost sinners that they really are and and then see their need a desperate need for salvation.

I really, from our perspective as just human beings, we're not God. God is sovereign, but we're not. And God knows all things and we don't. And God is sovereign in salvation. We're not. And so, from our perspective, I really think the old adage is right that you can't get a person saved until you get them lost.

You're not going to get them saved. You understand what I mean. But until that dear soul, that sinner, sees himself or herself as lost and in desperate need of a Savior, there will be no salvation. [31 : 25] And God's tool that He uses, the Spirit of God, that tool the Spirit of God uses is His holy law to open the eyes of that lost sinner to his or her own sin and lostness and desperate condition.

And so, I think it's so important that we share God's law. And so, you know, is the law then a bad thing, an evil thing?

It's not. Not if that's what it accomplishes. And, you know, in that last verse, verse 12, He says, therefore the law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good.

God expects His law to be obeyed. But its purpose is, as He said in another place, it serves as a schoolmaster to instruct us, to lead us, to lead us to Christ.

And, alright, so, we just kind of cap this off here tonight and then we'll get into running to Zion next time.

[32 : 48] Let's just remember the distinction here. Mount Sinai represents the law and therefore represents judgment. And Mount Zion represents Christ and grace.

God's grace. Coming to God by way of Mount Sinai represents human works, works of righteousness, personal righteousness.

And, according to the Bible, those things are as filthy rags to God. But, coming to God by way of Mount Zion represents the righteousness of Christ.

Christ and is acceptable. Not filthy rags, far from it. Is acceptable in the sight of God. And so, you know, you can say to someone, alright, go ahead, live your life under the terms and provisions of Mount Sinai if you want.

Just go ahead and do that. Just run to Sinai if you want to, the law, and live in fear. Live in fear and condemnation.

[33 : 56] Is that what you want? That's what you'll have if you run to Sinai. But, go ahead, live. But, if you would live your life under the terms and provisions of Mount Zion, grace, you'll live in freedom and eternal salvation.

So, to which mountain will you run or have you run? I hope you've run to the right one. I hope you're like for that group of people that Paul was writing to.

He said, you have not run to Sinai. You've run to Zion. Transcription by CastingWords