

# OpenTheo

## Was Moses Wrong for Giving a Law That Regulated Something God Hates?

January 1, 2024



### #STRask - Stand to Reason

Questions about whether Jesus thought Moses was wrong for giving a law to accommodate the hard hearts of the people, whether our civil laws should reflect the ideal or take into account man's brokenness, and how to counsel someone who has "lost his joy in the Lord" because of sin.

\* In Mark 10:2-9, is Jesus reprimanding Moses or claiming Moses was wrong for giving a law regulating divorce to accommodate the hard hearts of the people? Should civil laws reflect God's good will or take into account man's brokenness?

\* How would you counsel someone who made some poor choices recently and "lost his joy in the Lord"? He is repentant and is fervently seeking to restore his relationship with God, but he has not regained his joy.

## Transcript

You're listening to the hashtag SDRaskpodcast from Stand to Reason. I'm Amy Hall, and I'm here with Greg Kogel. Hello, Greg.

Hi. And today we're going to start with a question from Daniel. In street smarts, you use Mark 10 2-5 in your marriage discussion, but you never say if Jesus is reprimanding Moses or claiming Moses was wrong for you.

If he was wrong, when he gave a law to accommodate their hard hearts, should civil laws reflect God's goodwill, divorce is not right, or take into account man's brokenness? Well, we have to keep in mind here that this wasn't just Moses's point of view here. Moses was giving the law that God was giving him. So this is God's idea, all right? And so he wasn't, I don't think in that passage that this is regarding divorce and remarriage, I guess.

I don't think in that passage what Moses was doing is saying, yeah, you know, this idea of marriage being like forever, one man, one woman for one lifetime, becoming one flesh

for one lifetime, Jesus characterization of Matthew 19. That's a little extreme. So let me say here's a way to get out of that.

I don't think that was the deal. I think this is God's acknowledgement of his standard and God's acknowledgement of the hardness of the heart of the Pharisees. And so, and I mean, the people in general, not necessarily the Pharisees, but people in general.

And so they were going to break God's law anyway, even though God says no. And of course, they did break God's law in spades in a whole bunch of other areas, not just this one. And so what Jesus explains is because of the hardness of your hearts, meaning they were going to disregard not only the law, that prohibited divorce, but also caring or the needs of the woman that has now been abandoned because of the hardness of your heart.

God, he says Moses made a provision. But keep in mind when Jesus is quoting Moses and you can see the different times where he's quoting from the Old Testament, he will identify the source as, I should say, the identify the source as the writer. Sometimes as the text and sometimes as God.

And these are interchangeable. So Moses said this, which is the same as God saying this, or God said this in the same passage or same section, same book, certainly. Or the scripture says this.

And so Jesus uses these terms interchangeably that acknowledges that these are the writings by a writer that has from God. And so he makes reference to the writers or to the writings or to God, the ultimate source. So we're to understand this provision for divorce as being something God himself has made in light of the abuse that would follow.

And especially, I think, the vulnerability to the woman who is left behind because the man is not vulnerable, he can make a living, he can take care of himself, he can even get himself remarried. The women from the perspective of that culture now are damaged goods. And so what are they going to do? How are they going to be provided for? And apparently, the certificate of divorce gave them some, what's the right word, a resort, some nobility to them in this circumstance.

So it provided for a legitimate remarriage in her case, something to that effect. So that's, I think, what's going on in the in the law with Moses, God's revelation. Now, when it comes to our circumstances now in the law, I think that there is a place strategically, which I think this is what God was doing, for doing something that is going on in the law.

I think we have to be careful because it's not quite exactly the same set of circumstances that that look when the entire culture, the Jewish culture goes south from God's law. There's no one there to enforce it, all right, effectively. Later, a few hundred

years later, but we do have enforcement here now.

And so the only thing that I could think of where maybe a stopgap measure might be made is in the area of abortion as a strategic issue. So I think and have argued that that all abortions take the life of an innocent human being and therefore are, it's done illicitly. The reasons that people give for abortion are not adequate to justify eliminating another human being who is a valuable human being, even in the womb.

Okay. But how does one enforce that in the culture? There are some who say, we want our laws to say all or nothing. We will not support a law and now on a state level, what we're facing since the Dobbs case, we will not support a law that doesn't prohibit all abortions.

It's all or nothing. Now, to me, this makes no sense because even though it shows that there's a lot of people who are in the state, those are kind of a pure, what appears to be a pure noble moral approach to abortion. All abortions are acts of murder, essentially, in God's eyes, and therefore they should all be prohibited, which I agree with in principle.

But the question is from a policy perspective, how do you get that in play? And the chance of getting 100% in all the states is virtually nil. So if we have an opportunity to pass a law that says no abortions after the first trimester or the second trimester or the third, except in the case of rape and incest, well, that's a compromise. Yes, but it's a compromise that saves lives.

It's not a rigid non-compromising position that costs lives. And that's the measure. That's what we have to be deciding.

What is the ultimate result of the laws that we're passing? And will this law, though it's not ideal because of the hardness of heart of people or because of moral sensibilities? I think a lot of people don't see morally that pregnancy through rape or incest, is no different in terms of its moral character and the moral value of the unborn than any other pregnancy. Nevertheless, because of their soft-heartedness, understandably, towards the victim, the mother, they're willing to make an exception here. And if there isn't an exception like that in the law, then they won't approve of a blanket prohibition of abortion at all.

So you get nothing for that on behalf of the children and the unborn children. And so this is a case where I think it's completely, it's not only the legitimate, it's morally required to take an incremental approach, knowing that you're not going to get what you want, ideally and morally, just like Jesus is acknowledging that God understood with regards to the law and the Jews that he wasn't going to get what he wanted either. And in light of that, he is making an additional provision for protection of the woman in the case of divorce.

Thank you. The word abortion kept running in my mind. I couldn't kick it out to get the new word in there.

And so I think that there is a place as long as it's carefully argued and carefully thought through for something like an incremental approach or an incremental application or less than perfect, morally perfect and morally sound policy, but we have to be careful with that. Well, when we look at Jesus's point to the Pharisees, he was trying to show them, because they thought if they were following all these laws, then they were perfectly righteous. And his point was that the ideal is actually the righteousness.

And the law doesn't necessarily always reflect that ideal because human governments cannot enforce a perfect law. They just can't. It's not possible.

It's not possible for human governments to have laws against everything that's sinful or wrong or anything like that. You can't do that. So if God had given a law that demanded perfect righteousness in every way, nobody would have followed it.

They would have lost its authority. It would have made no difference. And instead, he worked with the culture that he had and he moved that culture in a certain direction, taking an account, the hardness of their hearts and what law is actually able to do and what it is not able to do.

Right. And this isn't to say that the law is bad. It's not bad to have a law governing divorce.

It was actually doing something to protect the women, as you mentioned. It's just that it's not, it's not the thing that makes you righteous. It's not the actual, the ideal, the perfection.

And so I think it's fair to compare this to the issue of abortion because I think this is how this is what God did. He, for the human governments, you have to take into account what law is able to do, what it's not able to do. And you, you instruct people with that law and you move them in a certain direction.

And what we are continue to work for is complete abolition of abortion, of course. So, and Daniel, I'm sorry, this is taking a turn to abortion, but hopefully this will help you understand. I think it's a fair application.

Yeah. Because he was asking, how do we apply this notion in a, in a current circumstance of policymaking? So, so in the case of say, William Wilberforce, he started off to ban the trade and he worked until that was done. And when that was done, then they started work on abolition of slavery.

Right. But he, which is much easier after the first step was done. Exactly.

That's exactly my point. He was, he was, the law was instructing people that made it easier to move the culture in this direction where you could make a law that would still have authority and that people would follow and that would actually make a difference to them. So, if we take, if we take it again, this is not to say the law is bad.

Jesus wasn't condemning the law. The law is meant to do a particular thing. It's not meant to give us our righteousness.

And that was, you know, Jesus's point that there is this ideal and you're, you're not following the ideal. You think that you are, you're gaining God, God's righteousness by doing all these things and it's not deep enough. Yeah.

There's a lot more deeper things. I want to anticipate a little bit of a push back here because a lot of people are going to say something like, and this is where one of these statements, there's a truth to it and then there's an error to it. It's like a pastorism, so to speak.

And that the, and the, the, the aphorism is the statement is the law can never change anybody's heart. The way we're going to get transformation is not trying to force people into a civic or civil righteousness behavior on the outside, but changing their hearts on the inside. And on the one hand, there's a, this is true.

The transformation, that's the greatest transformation comes from the inside. And actually Paul says in Galatians chapter five that if you are, if you are being led by the spirit, and here he means the moral influence of the spirit in one's life. Keep in mind he's contrasting the works of the flesh with the fruits of the spirit in that passage.

He says, you're not under the law. And the reason you're not under the law is because the spirit is already accomplishing the purposes of the law already as one matures in Christ. However, on the other hand, it isn't as if the law has no effect on people's moral behavior.

And I like the way you used the phrase actually twice that the law is used to instruct the people in moral behavior. And this is exactly how we teach our kids how to be moral. We give them rules to follow.

And when they break the rules, we punish them when they follow them, then we would then re-reward them. We don't just say, well, kids are following. There's nothing we could do about it.

We just hope they get saved someday and then get good. That's not responsible parenting. But if the same is true of cultures, the law, the written law, what is promoted informs people, informs their conscience.

And so when abortion was almost universally illegal, almost everybody thought it was

wrong. And then when it became legal in states like, for example, New York was one of the first ones. And then nationwide after 1973, Roe vs.

Wade, people's attitude about abortion changed. Well, it must be okay if it's legal. This is one of the liabilities of making prostitution legal and drugs legal, et cetera, et cetera.

And so the law does serve as the function of informing our conscience about morality and as such, directs our behavior. It directs our behavior. It doesn't transform us into righteous people, as you pointed out, obviously.

Then the people are happier and things are better for everybody. But when there's evil in the leadership and when people applaud evil and they condemn what is right, everything goes topsy-turvy. So the law does play an important part here in instructing us.

And we ought to use it for what it can do while also being aware of what it can't do. Let's go on to a question from Damon. I have a friend who says he used to have joy in the Lord.

However, he has made some poor choices recently and has lost his joy. He is repentant and is fervently seeking to restore his relationship with God, but has not regained his joy. How would you counsel him? Oh, that's a difficult one.

And it's partly difficult because our emotions are fragile things. And I am thinking about even the notion of joy. This to me is a, for me personally, it's a vague notion in Scripture.

Most of the time we talk about being joyful, we're talking about a kind of happy exuberance. It's filled with joy. Wow, this is a very positive emotion.

And the way Scripture characterizes joy is that this is something we can experience even during hard times. This is hard for me to understand though. I mean, after all these years as a Christian, I'm just trying to get out what that means.

I mean, the way I manage my emotions, if you will, during difficult times is I'm reminded of God's sovereignty and that he is taking these things that are hard and he's using them for my good. Momentary light of fiction is producing for us an eternal way to glory, for example, from 2 Corinthians 4. And so that makes me feel better. It helps me to persevere.

I don't know if that's what biblical joy amounts to, but that lifts my spirits. Some people seem to be, and again, I'm trying to explain this kind of emotional response in a bright, uplifted mood with the kind of happiness in their face, even through the most difficult times. And I think this is an example of a joy in the Lord, but this isn't something that, in my case, that I have a lot.

When times are hard, I feel the weight of them. And when important relationships are

not going the way I like them to be difficult things befall me and crutches right now because I had surgery on my foot, scooting around on my scooter, you know, when I can use that and there's enough room for that. Okay, well, this is kind of a pain, literally, and in convenience.

So I have to adapt to it. I have to do the best that I can do, but I try to be cheerful in the midst of it, and then I have other things that are happening. So I don't know if that's joy or not.

Now, if a person is really down a lot and their circumstances, I was going to say don't dictate it. And what I mean by that, I don't think circumstances should dictate our moods, but certainly can it be a huge impact if a person's in pain, emotionally or physically for a long period of time. And this is hard to manage.

But if you kind of come out of a sinful circumstance and you've repented from that, you know, then it seems to me that one's emotional, a frame of mind ought to even out quite a bit more. Okay. And in that God, you're not under the conviction of God.

And so maybe at this time, this is the point where, and sometimes I have to do it myself, I have to remind myself of the truth about where I am before God. And an example of that would be Hebrews 10, and I kind of go to this in a certain sense by memory because I have an understanding of the passage, but I'll just try to read it directly so I don't get any of the words wrong here. And here is what the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter 10, starting in verse 19, after he has just explained the power or the efficacy of the blood of Jesus compared to the blood of Jesus.

The blood of bulls and goats. The blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin. Jesus blood takes away sin.

In other words, it's gone. It's no longer an issue as far as the east is from the west so far has got removed are transgressions from us. Okay.

And that's what the writer of Hebrews is kind of emphasizing now when he makes this application. He says, therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus confidence based on the theology. He's just explained by a new and living way.

That's the new covenant, which he inaugurated for us through the veil. That is his flesh. And since we have a great high priest, a great priest over the house of God.

So we have the sacrifice and the priesthood. Jesus made the sacrifice and he's interceding based on the sacrifice on our behalf. Because those things are true, the writer of Hebrews is saying, let us draw near with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Now, the writer of Hebrews in here is telling you the facts. He's given the theological foundation, which secures the facts that our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. These are figures of speech that are identifying the perfectly clean state that we have before God now in virtue of Christ's sacrifice.

We know we sin. This is why this encouragement is given. Because, because of the perfection of the sacrifice that takes away the consequence and washes us clean before God.

And then the next verse verse 23, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope, which hope. That hope he just said without wavering for he who promised is faithful. The picture here in this passage is the ability to come into the very throne of God, throne room of God, the holy of holies, having our sin covered by the blood of the one sacrifice, Jesus, and therefore being completely cleansed of the sin and therefore confidently going in to the very presence of God.

Now, of course, there are going to be seasons where we're going to be under conviction and we're going to be disciplined. And in Hebrews chapter 12, the writer talks about our discipline before God. You know, we're kids.

He's a good father. He's going to discipline us. But the point I'm making here is in the absence of significant physical pain and emotional pain.

And in the absence of an ongoing sinful circumstance that you're living in, and you could do something about, and you haven't. I should say, yeah, in the absence of that, you should. There's no reason why, bare minimum, we should feel a sense of confident happiness that eventually our lives are going to be rewarded in the resurrection.

And things are going to be okay, even if they're hard now in other ways. All right. If that's not there and you have sin that you've repented from and been dealt with, you're still like, maybe you need to remind yourself of some of the facts that I just described.

And so it's a, it's a, David said he encouraged himself in the Lord. You know, in other words, he understood the truth of God's grace and mercy, that God's, when the lamentations chapter three verse 22 and 23, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning, greatest life, faithfulness. Wow, that's cool. One thing we have to keep in mind is that the gospel is very hard for us to believe.

It is very hard for us to believe. So I really appreciate what you said about reminding yourself about all of these things, because I think that's key here. Because I think what happens is that we go along and we don't really notice our sin most of the time.



And so we think we're depending on Jesus, but reality, we think we're pretty good. And then we do something we're really not proud of, something wrong. And all of a sudden, we realize our righteousness is not enough.

It hits us in this real and raw way that we didn't expect because we didn't realize that we actually were depending on ourselves and our righteousness. So if you sin and you're devastated and you feel like you're separated from God, I think exactly what you need to do is remind yourself of the gospel and realize that you might have been, you might have been depending on yourself. And luckily, it doesn't depend on you.

You have a relationship with God. It's real. It's never going to be taken away from you.

And you have no reason. Just as Greg explained, you have no reason to fear him. You can run to him.

You can be with him. And it's natural to be grieved by your sin. We don't want to go against God and we do feel guilty for that.

And that's fine. But you need to trust in Christ. And so that was a great passage in Hebrews.

Here's one in Romans eight starting in verse 31. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who was against us? He who did not spare his own son but delivered him over for us all. How will he not also with him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies who is the one who condemns Christ Jesus is he who died.

Yes, rather who was raised who is at the right hand of God and also who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or naked or peril or sore or sword? Nothing will separate us. I mean, his whole point here is God's not going to condemn you.

He justified you. Jesus isn't going to condemn you. He died for you and now he's praying for you by the throne of God.

So you just have to you have to lean into the gospel and you have to remind yourself constantly or you will forget and you will stop believing it. Yes. Also for the book of Romans chapter four, a verse that I go to frequently in my own mind just to reflect on.

And I think it's powerful because of the stark contrast that Paul is making here. Chapter four, verse four and five. Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but is what is due.

In other words, if you're working for yourself, if you're getting what you earned. Verse five, but to the one who does not work. Now the Bible in teach we shouldn't work.

We shouldn't be seeking our sanctification. Paul's making a point of contrasting works versus grace here. But for the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.

Well, thank you, Greg. And thank you for your question, Damon and Daniel. We really appreciate hearing from you.

I feel like there was something more I wanted to say, but oh, I know what it was. Oh, on the grace of God? I know what it was. I know you ran out, right? You talk all the thing about this.

Read Romans. That's why that's my that's my suggestion. Read through all of Romans in one sitting.

Do it every day for a month. Just let it soak into you because it's all there. Romans is the best.

All right. Thank you for your questions. We'd love to hear from you.

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