

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL



FALL 2014

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1



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RPTS

THE ONLINE THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal

DESCRIPTION

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ISSN 2377-7680

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From Rutherford Hall

As I write this column, I am sitting in my office in Rutherford Hall, the grand, former Horne Mansion situated on the small campus of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (RPTS) in the East End of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. By God's grace, the Seminary has a long and noble history like the building itself, dating back to its establishment in 1810. Given Rutherford Hall is the location where so much of the life of RPTS takes place – classes, chapel services, conferences, meals, fellowship – that is the name given to this column. We anticipate this feature being a regular part of this new journal being launched by RPTS. The journal, to no one's surprise, will be called the *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal*.

I believe you will find the *Reformed Presbyterian Theological Journal* to be a professional journal that reflects the ministry of this seminary—a theological journal that will be both scholarly and pastoral in tone. For years the tagline at RPTS has been *Study Under Pastors*; and after a number of years of considering the advisability of having yet another professional journal, we at RPTS believe that the time is now right for us to make our contribution. We pray that this semiannual journal will be helpful to the church as we seek to raise up shepherds who feed the flock and minister to the souls of all who are under their care.

The name *Rutherford* draws our attention all the way back to the Second Reformation in Scotland in the mid-seventeenth century. Samuel Rutherford himself was a pastor, theologian, and author during this remarkable time. *Rutherford's Letters* and *Lex Rex* are but two of his works which the Lord has used powerfully in His church throughout the intervening centuries. Rutherford was also a Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly in the 1640s, an assembly that produced what today we call the Westminster Standards, arguably the finest summary of Biblical doctrine ever written.

In this inaugural issue, the articles are based on lectures regarding the Law of God given at our 2014 *Westminster Conference* that takes place each fall. We hope you enjoy our journal and find that some of that same Spirit the Lord gave to Rutherford, our faithful forefather in the faith, can be found here. If you do, please tell others about it and come back to see us again.

For Christ and His Kingdom,

Jerry O'Neill, RPTS President

For more information about the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, go to rpts.edu.

Is the Christian under Law or Not under Law?

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The Westminster Confession of Faith teaches that the moral law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments, is binding on all men, whether believers or unbelievers. All humans, therefore, are under the moral law as a duty owed to God according to the Westminster Confession.

God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which *He bound him and all his posterity* to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it. (Westminster Confession of Faith 19:1)

This law, after his fall, *continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness*; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man. (WCF 19:2)

The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation. (WCF 19:5)

But for many Christians, such teaching seems to contradict the explicit teaching of the Apostle Paul that the believer is not under law.

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are *not under the law*, but under grace. (Rom. 6:14 NIV)

Before the coming of this faith, *we were held in custody under the law*, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, *we are no longer under a guardian*. (Gal. 3:23-25)

If the Bible clearly says that the believer is not under law, how can the confession affirm just the opposite? It is not that the Westminster divines were unaware of the above passages. Indeed, they recognized the tension and added that “Neither doth Christ, in the Gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.”

In the Westminster standards, the term “law” is used in at least four different senses. It is used for the moral law, for the Old Covenant, for the ceremonies required under the Old Covenant and for the judicial laws of the Old Covenant.

According to the Westminster Confession, the Christian is not under the Old Covenant administration, not under the ceremonial law of the Old Covenant, and not under the judicial laws of the Old Covenant. Neither is he under the moral law as a covenant of works, but he is under the moral law as duty and obligation to his Creator. These distinctions found in the Westminster Confession mirror the different uses of the word “law” (νόμος) in the New Testament, but many Christians read the New Testament assuming the word “law” always means the same thing whenever it is used. Therefore, these same Christians would think that Therefore, these same Christians would think that because Paul says we are “not under law,” the Westminster Confession errs in saying we are under the moral law as a standard of behavior. Some translations seek to avoid some of this confusion by adding “the” in front of “law” or capitalizing “Law” when the translators think the text is referring to the Old Covenant, the books of Moses or the Ten Commandments. This intended aid only adds to the confusion for many readers. In part, this is because “the law” or “the Law” is still ambiguous. No such nice distinctions exist in the Greek text. Ancient Greek was not written with lower case and upper case letters like English is written, and the English definite article is not a simple equivalent of the Greek definite article (ὁ, ἡ, τό). The New Testament does use the term “law” with a considerable variation in meaning. The differences in meaning, however, are a result of how context controls meaning.

In 1 Corinthians we find a passage where Paul uses the term “law” in more than one sense.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law though *I myself am not under the law*, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law though *I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law*, so as to win those not having the law.
1 Corinthians 9:20-21 (NIV)

Paul seems to be double-minded about the matter of being under law. In this passage he affirms that he is both not under law and under law. He says, “I myself am not under the law,” but then seems to contradict himself by saying, “I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law.” When a writer uses such contradictory language, it is often the case that although the same words are used, the meaning is different. In other words, Paul uses the term “law” to mean more than one thing.

So then, is the Christian “not under law” or is he “not free from God’s law”? The answer is yes. Both are true statements when properly understood within both their immediate literary contexts and the larger context of the whole of biblical revelation.

Let us first consider the larger context of the whole of biblical revelation. The foundation of biblical revelation is that God created man according to his image and likeness. Every biblical writer assumes and builds upon this foundational truth about man: “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness...’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:26-27).

When God created man according to his own image and likeness, God made man to be a revelation of his goodness, since man was made according to the image and likeness of the good

God. As it is said in the Psalms, “Good and upright is the Lord” (Psalm 25:8). If man was created according to the image and likeness of God, man must be “good and upright” since God is such. God made man to be a living expression of God’s goodness, for God breathed into him the breath of life.

Being made according to the image and likeness of God, man has both knowledge of the good, and an obligation to do the good. This is inherent to the notion that the good God made man in his image and likeness. If man had no knowledge of the good and felt no obligation to do the good, he would be unlike God. For man cannot be the image of God without knowing God and his goodness, and man cannot live as the image of God without conforming himself to God and his goodness.

Thus man has within his nature, as a creature, a moral sense and a moral obligation. The Westminster Confession of Faith refers to this human reality of moral sense and moral obligation as the “law written on the heart,” the “law of nature,” “the light of nature,” and the “moral law.”

After God made all other creatures, he created man, man and female ... having the law of God written on their hearts.... (WCF 4:2)

God gave to Adam a law. ... This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness ... commonly called moral.... (WCF 19:1-3)

The light of nature showeth that there is God, who ... is good and doth good unto all ... as it is the law of nature.... (WCF 21:1, 7)

Any discussion of the senses in which the Christian is under law and not under law must be conducted in the context of the creation narrative in which God made man according to his image and likeness. Therefore, any doctrine that redeemed man is not under the obligation of God’s moral law is a denial that God made man according to his image and likeness, and that, in Christ, God is now renewing men according to his image.

The narrative of creation is the ultimate context in which all the other words of the Bible must be interpreted and understood. Man cannot be free from the obligation of God’s moral law without ceasing to be man, namely, the one made according to the image and likeness of God. Therefore, in the context of the creation narrative, the following passages cannot be understood as saying that men are not under the rule of God’s moral law. “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). “Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law.... Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian” (Gal. 3:23, 25).

As we shall see later, when these texts are examined in their immediate literary contexts, the correct sense of “law” will be apparent, but the sense of “moral law” cannot be imported into these passages without contradicting the truth that God made man according to his image and likeness. So then, the later language of the Bible asserting that the believing man is “not under law but under grace” cannot rationally be understood to mean that the believing man is free from

the obligation of God's moral law. For to be free from the moral law is no longer to be according to God's image and likeness.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Col. 3:9-10)

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)

The believing man is being restored to the image of God and is being made like God in true holiness and righteousness. Or, as Jesus put it, "be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Prior to God speaking his moral law at Mt. Sinai, men knew right from wrong, and God interacted with men in terms of this moral sense and obligation. We see this with Cain (Gen. 4:6-7), with Noah (Gen. 6:9), and with Abraham (Gen. 18:23). In each case, Scripture presumes that humans know right from and wrong and that they ought to do the right. Thus, in the context of the creation narrative, the language of "not under law" cannot be understood to mean "not under obligation to keep the moral law of God." While there are legitimate senses in which the Christian is "not under law" (which we will explore later), the Christian is most certainly under the instruction and obligation of the moral law of God.

In a number of places, the New Testament affirms the abiding validity of the moral commandments.

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us*, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-4)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore *love is the fulfillment of the law*. Romans 13:8-10 (NIV)

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "You shall not commit adultery," also said, "You shall not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a law-breaker. (Jas. 2:8-11)

So then, if the moral law is abiding in its validity, then what does it mean to say that the Christian is “not under law.” In what sense or senses does the New Testament teach that the Christian is “not under law”.

First, Jesus uses the expression “the Law and the Prophets” to refer to the epoch of the Old Covenant which ends with the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it. (Luke 16:16)

Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven is advancing violently, and violent people have been ceasing it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. (Matt. 11:11-13 NIV, 1984 version)

In this usage, “the Law and the Prophets” refers to the era of time in which the Old Covenant is in force. The coming of the Kingdom of God means that the covenant administration of the Law and the Prophets has ended. The Christian is not under the covenant administration of the Law and the Prophets, but is now in the Kingdom of God. The covenant order of the Kingdom of God is the New Covenant.

Paul also speaks about the end of the covenant administration that is the Law. But in this usage there is a focus on the ceremonial requirements of that covenant administration and, in particular, circumcision: “Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian” (Gal. 3:23-25). Of course, in the same letter Paul teaches the abiding validity of what we call the moral law, that is, the law of love: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love... For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:6, 14). This contrast between the moral law and the ceremonial law is the variation in the meaning of “law” used 1 Corinthians 9:20-21.

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law (ceremonies) I became like one under the law (ceremonies) though I myself am not under the law (ceremonies), so as to win those under the law (ceremonies). To those not having the law (covenant with its ceremonies) I became like one not having the law (covenant with its ceremonies) though I am not free from God’s law (moral) but am under Christ’s law (love), so as to win those not having the law (covenant with its ceremonies).
(Parenthetical comments added by the author)

The Writer to the Hebrews also indicates this change of covenant administration with a focus on the ceremonial requirements and, in particular, the priesthood and sacrifices: “For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also.... The former regulation is set aside

because it was weak and useless for the law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:12, 18-19). However, the variations in the meaning of “law” observed above do not explain the troublesome language of Romans 6:14: “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” If we take “under law” to mean under the moral law, we take the text out of its context of meaning (creation narrative) and make it conflict with the overall teaching of Scripture. If we take “under law” to mean under the Old Covenant administration, we make it conflict with the testimony of the Law itself that God is gracious and merciful to sinners.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” (Exod. 34:6-7)

If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. (Psalm 130:3-4)

Furthermore, the issue of the ceremonies of the law is completely out of context. Paul in Romans 6 is not discussing circumcision, but the problem of the struggle with indwelling sin. So then, what does Paul mean by “law” in Romans 6:14, and why are we not “under law” but instead are “under grace?”

In the period after the return from captivity, an interpretation of the Law of Moses, that is, of the Old Covenant, developed which was a profound distortion of the real meaning of the Covenant. This was the understanding of the Law expressed by the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in the Gospels narratives. In this misinterpretation, the minimal keeping of the moral law and the strict outward performances of the ceremonies of the law according to the custom of the fathers constituted righteousness before God. The spiritual effect of this misinterpretation was boasting before God.

Earlier in Romans, Paul contrasted this Pharisaical interpretation of the law with the proper meaning of the law.

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the “law” that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. (Rom. 3:27-31)

The gospel of justification by faith does not annul the law in its proper and intended sense, but rather upholds the law in its correct meaning over against its abuse at the hands of the Pharisees who perverted it into a law of works and boasting. Such self-righteous boasting before God, however, serves only to increase sin. Those who follow such a religious program can never be free of the enslaving power of sin because their misinterpretation annuls the possibility of true faith.

The believer in Jesus, however, is not under law in this perverted sense, but is under grace. Of course, Abraham, Moses, and David were also under grace and not under law in the sense of “under law” in Romans 6:14. They also were justified by faith and saved by grace. They did not boast before God as did the Pharisees, but had true and saving faith.

So then, the meaning of law in Romans 6:14 may be stated thus:

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law (as a law of works resulting in boasting before God), but under grace (by which you believe that God in his grace forgives sinners through sacrifice of his Son). (Parenthetical comments added by the author)

Therefore, the Christian is “not under law” in the sense that he is not under the Pharisaical misinterpretation of the Law as a law of works, that is, of justification by works of law. As we noted earlier, the Christian is “not under law” in the sense that he is not under the Old Covenant administration with its ceremonies, its judicial system, and viewing the moral law as a means of salvation. and the moral law as a law written on stone. But the Christian is under law in that he is instructed by and obligated to keep the moral law of God, that is, the law of love.

To be under the obligation of the moral law of God is a good thing. Life is better lived as Jesus taught us to live: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12 translation by the author). To keep that moral law is to be like God, and so realized the meaning of our humanity, namely, those made after the image and likeness of God: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

The Law Leads Us to Christ: The Law and Its First Use

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*“The law must be laid upon those who are to be justified,
that when they are cast down and humbled by the law, they should fly to Christ.”*

Martin Luther, Commentary on Galatians

As the quote from Luther above indicates, if we are to see men and women come to Christ, then we must first lay the law upon them so that they might see their need. The use of the law to show lost souls their need for Christ historically has been called the first use of the law.

Before we look at how to use the law in this manner, we need to make some working assumptions that will help us do so in a pastoral manner.

Seven Working Assumptions

- 1) We accept Paul’s declaration that “the law became our tutor to lead us to Christ” (Galatians 3:24). Few Christians argue this point, making this first use then the easiest to defend! Whether Reformed or Lutheran, two kingdoms or one kingdom, or covenantal or dispensational, most evangelicals will use the law in one way or another, to one degree or another, to seek conviction of sin.
- 2) When we speak of the law, our primary reference is to the moral law. This law is “summarily comprehended” in the Ten Commandments (Westminster Shorter Catechism 41), but also further revealed by “good and necessary consequence” (Westminster Confession of Faith 1.4) and in the “general equity” (WCF 19.4), or the undergirding moral principles found in the case laws, ceremonial laws, and civil laws.
- 3) The law of God is not a set of arbitrary rules, but issues forth from the heart and mouth of God Himself. “The law of the Lord is perfect” because God is perfect. “The commandment of the Lord is pure” because the Lord is pure. Hodge says in his commentary on *The Westminster Confession of Faith* that the law “has its ground in the all-perfect and unchangeable moral nature of God. When we affirm that God is holy, we do not mean that he makes right to be right by simply willing it, but that he wills it because it is right.”¹

¹ A.A. Hodge, *The Westminster Confession: A Commentary*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 2004), 337.

- 4) The law was expressed in the Covenant of Works, which was re-emphasized (though not republished!) at Mt. Sinai. Thus, it bound Adam “and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it” (WCF 19.1). “The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof” (WCF 19.5).
- 5) Since the law can justify no one (Gal. 2:16), justification comes to the elect “not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone...by imputing the obedience (to the law) and satisfaction (of its demands) of Christ unto them...” (WCF 11.1, parenthetical statements by author).
- 6) The evangelist must then skillfully use the law to bring sinners to repentance and faith. “A sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of His mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with Him in all the ways of His commandments.” (WCF 15.2).
- 7) Thus, we will focus on how practically to use the law in our witnessing.

In using the law practically in witnessing, we can follow the uses of the Apostle Paul as seen in Romans 3.

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Rom. 3:9-20)

Drape “Black” Rabbinical Pearls upon Others in Witnessing

One thing you will notice in this passage from Romans 3 it consists primarily of quotations from the Old Testament. Paul, a rabbi before he became an apostle, is employing a teaching technique of the Jews. He took several related Old Testament Scriptures and placed them one after another to establish his point. Quotations from the Old Testament placed together in this manner by

Jewish teachers were called “rabbinical pearls.” Just as a jeweler strings one pearl after another to form a necklace, so they would use these related quotations to form their arguments.

As Paul forms this “pearl necklace,” we see that he is placing it around the neck of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, not as a way of enhancing our beauty but to emphasize the wickedness of all (Rom. 3:9). It is for this reason that we refer to them as black pearls. Paul is bringing to a close the opening argument of his letter: namely, the fallen nature of all mankind. Through these first three chapters he has shown how men, whether they Jews or Gentiles, are all condemned. Whether by the outright immorality of the Gentile or the hypocrisy of the Jew, all fall far short of God’s glory and are under the wrath of God.

Like Paul, we are to use the law to show every person that they too are under God’s wrath. One might object that it is cruel to use the law to make people feel guilty for sin, in essence weighing them down and oppressing them with the law. Yet we would respond that a temporary God-given necklace in this age is better than an eternal self-imposed millstone around an unbeliever’s neck in the age to come. The law is given to reveal the reality of the sinner’s situation and to help them see their true standing before God.

Here are practical means to accomplish this.

Use the Scripture to Interpret Hearts. We are those who believe in the Reformation cry *Sola Scriptura*. We believe the Bible is its own best interpreter, and use Biblical texts to interpret other texts. Remember that Scriptures are given to help people interpret their own hearts as well. They cannot understand them on their own. As the prophet Jeremiah says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart...” (Jer. 17:9-10). He searches it through his law. His Word is “living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Every sinner needs this! Because all men are sinners, in every other religion from liberalism to secular humanism, from Islam to atheism, all men seek to justify themselves. They point to some piece of morality, some aspect of the law, and believe that it renders them just. Anyone who does not believe in his heart that he is justified by faith in Christ will constantly seek to justify himself by his works. He needs the Law of God in its fullness to show him the impossibility of this self-justification. Thus, the church must be faithful to bring this knowledge to sinners.

Overcome Belief in Justification by Works by Revealing True Demands of Law. As difficult as it may be to bring people to the knowledge of sin with the law, to show them no works of theirs can justify them, to hold the whole world accountable, and to stop every mouth, as Paul says, we must speak the law to those under it. We are doing them no favors if, like Mr. Worldly Wiseman in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, we point them toward the village of Morality and tell them Mr. Legality and his son Civility can rid them of their burden. Instead, we must press upon them how great this burden is. When Evangelist rescued Christian, he said, “Legality, therefore, is not able to set thee free from thy burden. No man was as yet ever rid of his burden by him; no, nor ever is like to be: ye cannot be justified by the works of the law; for by the deeds of the law

no man living can be rid of his burden.”² Evangelist called aloud to the heavens for confirmation of what he had said; and with that there came words and fire out of the mountain under which poor Christian stood, which made the hair of his flesh stand up. The words were pronounced: “As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’” Gal. 3:10. To do this work is our duty as gospel ministers.

Recognize That People Must See Sin Before They Will See a Savior. When Jesus interacted with individuals, why did he so often engage in holy pauses? Why did the Lord make a blind man go across town with mud made from dirt and Jesus’ spit on his eyes to wash so he could see? Why did he speak at length with the Samaritan woman at the well until her serial relationships were exposed before he told her who he was? Why did he give the rich young ruler, eager to know how to obtain eternal life, a Ten Commandment quiz and then watch the young man walk away when he applied it strongly to his life? Why did he not just say “Believe in Me. I’m the Christ. Be saved!”? Because Jesus practiced what Paul is teaching here, that “through the law comes knowledge of sin.” Through knowledge of sin comes the need for a Savior.

Now think about our culture. It is lawless! Every day we wake up and the media tells us of yet another new definition of what constitutes marriage. You cannot have the law of adultery if marriage is not defined. For another example, people upload videos to YouTube containing all types of violence for people’s viewing enjoyment, and people watch others engage in such things as “playing” the Knockdown Game, gang beatings, and even Islamic beheadings. You cannot have the law of murder if violence is your pleasure. Lawless people are not gospel-prepared people. If they do not see their sin, they have no need of a Savior.

Have an Extensive Knowledge of the Old Testament for Evangelizing

How do we obtain knowledge of the Law? There are four means to acquiring such knowledge.

Read the Law of God Regularly. Too many people who have been Christians for years – even seminary students - have told me they have never read the whole Old Testament. There are many other reasons to read the Old Testament, but one would be this: How can we expect the knowledge of the law of God around us if it is not in our own minds and hearts? How can we witness to sinners of their sin if we do not even understand its depths ourselves? We cannot even understand the New Testament truly without the Old Testament, since it is quoted in it repeatedly. You must gain the knowledge of the law that reading it will give to you.

Meditate on the Law by Singing It. We are to be singing the law, though I am not necessarily advocating putting the words of the Pentateuch to music. Yet, in a manner of speaking, the law has already been placed in song form. For the Psalms, in one very real sense, are God’s Law in song form. You cannot sing a psalm without being confronted with God distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked, without him declaring the nature of fallen mankind, without him

² John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress: One Man’s Search for Eternal Life – An Allegory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1999), 27.

speaking of his holiness, without hearing echoes of the moral law, or without the need for salvation and deliverance being proclaimed.

I raise this for Paul's quotes of the law here are not strictly from the Pentateuch. Verses 10-12 are from Psalm 14 (or 53). Verse 13 is taken Psalm 5:9 and Psalm 140:3. Verse 14 is Psalm 10:7. In verses 15-17 Paul deviates by quoting from Proverbs and Isaiah. But then in verse 18 he gets another black pearl from the treasure trove of the Psalms from Psalm 36:1.

How did Paul write this section? He may have pulled out a scroll and looked up these references. Yet the text has the sense that he is quoting them from memory. Perhaps he could do this readily because he was singing the Psalms and knew them readily and handily? Consider then what the robust singing of God's Word would mean for our evangelism. If we sing them like we should, not only to God but teaching and admonishing each other with all wisdom as we sing (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19), then we are plowing hearts with his law where gospel seeds can be planted.

Memorize Important Portions of the Law. As Paul shows here with the doctrine of reprobation, or in Romans 4 regarding the doctrine of justification, or Romans 9 with the doctrine of election, he knew the Old Testament thoroughly and had much of it committed to memory. How vital this is to our witness! After several years of being a believer, I was in a meeting of men where an older minister asked us how many of us knew the Ten Commandments. Few of us could raise hands, and I went home to make sure that I cooperated with the Spirit's work in writing them on my heart. As a pastor, I worked to make sure the children and families of the congregation had them memorized.

We would then use the law in evangelism. Our congregation did door-to-door surveys based on the Ten Commandments, and it incredible the experiences we had. One day I came up to the home of a man sitting on his porch who was reading a book from the *Left Behind* series. He was friendly and agreed to take the survey. He could only name two or three of the commandments, and thought one of the Ten Commandments was actually "love your neighbor as yourself." He started smiling at his failure, and then said to me, "What makes this embarrassing is that I am the pastor of the church behind you," as across the street was a mainline church. Sadly, this incident was commonplace. Some young people did an apologetic project which consisted of videotaping people trying to list the commandments, and they even went to a number of the churches in town and talked to the pastors. The amount of pastoral stumbling over listing the commandments on those videos bore a tragic testimony to the lack of knowledge of God's basic rules in our land.

Think of the impact of this deplorable lack of knowledge has on preaching. Those given the duty to preach are under holy obligation to preach the whole counsel of God with its warning and judgments.

Declare the Judgments of the Law. Paul does not shrink back from saying some unpleasant things – no one is good, man's works are worthless, lips speak lies, feet run to evil, and none fears God. Preachers, when is the last time people heard judgments and warnings coming to them from your pulpit? In order to have true gospel backbone we must have the bittersweet fire

of the law in our bellies. You are not a true watchman on walls of Jerusalem if you do not warn people of their sin.

Yet as we bring the law to bear on people we must do it skillfully.

Learn in Tutoring to Apply the Law of God Skillfully to Your Hearers

We are called, preacher and layperson alike, to tutor others in the Law of God. Yet you would not be a good tutor in the subject of math, science, or English if you know very little about the subject. So it is with God's Law. We must learn to be effective tutors.

I want to return here to the terms the Westminster Confession of Faith uses when it describes the obligation all people have to "personal, entire, exact, and perpetual" obedience of the law. As we have established, people cannot achieve this obedience, but we must press this duty upon them so they will see their need for Christ. Calvin spoke of the law in this manner regarding its impact on people: "Their attention would be aroused by its menaces."³ The Law should capture people's attention. How can we develop this?

Use the Law *Personally*. Our knowledge of the law must be extensive so that we can minister to the individuals God puts before us who come to us with differing life stories. We need to use it personally to speak to the one before us. Later in Romans, in the early part of Chapter 7, Paul relates that "if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin" (Rom. 7:7). Then he goes on to describe how he learned that coveting was a sin through the tenth commandment. He personalized the law, and we need to do the same in guiding people toward Christ.

This does not always require a reference or quote. A strong familiarity with the stories of the Old Testament is a tremendous way to help people. I love using the story of Joseph in working with people, because it has so many of the experiences people go through: jealousy over favoritism, betrayal by family, estrangement, unfair circumstances, problems going back over years and years, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Find personal application from the Law as you work with people you know.

Use the Law *Comprehensively*. Our Lord Jesus did not come into this world merely to help rescue people from a singular problem that at any given time is bothering them. He came to save people whose sin has so ruined their souls that Paul here in Romans classifies them as "worthless." Though a word we do not like to use in speaking about people, here it is being used only in a certain way. Paul's use of this term is in reference to the economy of righteousness or the economy of heaven.

In his commentary on Romans, James Boice uses the illustration of Monopoly money. In the game of Monopoly, a five hundred dollar bill will buy you the Boardwalk property. But if you take that same Monopoly five hundred dollar bill down to the local hardware store and try to purchase something, it will not even buy you a board. That bill is worthless in that economy.

³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Last Four Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 375.

Similarly, our righteousness is worthless in God's economy where only perfection has true value. As we established earlier, people want to point to one aspect of their lives and declare its righteousness. We have to show people that if they have broken the law at one point they have, as James states in his epistle, broken the entirety of God's Law. If people think they have sinned just a little bit, then they will believe they need just a little Savior. But we want them to be brought to the point where they express what John Newton did. "I have come to realize two things: I am a great sinner, and I have a great Savior."

Use the Law Precisely. If you are a pastor, it is inevitable that you will have to deal with conflict and reconciliation issues between two brothers who have offended each other. It is amazing how people fight reconciliation. People in the church do not want to come into the same room to discuss and come to terms of peace over the matters that have been dividing them. Conflict resolution where specific issues and sins are being addressed is very difficult work.

How much more difficult it is to speak specifically to sinners regarding their lives and the sin in which they are involved. We need grace to do this difficult work. To those who are bruised reeds, we must speak gently to their souls so as not to crush them or send them off in despair. To the proud and rebellious, we have to speak of the seriousness of the sin of which we are calling them to repent.

Use the Law Persistently. The Westminster Confession states there is a "perpetual obedience" all people must render unto God. So often as we interact with sinners and tell them of their need for Christ, and they simply walk away from us. They think by walking away they are also walking away from the demands that God's Law places upon them. We know that is not true. We have to keep pursuing them with the Law.

Psalm 119:126 says, "It is time for the Lord to act, for your law has been broken." We could grow despairing when we see God's Law set aside. When we see people rejecting His Word, this is then when we need to cry out to God to work and pursue people. We need then to pray that the Church would learn to love His Law once again as part of that pursuit. We must cry out and ask God to reestablish the knowledge of His Law in the land once again. We must plead that His Spirit would be given to us once again so that, in the words of Isaiah, our voices would be raised up like a trumpet in declaring to people their rebellion. We must be faithful to use His commandments and His statutes, His warnings and His judgments, to awaken people to see the awfulness of their sin against the Holy God.

As we do so, may the results be what Samuel Bolton reminds us of in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*: "The law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified; the gospel sends us to the law again to inquire what is our duty as those who are justified."⁴

⁴ Samuel Bolton, *True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (London: Banner of Truth, 1964), 80.

The Second Use of the Law as Understood in the Westminster Assembly’s Scottish Context

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Introduction: Since this presentation concerns the second use of the law, we should agree as to what the law’s “second use” means. To underline the importance of a proper definition, turn to a contemporary blog to observe its misuse. A former colleague from the south addressed a controversy within the PCA and asked, “So, what’s really going on here? I wonder if the real missing distinction here is not the distinction between law and gospel, but the distinction between the *second use and third use of the law* [original italics]. The clear focus of pastor [name withdrawn]’s response article was on the “second use” of God’s moral law, namely that the law functions to expose our sinfulness, reveal our failure, and to drive us to Christ.” The colleague added: “Put differently, the law is not just something that condemns (second use), but it is also, for the believer, a necessary guide to holiness (third use).” He concluded: “If one thinks mainly in “second use” categories, then [the article’s] call to obedience might sound like a call to legalism.”

Notice the professor’s definition of the second use of the law: he says that it exposes our sinfulness, reveals our failure, and condemns. While the law does so function, this learned colleague is not speaking of the second use of the law at all—but, in fact, of the first. Thus, when a Seminary professor in the midst of theological controversy can be so mistaken, such writing underlines the contemporary relevance for proper terms and categories.

Reformed theology defines the first use of the law as the rule of God’s judgment over men.¹ The first use of the law, operative before conversion, is sometimes called the “pedagogical” use. It is the law as a standard for righteousness that crushes and condemns us because of our sin. The second use of the law, this presentation’s topic, is the restraint of sin. The third use of the law is the guide for the righteous walk of the believer.²

¹ Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 295: “The [earlier] classic confessions provide evidence of the threefold division of the law, but do not put it in precise terms.” See *RPCNA Testimony* 19:1.

² Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: a study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2012), 296, the first use of the law revealed to man his real need as a sinner and pointed him to Christ. Calvin’s second use had a more social and civil function. Here the law acted as a restraint or a deterrent to the behavior of those who were not believers, and whose depravity could otherwise boil over into all manner of lawlessness. Calvin developed it in context of civil government. For the development of the three uses of the law, see J. V. Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards: Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossway, 2014), 273ff.

In fact, the first and the third uses of the law are much easier to understand and apply than is the second. This paper will try to demonstrate the beauty of the second use so that we view it like the sweet middle of an Oreo cookie! Having briefly defined the terms, let's turn to the Westminster Standards' analysis.

I. Definition of Second Use of the Law in the Westminster Standards.

Definition in Confession of Faith. God's law was the topic of Westminster Confession of Faith 19. The divines introduced the law that was spoken to Adam in the garden as a covenant of works. This law, as a covenant of works, was binding on all of his posterity.³ The theological notion of the Adamic law, as a covenant of works binding his posterity, had roots reaching back to the very end of the 16th century in Scottish theology.⁴

According to the divines, after the fall, God gave "this law" (the reference connects back to the Adamic law) as a perfect rule of righteousness, called the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were divided into the two-fold duties toward God and man and together were termed the perfect rule of righteousness.⁵

The divines argued that beside this law, which they now term "the moral," another law, called the "ceremonial" was given by God to the church under age. That law had "typical" ordinances in worship that prefigured Christ as well as some instructions and moral duties. The divines concluded: "All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament."⁶

The chapter's fourth section presented a third type of law with a short definition that should be read in full: "To them also as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people; not obliging any other now further than the general equity thereof may require."

The fifth section said that the "moral law" binds both Christians and non-Christians to obedience. Their wording was strong as they contended that the moral law, "doth for ever bind all...to the obedience thereof." They stressed that Christ's redemptive work did not dissolve the obligation of obedience, but rather strengthened it.⁷

The sixth section of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* presented the second use fully within the context of the first and third. They first determined that the law, as a covenant of works, cannot justify but functions as a rule of life: the classic third use of the law. The moral law binds and directs in that humble walk. Likewise, the law demonstrates our sin: the classic first use.⁸

³ WCF 19.1. See Wayne Spear, *Faith of our Fathers*, (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant), 100 and Robert Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 293.

⁴ See the pioneering work of Robert Rollock of Edinburgh University, *Questiones et Responsa Aliquot de Foedere Dei* (Edinburgh: 1596).

⁵ WCF 19.2. See Spear, *Faith of our Fathers*, 101.

⁶ WCF 19.3; Spear, *Faith of our Fathers*, 102.

⁷ See Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 297.

⁸ See Spear, *Faith of our Fathers*, 103-04.

Then they moved to the second use, as the law restrains corruption, forbids sin, and shows God's approval for obedience with promises that encourage us in our obedience.⁹

Definition in Westminster Longer Catechism. At Westminster Longer Catechism 92, the law that was given to Adam in the garden was actually called “the moral law,” a term more generally used to describe the Ten Commandments. The following question (WLC 93) contains a beautiful summary of the moral law. The divines then introduced the complex notion that while no one can attain righteousness and life by the moral law, there was a “great use thereof” for both the elect and reprobate (WLC 94).¹⁰

WLC 95 continued the theme that the moral law convinces men of their sin [the first use] but included that they were also bound to “walk accordingly”.¹¹ WLC 97 reminded believers that they were not under the law as a covenant of works, (repeating WCF 19.6), but they were also to be thankful to Christ for his fulfilling of the law, and that they should take great care to conform themselves to the law's demands.

The larger catechism's elaboration of the law, which seems to be more complex than and extend beyond the confession, was specifically crafted to deal with the contemporary problem of antinomianism.¹² Having defined the law's second use, let's examine its function.¹³

II. Function of Second Use of Law in Westminster Standards.

Theological Context. The Westminster Divines faced a number of hostile positions concerning the second use of the law. On the one side was that of the papacy, and connected to their arguments were problems presented by the Erastians. Analysis of the Erastians will appear in a later section.

On the other extreme were the antinomians. The antinomians argued that believers were no longer subject to God's law.¹⁴ The Law's main purpose, for believers, was simply to give them joy at their freedom from its constraints.¹⁵

⁹ WCF 19.6: “It is likewise of use to regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works: so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.”

¹⁰ This is similar to WCF 19.6, “Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet it of great use to them, as well as to others...”

¹¹ Yet, WLC 96 clearly elaborated the first use as it condemns the unregenerate.

¹² Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 295: “...this chapter is crucial in rebutting [the antinomians], and this statement is at the heart of it.”

¹³ A. A. Hodge, *Westminster Confession*, 281 argues that chapter 19 presented four classifications of the law. There were those grounded in the divine nature and therefore universal, those grounded in the divine will and binding only so long as commanded, those grounded in temporary circumstances and binding to those circumstances, and finally those grounded in universal or permanent human laws and relations, and thus as permanent as those relations.

¹⁴ See David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit. Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2004), 211.

For the antinomian, justification led to good works, and they were performed freely. The antinomians viewed justification as a Godward action while sanctification was a lifelong process.¹⁶ There was actually no marked difference between the antinomian lifestyle and that of the other puritans, the antinomians argued, however, that the internal motivation for good works was gratitude, not fear.¹⁷

Among others, the Antinomian's problem was their unclear definition of good works.¹⁸ Eventually, they apparently believed that there was some type of an "inner" law that made Moses' "outer" law unnecessary.¹⁹ Understanding something about antinomianism helps analysis of chapter 20.

Function in Chapter 20: of Christian liberty and liberty of conscience.²⁰ In the first part of the chapter the moral law was described as a curse. Also, they determined that believers were set free from the yoke of the ceremonial law. The next section treated the situation when there were doctrines or commandments that touch faith or worship that were contrary to his Word or beside it. The divines argued that there was no obligation to obey or believe those commands. In the third section, they concluded that this new freedom in Christ was not for pursuing sin. The fourth section concerned civil power and taught that Christian liberty cannot oppose lawful civil or ecclesiastical power. To resist lawful civil or ecclesiastical power, in the name of liberty, was to resist "the ordinance of God."

However, the divines understood the reality of church life—that there were wicked people who held false teachings and practice. Their directions for action were very clear—but not presently a common opinion among evangelicals and even among Presbyterians. When someone asserted opinions or practices contrary to the light of nature, or the known principles of Christianity, (concerning faith, worship, conversation or the power of godliness) such opinions harmed the Church's external peace and those persons may be called to account by both the church as well as civil magistrate.²¹ This teaching, including civil punishment for wicked moral actions, provided justification for the civil war and the king's eventual execution.

¹⁵ Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, comments, 65 n. 74, Knox's: "...evangelical concern for holiness and purity of the church, as evidenced by the place given to discipline as a mark of the church, kept him from an antinomian error."

¹⁶ See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 213.

¹⁷ See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 215.

¹⁸ See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 216.

¹⁹ See Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 79, 217.

²⁰ For background concerning the repressions under Laud, see Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 298 and Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, 75.

²¹ WCF 20.4: "...and, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation), or to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the Church, and by the power or the civil magistrate." For those interested, the *RPCNA Testimony* 20.6 does not delete the last part but says: "the civil magistrate has no authority to pronounce ecclesiastical censures." Thus, the WCF as originally written is the current confessional status of the RPCNA- that "church" discipline may include the civil magistrate.

Function in Chapter 21: of religious worship and the Sabbath Day. The first, second, fifth, and sixth parts of the chapter are famous for its view of God and his worship, but are not essential to analysis of the law's second function.²² However, the third and fourth sections concerned prayer, which was enjoined upon all humans, not just on believers. This teaching clearly presents contemporary challenges for civic life.²³ Likewise, in the seventh and eighth sections, Sunday was called "the Lord's Day" or "the Christian Sabbath." The divines argued that this Sabbath was a creation ordinance and was thus perpetually binding on all men at all times, which also presents contemporary challenges for civic life.²⁴

Function in Chapter 22: on Lawful oaths and vows. The Scots were a nation of oath takers. As a nation they had subscribed to the solemn league and covenant. As such, they stood against the Anabaptist position against public vows.²⁵

Function in Chapter 23: on the Civil Magistrate.²⁶ The Divines began with broad principles relative to civil government. The civil magistrate was ordained under God, "for His own glory", that is, the civil ruler's first task was to promote the glory of the triune God. Then comes their responsibility to promote the common good.²⁷

The magistrate encourages those who are good and punishes evildoers. This teaching strikes at the heart of the issue of the second use. How did the divines understand those who do good in contrast with those who were evildoers? Earlier, the Scots Confession, section 14, taught that God regards works as good as those that are found to be in accord with the first and second tables of the Decalogue.²⁸ The *French Confession*, written by Calvin in 1557 and expanded in 1599, likewise said that civil rulers were responsible to implement the two tables of the law.²⁹

²² WCF 21.1: "The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is good, and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture."

²³ See A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, repr. 1978), 276. This teaching would probably be difficult to reconcile with a two kingdom theology.

²⁴ Hodge, *Confession of Faith*, 281-83 argues that the Sabbath is grounded in part in universal and permanent human needs (ground #4 in footnote #13) and thus remains in full force among all men of all nations, and is grounded as well in God's will as supreme Lord (ground #2). Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 309-10, says that they wrongly did not underline the eternal Sabbath rest.

²⁵ See Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 311. The *RPCNA testimony* at 22.9 rightly argues that it is appropriate for church and nation to covenant to be the Lord's and to serve him. An important question is to determine how such covenanting works out in contemporary society.

²⁶ Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 293-94.

²⁷ WCF 23.1-2. Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 311.

²⁸ See Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 294.

²⁹ See Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 295, The French Confession 23 says that the Decalogue is the basis for civil law: "the ordinances of the law came to an end at the advent of Jesus Christ; but although the ceremonies are no more in use, yet their substance and truth remain in the person of him in whom they are fulfilled. And, moreover, we must seek aid from the law and the prophets for the ruling of our lives, as well as for our confirmation in the promises of the gospel." Article 39: "God wishes to have the world governed by laws and magistrates, so that some restraint may be put upon its disordered appetites." "...so he has put the sword into the hands of magistrates to suppress crimes against the first as well as the second table of the commandments of God."

With these earlier confessional documents, the Confession's teaching makes sense. Evil actions were specifically those not in accord with God's moral law. The divines then solidified this prior teaching with the controversial notion (for today) that the civil magistrate must protect the church.³⁰

The Catechism's following section teaches that the Old Testament Civil Law was not abrogated-but expired. This section is sufficiently difficult to understand and apply that a number of basic interpretative options have been presented.³¹ The question is how to define the word "expired" relative to "abrogated". To aid interpretation, a similar expression could sound like this: "The President has expired. Thus, he can no longer give the Seminary any rules for its life as he could when he was not expired." In contrast is this expression: "The Board of Trustees has determined that even though the President is alive, for reasons of sufficient gravity, all of the rules that he has established up until this time as President have been abrogated; they have been overturned." This unsophisticated example can hopefully demonstrate the practical difference between the law expiring (as a man can expire) and the law being abrogated (as a man's teachings or rulings may be abrogated). Thus, the divines argued that the law is like a man who has expired, and even though he is gone, the "general equity" that he taught, while alive, continues.³²

Function in the Larger Catechism. WLC 98 says that the moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. They provided rules properly to understand the Ten Commandments. Those rules answer the question of how the moral law functions.

Their eight rules (WLC 99) can be summarized: God's perfect law binds all men to complete obedience [rule 1] including the inner man as well as the outer [rule 2] and that the Ten Commandments extend beyond the specific wording of the commands themselves [rules 3-6]. That what is commanded or forbidden to ourselves, [rule 7] "we are bound, according to our places, to endeavor that it may be avoided or performed by others according to the duty of their places." Thus, each adult has responsibilities as individuals, as parents, and as members of society.

III. Application of Second Use of Law in Westminster Standards.

Magistrate to uphold the Moral Law.³³ Background information on the magistrate takes us back nearly one hundred years before the Westminster Confession. John Knox, in *The*

³⁰ WCF 23.2. Letham, *Westminster Assembly*, 312.

³¹ The theonomic interpretation adopts the confession without modification of the passage. Most contemporary Presbyterian denominations either modify the text [some as if it were the original] or delete the section and re-write it [the RPCNA option].

³² This section contains a number of unresolved problems that could be explored at a later time. For example, theonomists argue that the ceremonial law is gone but something remains in the abrogated law. Connected is also discussion of binding case law.

³³ Inherent in this subject is a debated topic that is tangentially related to two kingdom theology. Since I analyzed Two Kingdom Theology a year ago (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAmyBHsS7CE>, accessed March 25, 2015), I will only summarize. The Two Kingdom position is that the laws of the state should be based on natural law and common morality. However, according to the divines, the magistrate upholds the moral law. The Two Kingdom theologian would need to demonstrate that natural law and common morality have the same content as the divine's

Appellation (1558) first used the idea of covenant in the specific context of Scottish political theory.³⁴ According to his analysis, the civil magistrate bore responsibility for the proper observance of the true religion within that magistrate's community.³⁵ Knox referenced King Josiah who made a covenant with the people, and then argued that this type of covenanting was not just for the OT era but was also applicable to the time of the gospel. Knox connected back to Exodus 34 and argued that when gentiles come to Christ, they are then under covenantal requirements.³⁶ His analysis of Psalm 2 in this context was that the admonition to kiss the son in the OT also applied to the time of the Gospel.³⁷ Using the same passage, Knox also countered the argument that it was exclusively the king's responsibility to govern religion, and not that of the magistrates.³⁸

Thus, believers who come to Christ through the preaching of the gospel were to uphold God's law.³⁹ Knox had already put into practice what he wrote in *The Appellation*. He had encouraged

understanding of the moral law as elaborated, for example, in the WLC on the Ten commandments. If they could make such an argument then their opinion on the second use of the law could perhaps square with the confession.

³⁴ Knox in *The Appellation of John Knox* (McGavin edition, 1830), 375-82 argued that he was making a legitimate defense, even though he had been declared a heretic and burned in effigy, to appeal to the temporal magistrate against the "visible church". He argued that he had a right to be protected and defended by the magistrates. Having established his case, Knox argued that the magistrates must answer to God if they fail in their duty, specifically to 382: "promote the glory of God, to provide that your subjects be rightly instructed in the true religion; that they be defended from all oppression and tyranny; that true teachers may be maintained" and that those who oppose godly teaching "may be removed and punished as God's law prescribeth."

³⁵ Knox, *Appellation*, 382-89 cited Romans 13 and argued that magistrates must provide for proper instruction in religion (otherwise starving their subjects) and to oppose corruptions (accusing the bishops of greater wickedness than that of Sodom and Gomorrah). The magistrates' opposition to Roman Catholic wickedness including repressing their tyranny, punishing them, and replacing them with true preachers. If the magistrates fail in their duty, they will then fall under God's judgment. He repeated, 388: "...to repress the tyranny of your bishops, and to defend the innocents professing the truth."

³⁶ Knox, *Appellation*, 386: "Of which histories [he had provided many OT examples] it is evident that the reformation of religion in all points, together with the punishment of false teachers, doth appertain to the power of the civil magistrate. For what God required of them, his justice must require of others having the like charge and authority: what he did approve in them, he cannot but approve in all others, who with like zeal and sincerity, do enterprise to purge the Lord's temple and sanctuary."

³⁷ Knox, *Appellation*, 387: "...when Christ Jesus doth reign and fight in his spiritual kingdom...whereof it is evident that the rulers, magistrates, and judges, now in Christ's kingdom, are no less bound to obedience unto God, than were those under the law."

³⁸ Knox, *Appellation*, 388-89, 389: "For it is no less blasphemy to say, that God hath commanded kings to be obeyed, when they command impiety, than to say, that God by his precept is author and maintainer of all iniquity." When a king commands wickedness, God "hat commanded no obedience, but rather he hath approved, year and greatly rewarded such, as have opponed themselves to their ungodly commandments..." as exemplified by Daniel and his companions. Knox also hinted that it was 390: "the duty of every man in his vocation, but chiefly of the nobility..." "...that God will neither excuse nobility nor people, but the nobility least of all, that obey and follow their kings in manifest iniquity." For more analysis, see R. Gamble, "The Christian and the Tyrant: Beza and Knox on political resistance theory," *WTJ* 1984.

³⁹ In fact, Knox's admonition was not limited to the nobles. At the same time that he published the *Appellation* he produced his *Letter to the commonality of Scotland*. After comparing the Roman Catholic leaders to Turks [as well as to Antichrist], he reminded those without political power that there is a point where all men are equal- all are born in Adam's sin, all can taste of Christ's redemption, and all redeemed are called to deny themselves. Using the same analysis presented in the *Appellation* on Psalm 2, he argued that commoners have an obligation to support the "spiritual tabernacle" the church. In fact, before God no one could allege the excuse that since they were not rulers they had no obligation to reform religion. Knox then went on the offensive- and asserted that they as subjects "may

the Scots nobles as early as 1556 to enter into bands or covenant together for the sake of protecting Protestantism with force of arms against Roman Catholic oppression.⁴⁰ The WCF, following Knox's theology and political application, also insisted that the civil magistrate uphold the moral law.⁴¹

To help us comprehend the Standard's teaching requires acquaintance with the concepts of Christ's essential Kingship and his Mediatorial Kingship. Knox and the divines held their positions because of Christ's rights in his essential kingdom, called the *regnum potentiae* by Samuel Rutherford (a Scottish commissioner to the Assembly). God as Creator has a universal kingdom (*regnum potentiae*) of power as Lord of Hosts or Lord over all aspects of life on this earth. Thus, God's moral law binds all men at all times because of God's essential kingship,⁴² combined with the law of nature which also demonstrates God's lordship,⁴³ and that even the law of nature demonstrates that a due proportion of time should be given by all men to God in worship.⁴⁴

However, God's rights in Christ extend beyond the essential kingship to what is termed the Mediatorial kingship. The Mediatorial kingship teaches that Christ, as the resurrected one, is king over the nations not only in his essential but also in his Mediatorial capacity as the conquering God-man. Specifically, God the Father appointed him to rule over the nations from the time of his resurrection until the end of the world. To be clear, according to the divines, Christ's Mediatorial power was not restricted simply to believers and the church, but that civil rulers were subject to the Messiah and were bound to recognize his revealed will and promote the interests of his kingdom.⁴⁵

In conclusion, the divine's understanding of the duties of the civil magistrate (WCF 23.2), argued that magistrates, "ought especially to maintain piety...." Thus, the magistrate had both the authority and the duty to preserve peace within the church, so "...that the truth of God be kept pure and entire...."⁴⁶

Civil Government as a Moral Being. Inherently connected to the Westminster Confession of Faith's understanding of Christ's kingdoms was a presupposition that is foreign to those of us who are familiar with the United States constitution. The Westminster divines viewed the state as a "moral being," and not merely as a collection of individuals organized under a sovereign

lawfully require of your superiors, be it of your king, be it of your lords...that they provide for you true preachers..." The truly converted should fear God and demand change "and to demand and crave the same of your superiors, which most lawfully ye may do...". Knox, *Letter to the commonality of Scotland* (McGavin edition, 1830), 401-06.

⁴⁰ For elaboration, see M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985), 41-43.

⁴¹ WCF 23.1, the civil magistrate is to be "under him" for his own glory and the public good.

⁴² WCF 19.5.

⁴³ WCF 21.1.

⁴⁴ See WCF 21.7.

⁴⁵ This teaching has been articulated in some contemporary Presbyterian Churches. See the *Testimony* of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, Part I:38, specifically, "nations and associations of men are in their corporate capacity, subject to the law and authority of Christ" as cited by J. G. Vos, *Scottish Covenanters*, 214.

⁴⁶ WCF 23.2 has not been rejected or modified by the *RPCNA testimony*. The magistrate has the *authority* and duty to preserve peace within the church.

government.⁴⁷ The notion of civil government as a moral being flowed out of its Scottish and English historical context.⁴⁸

While it is an interesting topic, the divine's understanding of the relationship between the sovereign and the people, a relationship of contract based upon covenant, is not the issue that needs to be resolved. Debates and discussions on that topic reach back in time to Aristotle, were advanced through the middle ages, and were particularly discussed in the 16th century.⁴⁹

Specifically, the Scottish commonwealth had covenanted, as a nation, to accept Christ as king not only of the church but also of the state. Those 16th and 17th century actions flow smoothly out of the ancient Scottish notion of kingship. The earliest "Scotland" (Kingdom of the Picts), reached back to 760 and was politically structured along the line of clans or families.⁵⁰ Scotland was politically structured such that there were seven great chiefs, each one a King in his own right, who was seated beside and under a high King. As Scotland progressed historically, her political and social history was not the same as that of England. Scottish feudalism was a tribalism or tribo-feudalism, and Scottish clans did not develop an English class system.⁵¹

The tribo-feudal phenomenon was not limited to the Scottish highlands but was legally incorporated throughout the entire nation.⁵² Thus, through the early medieval period there was no Scottish analogy to the English Parliament. However, the different political development between Scotland and England erupted during the struggle for kingship between the Bruces and Balliols in the 14th century, a dispute adjudicated by the English King Edward.⁵³

⁴⁷ See Robert Emery, "Church and State in the Early Republic," *Journal of Law & Religion*, 490.

⁴⁸ For example, Knox argued that both England and Scotland were called to keep God's covenant by suppressing the mass. See Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, 42.

⁴⁹ The social contract proper was found in Aquinas, John of Paris, William of Ockham, Marsiglio of Padua and Nicholas of Cusa. When the king was a tyrant, then he need not be obeyed. He had broken his *pactum* with the people. This provides some historical background to Samuel Rutherford's notion of the relationship between the sovereign and the people. For more information, see R. Gamble, "The Christian and the Tyrant. Beza and Knox on Political Resistance theory" *WTJ*, 1984.

⁵⁰ Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, "The Robes of the Feudal Baronage of Scotland," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 79, (1945), 119.

⁵¹ See I. F. Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, (Oliver & Boyd, 1930) 502, 516 as cited by Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, *The Tartans of the Clans and Families of Scotland*, (Johnston & Bacon, 1945, 8th edition 1971), 15–16, 25, 37, 39, 41. See also Learney, "The Robes", 121.

⁵² Scotland grew along these lines: There was a king in Northumbria and at Bamburgh in Bernicia there were High Reeves [perhaps a Scots word equivalent to high steward], a position lower than an earl. The *Annals of Ulster* called them king of the north Saxons. The Scots King Malcolm, in 973, assumed the title King of the Cumbrians, a claim that included the area of Strathclyde. However, Owen the Bald of Strathclyde gradually subdued by the Scots (between 1018-34), but then Duncan mac Crinan (Scottish King 1034-40) merged Strathclyde fully into Scotland. King Malcom in 1054 ruled as king in Scotland ostensibly under the power of the earl of Northumbria, and was sometimes called son of the King of the Cumbrians. In 1066 with the Norman invasion, England began its own unique history. Yet, there were Norman influences in Scotland as well.

⁵³ For example, both the Bruce and Balliol families both descended from female lines of the royal house (a Pictish aspect) and were granted candidacy. The Bruce argued his case along the lines of Tanistry while John of Balliol argued along primogeniture. The English King argued for primogeniture, thus favoring Balliol. For more information, see George Neilson, "Bruce versus Balliol, 1291-92," *The Scottish Historical Review* Vol. 16, Num. 61 (1919), 1-14 who narrated the documentary evidence and history of analysis.

The differences between the two nations became more apparent in the 1430's after the Scottish King James I returned from a decade long captivity in England.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he mandated no sudden changes in Scottish society or law.

In fact, over a century later, in 1556, the Scottish Parliament made clear that the title "King of Scotland" was a personal high king and not the territorial king of Scotland.⁵⁵ In connection, the Scots did not have anything like the English "house of commons" until after the Reformation.⁵⁶

Thus, the Scottish notion of the place of the king in their society is historically identifiable. In summary, the first phase, dated from 760 to 1430 had a high king ruling with seven (or more) great Earls (or sub-Kings). Then legal and social changes began in 1430 which lasted until the Reformation. The period from the Reformation to the civil war in 1640 is also identifiable,⁵⁷ which moved eventually to the current situation.

⁵⁴ Learney, "The Robes", 121.

⁵⁵ Learney, "The Robes", 131-32.

⁵⁶ Learney, "The Robes", 121, 131, 135. By a statute dated 20th December 1567 Scotland created the personal peerage *Barones Majores*, later denominated Lords of Parliament, constituted as a distinct Estit to replace the clergy (who as Archbishops sat as Earls). The Peerage had been the Order of Earls (in origin the provincial kings) who sat in Parliament "on the benches of the Throne" and the Baronage who sat "on the steps of the throne". In 1585 legislation was begun which led to Freeholders, other than Barons, being elected Shire Commissioners, and obtaining seats in Parliament within what continued to be entitled the "Estate of the Baronage." That same year's "Statute of Apparells" mandated that each estate have appropriate attire. Since 1455, the Earl's parliamentary robes were different from those of the Barons (major and minor barons wore the same), and the new Estate (elected Freeholders) was to have robes that differentiated them from the higher orders.

⁵⁷ James VI of Scotland/James I of England and Ireland, legally abolished tanistry after 1603.

The Gust of Gratitude and the Third Use of the Law

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Obligatory Gratitude

Thank you. These two profound words never say enough. We often struggle to express our gratitude for the opportunities we cherish, the gifts we receive, and the ones we love. Part of the problem is that we typically view gratitude as merely an obligatory gesture.

As a boy, I remember how frustrated I became when my parents required that I write a “thank you” card to every person who gave me a gift. While I ultimately complied with their demand, my gestures of gratitude were far from sincere. Outwardly, I exclaimed to my aunt, for example, “Thank you for my Tonka truck.” Inwardly, however, the fumes of ingratitude would burn as I was instructed to write what seemed to me a dumb old card. My attitude towards my parents’ request revealed a spirit of thanklessness. Even worse, it exposed my true love. I cared more about my silly truck than I did about my sweet aunt. I loved the gift more than the giver.

Real gratitude is never satisfied with petty expressions of gratefulness. Thanksgiving occurs not when the box of the law is checked but when the requirement of the law fuels a relish of gratitude. Overtime, my parents’ insistence on writing thank you cards not only exposed my ungratefulness but also taught me the value of cultivating an attitude of thanksgiving. As a result, a strange thing occurred. I began to derive more pleasure in expressing my gratitude for the person who gave the gift than I found in the gift itself. The process of heeding my parents’ demand became a means that grew my affection for my aunt, and, as a result, strengthened my relationship with her.

As Christians, we must not settle for petty gestures of gratitude. It is not enough to place a “thank you” card on top of our justification and think that we have settled the demand of the law. The relish of gratitude is experienced when the requirements of the law drive us towards godliness, and as a result, into a sweeter fellowship with God. Through the gust of gratitude we savor the sweetness of God’s grace.

The purpose of this article is to consider the so-called “third use of the law.” In particular, we will examine how the law of God guides us in gratitude and, even more, how gratitude guides us in godliness.

What Is the Third Use of the Law?

The law has three basic tasks. It serves as a mirror, a mandate, and a map. As a mirror, the law exposes our sin and drives us to Christ, who perfectly obeyed the law and bore its punishment (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19–24). As a mandate, the law is binding on all people and functions as a restraining influence on society (Rom. 1:20; 2:14–15). As a map, the law serves as a guide for Christian living. It reveals that happiness is paved on the pathway of obedience. As the Psalmist states, “Blessed are those . . . who walk in the law of the LORD” (Ps. 119:1).

As a map for Christian living, the so-called “third use of the law” (*tertius usus legis*) reminds us that the precepts of God are fundamentally good, because they reflect and reveal his character (Rom. 7:12). The logic is straightforward. The law is good because God is good. Conversely, to disparage the law is to disparage God. As God is to be loved, so is his law (Ps. 119:97).

For those who trust in Christ alone by faith alone for their salvation, and who are thus no longer hounded by the law’s demands for absolute perfection, the law becomes a cherished, not to mention divinely inspired, manual for knowing God. It instructs believers in God’s ways as well as orders their steps. This is what our Reformed forebears would sometimes call the didactic or normative use of the law (*usus didacticus sive normativus*).

Before we consider the biblical warrant for the third use of the law, we should listen to how previous Reformed theologians and confessions understood the positive role of the law in the Christian life.

How Has the Third Use of the Law Been Understood?

While many theologians and pastors expounded on what is now known as the third use of the law before John Calvin, he remains a good entry point into this discussion. His well-known comments in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* crystalized the doctrine for future generations. Calvin states, “The third and principal use (*tertius usus*), which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns.”¹

For Calvin, the law is the “best instrument” (*optimum organum*) for knowing God’s will. Its primary purpose is to instruct Christians in how we should “press on” (*instare*) towards righteousness. Like eager servants, we must daily and cheerfully conform ourselves to the Master’s plans. As a result, Calvin urges us to meditate frequently on the law in order to be “aroused to obedience, strengthened in [God’s will], and be drawn back from the slippery

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford L. Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 2.7.12; idem, *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, eds. Wilhelm Baum, Edward Cunitz, and Edward Reuss (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1864), 2:261.

path of transgression.”² As a Master’s house rules are binding on his servants, so God’s law is normative for his people.

Following Calvin, the *Heidelberg Catechism* traces the Christian life along the lines of guilt, grace, and gratitude. In particular, the second question and answer probes what we must know to live and die in the joy provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ. It suggests that three grand truths must be comprehended and embraced: “First, how great my sins and misery are; second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance” (Q&A 2).

Commenting on this section of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Zacharias Ursinus makes four observations about the relationship of the law and gratitude. First, gratitude is the goal of our deliverance. Second, “true gratitude” derives not from our own distorted notions of thanksgiving but from the teaching of God’s word. Third, whatever good works we perform towards God or our neighbors are not meritorious but are “a declaration of our thankfulness.” A life of gratitude to God is an expression of a life we know is undeserved. Fourth, the law instructs us in how we might grow in our ability to please God by increasing our capacity to express our gratitude to him for delivering us from sin. Ursinus argues that in the law, gratitude is “taught particularly, because it distinctly declares . . . what manner of obedience is pleasing to God.”³ The overall point of Ursinus and the *Heidelberg Catechism* should not be missed: God has given us his law in order to guide us in gratitude.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* focuses on how the law is used in the performance of good works. The confession defines good works as that which is done “in obedience to God’s commandments.” These Spirit-wrought works are not the cause of our salvation but the necessary result of it. They spring from a “true and living faith” (WCF 16.2). While we are justified *sola fide*, the faith that saves is never alone but is always accompanied by spiritual life and loving obedience. In its chapter on the law, the confession outlines no less than four ways in which the law facilitates good works (WCF 19.6). First, when we trust in Christ, and are freed from the demands of the covenant of works, the law becomes a “rule of life” that informs us of God’s will and directs us in how we should walk in a manner that honors him. Second, the law shows us our continual need of the gospel by revealing the pollution of our sin and the perfection of Christ. Third, the law helps restrain the sinful urgings and ungodly behavior of the regenerate by reminding us of the dreadful consequences of sin. Fourth, the law reminds Christians of the blessing of obedience. The Westminster divines, therefore, argue that one of the primary purposes of the law is to promote good works in the life of the Christian and to provoke them to “more thankfulness” (WLC 97).

² Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.7.12 (CO, 2:261–262).

³ Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 22.

Is the Third Use of the Law Biblical?

Much more could be said about the historical development of the third use of the law. However, one point has already emerged as an underlying theme: the law of God guides Christians in a life of gratitude. As we move from the annals of history and turn to the pages of Scripture, we see this same theme emphasized. I would argue that the Bible's insistence on gratitude is evidence of the biblical warrant for the doctrine of the third use of the law. This can be gleaned from two rudimentary arguments: one from ingratitude and the other from gratitude.

Stated negatively, the third use of the law is confirmed in the Bible's condemnation of ingratitude. Isaiah 38:18 states, for example, "For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness." According to King Hezekiah, Sheol is devoid of thankfulness, praise, and hope. Ingratitude epitomizes those under the judgment of God. In other words, if we can allow for a redemptive-historical anachronism, hell is a place of pure selfishness. In a similar fashion, the Apostle Paul argues that unbelief is characterized by ingratitude towards God, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Furthermore, if the law wasn't binding on all people, including believers, why else would the Psalmist weep over the flagrant disregard of God's law in society? He cries, "My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law" (Ps. 119:135-136). Ingratitude typifies life without God. It is a mark of unbelief. By exposing the unbelieving nature of ingratitude, however, these biblical texts also affirm the requirement of gratitude.

Stated positively, the doctrine of the third use of the law is confirmed by the Bible's commendation of gratitude. By means of both precept and example, the Bible gives hundreds of reasons why the law is both good and useful for guiding us in gratitude. By way of example, in Luke 17:16, we learn that only one of the ten lepers whom Jesus heals returns to Christ, praises God, falls at Jesus's feet, and thanks him for his healing mercy. The leper's thankfulness drove him to the feet of Jesus. This was not a petty gesture of gratitude. His thankfulness motivated him to a deeper and sweeter fellowship with the Savior. By way of precept, Isaiah 12:1-2 states, "You will say in that day, I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." Biblical gratitude understands that we deserve God's just judgment but instead we enjoy his lavish grace. As a result, the cultivation of gratitude to God for his saving mercies is actually a means of driving us into a deeper love and affection for the God of our salvation.

How Is Gratitude To Be Expressed?

The goal of gratitude is not simply the articulation of thanks but the enjoyment of the one for whom gratitude is expressed. In the words of the Puritan William Ames, “Thanksgiving is thus a secondary end (*secundarius finis*).”⁴ The chief end of gratitude is honoring God.

Ames identifies three key ingredients in thanksgiving. He states, “The right kind of thanksgiving requires, first, a knowledge of God’s blessing; second, an applying them to ourselves through faith and hope; third, a true esteem (*iusta æstimatio*) of them with fitting gratitude (*affectu congruente*).”⁵ God-honoring thanksgiving therefore pushes beyond merely articulating formulaic expressions of appreciation to cultivating utmost reverence and genuine affection for God. Thanksgiving that stops short of “true esteem” and “fitting gratitude” is nothing more than an empty gesture. Ames explains, “The proper end of thanksgiving (*finis proprius gratiarum*) is to honor God (*honorem Deo*) for all the things we have received, Ps. 50:14. For if we simply accept the good things we have received, resting in them or glorying in ourselves . . . thanksgiving is spoiled.”⁶ Thanksgiving does not simply acknowledge God; it delights in God.

The experience of exulting in God for who he is and what he gives might be called the gust of gratitude—that is, the act of savoring what you appreciate. In this gust of gratitude, we move past hallow sentimentality to discover that the process of giving thanks is actually a means of not only enjoying what was given but also cherishing even more the one who gave the gift. As John Owen states, “In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. . . . In this gust we taste by experience that God is gracious and that the love of Christ is better than wine.”⁷ In gratitude, we hone our spiritual taste buds and develop an appetite for God. We taste and see that he is good (Ps. 34:8).

How Does the Law Guide Us in Gratitude?

The Bible gives a myriad of examples of how the law guides us in gratitude. Here are just ten ways that the law calls us to give thanks to God.

⁴ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John D. Eusden (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 266; idem, *Medulla theologica* (Amsterdam, 1634), 2.9.91. Ames sees thanksgiving as a form of prayer but makes a distinction between “thanksgiving” (*gratiarum*) and “petition” (*petitione*). He states, “Thanksgiving is more perfect in itself and more excellent than petition, for in petition our good is often sought but in thanksgiving only God’s honor” (2.9.93).

⁵ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 266; idem, *Medulla theologica*, 2.9.89.

⁶ Ames, *Marrow of Theology*, 266; idem, *Medulla theologica*, 2.9.90.

⁷ John Owen, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded* (1681), in *The Works of John Owen*, 24 vols., ed. William H. Goold (London: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850), 7:270–271; cf. John W. Tweeddale, “Living on Things Above: John Owen on Spiritual Mindedness,” *The Beauty and Glory of Christian Living*, ed. Joel R. Beeke (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

First, we are to give thanks in all of life. Since God is Creator, we should be grateful for all that he has made, including all people (1 Tim. 2:1; 4:4). We are to boast in God for his never-ending provisions (Ps. 44:8). This involves thanking him for our daily bread and recounting to one another his works (Matt. 15:36; Pss. 52:9; 79:13). God's will is that we are to give thanks to him always, in every circumstance (Eph. 5:4, 20; 1 Thess. 5:18).

Second, we are to give thanks in worship. When the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Tabernacle, David appointed a time of thanksgiving be made to God (1 Chron. 16:8–10). Time and again, we are beckoned to join the throng of God's people in order to "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4). Even in our darkest and most vulnerable moments, we must also learn to express, however faintly, gratitude to God in private worship. As Jonah cried in the belly of the great fish, "with the voice of thanksgiving, I will sacrifice to you . . . [for] salvation belongs to the Lord." (Jon. 2:9).

Third, we are to give thanks for God's word. David declares, "I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for . . . you have exalted above all things your name and your word" (Ps. 138:2). When we receive the word of God with the open arms of gratitude, we even provide occasion for others to give thanks to God for his sovereign work of grace in us. As Paul states, "We give thanks to God always for all of you . . . For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess. 1:3–4; cf. 2:13).

Fourth, we are to give thanks for God's character. The Bible is replete with examples. We are to thank him for his righteousness (Pss. 7:17; 118:19); his wonderful deeds (Pss. 9:1; 26:7; 75:1); his holiness (Pss. 30:4; 97:12; 122:4; 140:13); his salvation (Ps. 118:21; Jon. 2:9); his mercy (Isa. 12:1; 51:3); his grace (Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13); and his steadfast love (1 Chr. 16:34, 41; 2 Chr. 5:13; 7:3; Ez. 3:11; Ps. 106:1; 107; 118:1, 29; 136; Jer. 33:11). A grateful heart takes time to relish the manifold flavors of the character of God (Ps. 118:29).

Fifth, we are to give thanks to God for answered prayer. When Daniel looks for divine aid to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he states, "To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter" (Dan. 2:23). We are to bring our supplications before God, thanking him for hearing and answering our prayers (Phil. 4:6).

Sixth, we are to give thanks for God's people. Paul opens his epistle to the Romans with a thanksgiving greeting, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world" (Rom. 1:8). Far from a formulaic expression or generic platitude, at the end of the letter, he identifies the names of the people he is grateful for (cf. Rom. 16:3ff).

Seventh, we are to give thanks for God's grace in salvation. Notice Paul's logic in his personal statement of faith: "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord .

.. though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy . . . and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am foremost” (1 Tim. 1:12-15). For Paul, gratitude and confession go hand-in-hand. He confesses Christ, because he is grateful for the salvation he has undeservedly received. But even more, his gratitude then becomes a megaphone to broadcast his Christological creed.

Eighth, we are to give thanks for victory over sin. After struggling with an internal battle between obedience and disobedience, Paul exclaims, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 7:24–8:1). The elation of Romans 8 comes after the anguish of Romans 7. Gratitude propels us out of our despair and into the arms of his Savior, in whom we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). “Thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

Ninth, we are to give thanks for spiritual growth. Coming out of a life of paganism and facing a life of persecution, the Thessalonian church grew in faith, hope, and love. Their spiritual progress was the occasion of Paul’s praise: “We ought always to give thanks to God for your brothers, as is right because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing” (2 Thess. 1:3).

Tenth, we are to give thanks for eternal life. Paul tells the Colossian church, I give “thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). In heaven, we will join the host of heaven in everlasting thanksgiving (Rev. 4:9; 7:12; 11:17).

The Gust of Gratitude

Giving thanks to God is a matter of both obedience and love. We cannot love God without his law, and we cannot obey God’s law without love. As Jesus told his disciples, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15). Applied to the subject of gratitude, one of the reasons we comply with God’s commands to give him thanks is because through these expressions of gratitude we learn to love him more. The process of fulfilling the Bible’s mandate to give thanks to God not only breaks up the hard soil of our own selfishness and ingratitude but also cultivates a greater affection for God. We cannot stop at gratitude and expect to fulfill the law’s demands. Gratitude is only the means not the end. For Christians, the law is the track that leads us to our final destination. The law guides us in gratitude; gratitude guides us in godliness; and godliness guides us into sweeter fellowship with God—such is the gust of gratitude.

The Heart of the Matter: Avoiding Legalism

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Concluding this issue's discussion of the three uses of the law, we will now turn to the fourth use—the *misuse* of the law, otherwise known as legalism. We begin by turning to Jesus' condemnation of the premier legalists of His day: the Pharisees. Matthew 23:1-36 provides an important look at legalism, what it is, how we can define it, and how we can avoid it.

Nowhere else in the New Testament does our Savior speak with such fire and passion as he does when condemning the legalism of the Pharisees. This is the same Savior who described himself as being gentle and lowly in heart, the same Savior who would not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax, the same Christ who dealt gently with those of weak faith, and tenderly called little children into the kingdom of heaven. But now his words are aflame with righteous anger. He calls the Pharisees hypocrites, sons of hell, blind fools, and a brood of vipers. The English translation of these verses contains eleven exclamation points. By the tone of his voice and the measure of his words, we can rightly conclude that there are few things more odious to our Savior than the legalistic misuse of His own holy law.

The Bible never uses the word "legalism," nor does it give us a tidy definition. However, we see clear examples of it, such as the Pharisees, whom Jesus condemns here, and the Judaizers, whom Paul rebukes in the book of Galatians. Legalism may be one of those things that is hard to define, but you know it when you see it. The Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul certainly knew it when they saw it, but, for those of us with less discernment, it is useful to look at such examples of legalism and build a Biblical, working definition. So, let me propose this definition of legalism:

Legalism is a contortion of the true gospel, whereby a person tries to earn or maintain his salvation, or appear righteous in the eyes of men, by keeping, and often adding to, the law of God.

This may not be a perfect definition, but we will see its main elements born out from Scripture. However, our purpose is not just to define legalism, and talk about it abstractly. Through defining it, our purpose is to examine ourselves for it, and flee from it, and to reaffirm in our lives that our salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That alone is the true gospel.

Our definition begins by saying that "Legalism is a *contortion* of the true gospel." The true gospel is that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is the singular, decisive principle. Any contortion of the gospel will either add to, or diminish, the central, singular principle of faith in Jesus Christ. Legalism does this very thing. It begins either with

the premise that our obedience is good enough to gain favor with God, or that faith needs to be supplemented by our own good works in order for us to be saved. In either case, it does not begin with faith alone.

In Jesus' long condemnation of the Pharisees and their legalism, Matthew 23:23 stands out as the heart of the matter. Here, Jesus identifies the central principles of the law, the same law that the Pharisees thought they were keeping. Had they read the law rightly, they would have understood that *faith* is the weightiest priority. Now when Jesus identifies justice, mercy and faith as the weighty matters of the law, he is not saying that *works* of justice and mercy, along with faith, are what saves a person. Justice and mercy are the companions of faith, but by faith we are saved. In a similar way, Paul grouped together hope and love along with faith in 1 Corinthians 13, even saying that love is the greatest of these. But when the apostle wrote Ephesians 2, he did not say "By grace you have been saved through love." He said "through faith." His point in 1 Corinthians 13 is that hope, and particularly love, are found along with true faith. In the same way, Jesus is saying that justice and mercy are the companions of faith, but faith is still the singular, decisive principle of our salvation. This is what the Pharisees lacked – faith alone in Christ alone as the true and only grounds of their hope of salvation. This lack of faith was at the heart of their legalism. They thought their obedience was sufficient, or that faith could never stand alone without their good works added to it. John Piper wrote that "the essence of legalism is when faith is not the engine of obedience." That is a fair summary of the legalism that Jesus condemns here in Matthew 23. It does not begin with faith alone.

Now in one sense, the Pharisees are something of a grotesque caricature of what legalism can become. Most legalists are not so obvious, and most legalism is much more subtle. I say most, because it does still exist in blatant form today. Years ago I was doing door to door evangelism with a fellow seminary student, and we happened to knock on the door of a Mormon Bishop. His wife, a very pleasant woman, invited us in, and in the ensuing conversation we asked her how she thought a person could be saved. She got a thoughtful, distant look on her face and finally said, "I guess by keeping the 10 Commandments." That is blatant legalism. Other blatant forms of legalism include modern Judaism, which traces its roots to the Pharisees, and Roman Catholicism, which still contends that our justification before God depends on faith and good works together. There are more examples of the blatant variety, but for the most part, legalism has gone underground. It does not exist so much in theological formulations or church creeds. Legalism today is more subtle and practical, rather than theological or confessional. Hardly anyone would come right out and say, "We are saved by our good works," because that would go directly against the clear teaching of Scripture. Instead, the practical legalism of today is something only faintly detected in subtle accents placed on the Christian faith. You may hear it when people talk more about what we should do, rather than what Christ has done. You may hear it in evangelism that exhorts people to change their ways rather than come to Christ. You might hear it in preaching that emphasizes moral values over faith and repentance. You may see it in cliques of Christians who define themselves by what they do or do not do, rather than what they believe. In most cases, these are people who will proclaim that salvation is all of grace, but, in practical terms, they try to add some human effort, some human merit, or some behavioral qualification into the equation.

Again, this is not a well defined group in the Christian world. It is a subtle emphasis, and, truth be told, it is a common struggle. Everyone, in some way, struggles with the temptation of practical legalism. We struggle with it because we sometimes fail truly to appreciate the real depth and fullness of God's grace in Christ. The righteousness of Christ alone covers us completely, and the grace of God toward us abounds in full measure through faith in Christ alone. However, the pride left within us will sometimes lead us to doubt whether this is enough. The old nature still loves to take credit where credit is not due. You may hear this little whisper at times in your own mind: "You have to do *something* to make yourself stand out in God's eyes. You have to do *something* to make yourself a little more salvation-worthy than all those horrible sinners around you." You may never say these kinds of things, but you might catch yourself thinking this way sometimes. If you do, the antidote to practical legalism is to remember that salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is a *full and free* salvation. There is nothing that can be added, and the glory belongs to God alone. We must return again and again to this central truth, and if we do, we will be on solid ground to resist the practical legalism that would otherwise so easily ensnare us.

Now, let us turn to examine another kind of legalism. In our definition we said, "Legalism is a contortion of the true gospel whereby a person tries to earn *or maintain* his salvation ... by keeping the law of God." Some would freely say, and truly believe, that salvation is all of grace and never can be earned, but still live as though it is up to us to keep ourselves from falling out of grace by our own obedience. In other words, salvation is by grace, but perseverance is by works.

Before going further, we have to be clear that obedience to God's law in the Christian life should naturally flow from true faith. We know that the moral law of God is not a means of salvation, but it is a guide to covenant life. We obey from the heart, out of thanksgiving, and ought to be always growing in our obedience. Paul says in Ephesians 2 that we are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Good works are God's will for the Christian life. So, obeying the law out of faith is not legalism.

I would also add that scrupulous attention to the detail of God's law is not legalism. Some think that legalism is when Christians try too hard to be obedient, and the solution is to not try so hard. "Just love Jesus," says the antinomian, but Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We are to *strive* in our obedience. Jesus said something noteworthy regarding this in Matt 23:23, 24 (read). He said, "These you should have done" (faith, mercy, justice), "*without leaving the others undone,*" (the tithe of mint, cummin, and anise). Putting the point in terms of verse 24, they strained out a gnat and swallowed a camel, but swallowing gnats is no virtue either. In other words, Jesus was saying that they got the details right in some respects, but details were all they had. So it is not their scrupulosity that Jesus was condemning. Faith, mercy, and justice are the heart of the matter, but the tithe of mint, cummin, and anise is not unimportant. There are the weightier matters of the law, but that does not mean we can willfully ignore the details. The point is this: our obedience must begin with faith and be motivated by love. If it is, we ought to be scrupulous. If it is not, then the details do not matter.

The point is that obedience goes with the Christian life, even a growing, scrupulous obedience. This is not legalism. But we have to recognize humbly that our obedience is not what keeps us in God's favor. That idea *is* legalism. We saw from Ephesians 2 that God Himself is the author of our good works. We cannot take pride in, or find personal merit in, any obedience that we might render to the Lord. As we serve the Lord and seek to obey Him, it is He who is working His will within us, and it is He who is keeping us in the pathway of life. 1 Peter 1:5 says that we are "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation." We are kept by God, not sustained by our own obedience.

Again, the Pharisees are an obvious example of this kind of legalism. Most believers would not outright say they are saved by grace but sustained by their own good works. Most would not say that, but we are weak enough that the thought might cross our minds. Have you ever caught yourself thinking of your sanctification as a zero-sum game, in which a bad deed negates a good one, or a good deed makes up for a bad one, and you are still in the faith as long as your good deed column is just a little longer? This is legalism. We need to remember that obedience is important, but also that it is God's work within us. Obedience can *confirm* the genuineness of our faith, but it is not our good works that keep us in God's favor. If we find the fruit of obedience growing in our lives, we should simply and humbly thank the Lord for His work within us, and give Him all the glory.

Thus far we have looked at two different brands of legalism. The first we might call "justification legalism," because it tries to combine faith and works as the *ground* of our salvation. The second we might call "sanctification legalism," because this legalism tries to *maintain* God's grace through obedience. What we conclude is that our obedience neither saves us nor sustains us in God's eyes. Instead, our obedience to the law in the life of faith is God's work in us, confirming that we are His, and confirming that His gift of faith to us is genuine. All the glory belongs to Him.

There is yet a third kind of legalism, or rather a third motive for it, and that is to appear righteous in the eyes of others. In Matthew 23, Jesus identified this as a motive of the Pharisees – they wanted to "outwardly appear righteous before men." You see, some legalism does not even consciously take God into account. It is not related to salvation or sanctification, but rather, it is a purely prideful attempt to *look like* you are keeping the law, for the sake of your reputation, or to gain favor with some people by appearing more righteous than others. This is perhaps the lowest of all the motives that legalism can have – to take God's perfect law that reveals His righteous character, and just pretend as though you are keeping it for the sake of earthly appearances.

Again, the Pharisees are something of a grotesque caricature of how far this legalism can go, but it is a temptation that is alive and well. As Christians, we live in community with each other. We worship together, have fellowship in many contexts, and thus we live out our Christian lives in the view of each other, at least to some degree. We value the opinions that people have of us as Christians, and that is only natural, but it can become a subtle influence on our motives for obedience. For instance, have you ever kept the Lord's Day in a certain way, only because of the people who were with you? Or maybe rendered some service to the church, mainly because of the people who would see you? Or perhaps attended a church gathering, only because you did

not want your absence to be conspicuous? If we are honest, we will all have to admit that we have done such things. This does not mean that our faith is a gross hypocrisy, but what it does mean is that we need to be careful to always examine our motives for obedience. We need to obey the Lord from the heart, in thanksgiving, because we love Christ. We should, of course, value the opinions of our brothers in Christ, but if it is the opinions of men that begin to move our obedience, we begin to flirt with legalism.

This is one of the main points in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6, Jesus talks about good works, prayer, and fasting – three very visible elements of our obedience. His point in every case is that we should make these *invisible* – not doing these things in the sight of others, or for the sake of their opinion. When you do a good deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. When you pray, go into your room, and pray in secret. When you fast, wash your face and anoint your head, so that you do not appear to be fasting. In every case, Jesus is telling us to render our obedience to God alone, and not for the sake of earthly appearances. Again, we need to obey the Lord from the heart, in thanksgiving, because we love Christ. We need to examine ourselves often for this motive, because anything less flirts with legalism.

There is one last element of our definition of legalism that we have to consider:

Legalism is a contortion of the true gospel, whereby a person tries to earn or maintain his salvation, or appear righteous in the eyes of men, by keeping, *and often adding to*, the law of God.

This element of legalism is also exposed by Christ in Matthew 23. The Pharisees had many extra-biblical rules about taking oaths. For instance, they said if you swear by the temple you are under no obligation, but if you swear by the *gold* of the temple you are obligated to keep your oath. This is obviously a foolish and contrived rule, especially in comparison to the plain and powerful teaching of Jesus, who said, “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’.” We are not to swear oaths as a pretense, or contrive complicated rules to define truth and falsehood. The teaching of Christ is lucid and simple – just be a man of your word and honest in all that you say. In contrast, the Pharisees provide an example of what legalism tends to do: it takes the clear and powerful law of God and adds these contrivances, these petty attachments and human accessories, as if the law of God is not clear enough or complete enough on its own. This was the legacy of the Pharisees. Their many rules were further developed and eventually codified into the Talmud – an encyclopedic addition to the law of God, which still defines Judaism today.

Paul dealt with another strain of such legalism in the book of Colossians. There were some who wanted to subject themselves and others to extra-biblical regulations, and make these regulations a standard of Christian behavior. “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” is how Paul characterized their rules. These were not Judaizers campaigning for the kosher laws. Rather, they were gentile converts who brought in their own rules for the Christian life, and essentially added to the law of God. Paul writes in Colossians 2:23 that “these things have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion and false humility...but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.” This is an apt description of the additions to the law that legalism makes. There is an *appearance* of wisdom – again, it is about appearances. It is *self-imposed* religion, rather than coming from the Word of God. And there is a *false* humility involved. Paul sums up the case by

saying that such rules are of “no value,” but we know such additions to the law are worse than meaningless. Scripture pronounces a curse on anyone who adds to, or takes away from, God’s law (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19).

Legalistic additions to God’s law were an obvious challenge to the early church, but once again, legalism has taken more subtle forms today. We live in a more permissive atmosphere, where perhaps the greater challenge is the misuse of Christian liberty, rather than legalistic additions. The prevailing “spirit of the age” will often dictate the changing tendency either to add to God’s law or to subtract from it. We seem to live in times of subtraction. Christian liberty is often used as a cloak for vice, and the term “legalist” is often misapplied to any scrupulous believer.

Still, the basic legalistic temptation to add to God’s law is not something that we have outgrown. It is usually found in those debates over “doubtful things,” as Paul calls them, in Romans 14. Paul was referring to matters of conscience, over which Christians may disagree, about the propriety of eating this or drinking that, or observing special occasions. His point is that when it comes to these “doubtful things” we should bear with one another in love. We should be careful not to give offense, or to take offense, in these matters, but always make sure that we live with a clear conscience before the Lord. Note well, here, that there is a Biblical category called “doubtful things.” The Apostle Paul, who could have commanded one thing or another, and could have ended the debate over these “doubtful things” – did not. Instead, he coined the term “doubtful things,” he left it at that, and urged us to deal kindly and patiently with one another’s consciences.

To the legalist, there are no “doubtful things.” Everything is cut and dried – what a Christian should eat, drink, wear, and do, down to the last detail. Of course, the Bible gives us some clear direction on many of these points of behavior, but the legalist has an unwritten rule to fill in the gaps where the Bible is silent. Paul gives us the warning not to do this – to not judge each other on doubtful things, or make up rules that bind people’s consciences. There is a category of doubtful things – a Biblical category – and it is not our place to “solve” these matters by making up our own rules, adding to God’s law, to create new norms of Christian conduct. It is our place to be patient with one another in these matters, not cause others to stumble, and to live with a clear conscience before the Lord. Besides, legalism never removes the doubt from doubtful things. Adding to God’s law never brings peace and agreement. It only stirs up conflict even more. When we have our unwritten codes of conduct that go beyond the word of God, we have become practical legalists. This type of legalism is not all that hard to spot. Without any Scriptural basis for their rules, legalists all lean on each other, and all together on nothing, often making an extra-biblical rule the most prized and visible point of their fellowship. It is a sad thing to see believers hold each other at arm’s length over doubtful things, when we need to spend what time and energy we have on edifying one another.

We have gone through and explicated our definition of legalism, which is this:

Legalism is a contortion of the true gospel, whereby a person tries to earn or maintain his salvation, or appear righteous in the eyes of men, by keeping, and often adding to, the law of God.

If this is a fair and Biblical definition, then the antidote against it is also clear. In conclusion, let me suggest three simple points for guarding our hearts against legalism:

1. Always return to the power and purity of the true gospel, which is “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph 2:8, 9). Return to this point again and again in your thoughts, prayers, and conversation. Never loose sight of it!
2. Always examine your motives for obedience. Whatever obedience you render to Christ, accompany it with the prayer that He alone would be glorified in it. Take particular care for secret obedience – the kind in which your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing.
3. Remember that “the law of the Lord is perfect” (Ps 19:7), and it does not need our subtle additions. When it comes to “doubtful things,” take particular care to show patience and love to others who have a different conscience.