

The Law and the Gospel

I. A proper understanding of the inseparable relationship between the Law and the Gospel is vital for the Christian.

Are believers freed from the law since they are under grace?
Is the law binding on believers?
What parts of the law are we still to obey?

Charles Spurgeon:

"There is no point of biblical interpretation and application where men make greater mistakes than the relationship which exists between the Law and the Gospel... some put Law instead of Gospel, some modify the Law and the Gospel and therefore preach neither Law nor gospel.

To see the glory of the whole would be a means to calm the conscience in times of mental and spiritual trouble. You see, a troubled conscience cannot be properly quieted unless the Gospel is rightly distinguished from the Law; on the other hand, there will be no troubled conscience to be quieted without the Law."

II. Law

A. The moral law has been with mankind from the very beginning and is still in effect for us

1. The law can be categorized and distinguished into moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law. The moral law continues to be upheld and is binding on believers in the New Covenant while civil and ceremonial laws have been abrogated.

2. The moral law existed prior to the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. The law is written on the hearts of all men.

(Romans 2:12-15)

[12] **For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law**, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. [13] For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. [14] For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, **by nature do what the law requires**, they are a law to themselves, **even though they do not have the law**. [15] **They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

3. The moral law was not abolished by Christ. **The Christian is not under the law because it has no power to justify, but he is obligated to follow the law as an objective standard of righteousness.**

(Matthew 5:17)

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**

B. The purpose of the law

The Heidelberg Catechism

Question 2. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

Answer: Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

Question 3. Whence knowest thou thy misery?

Answer: Out of the law of God.

Question 4. What does the law of God require of us?

Answer: Christ teaches us that briefly, Matt. 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Question 5. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

Answer: In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbour

1. The law reveals the nature and will of God. The law is holy and good.

(Psalm 119:137)

Righteous are you, O LORD, and right are your rules.

(Romans 7:12)

So **the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.**

2. The law reveals the sinful condition of man and our need for redemption.

(Romans 7:7)

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! **Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.** For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

(Romans 3:20)

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since **through the law comes knowledge of sin.**

Charles Spurgeon: The Law cuts into the core of the evil, it reveals the seat of the malady, and informs us that the leprosy lies deep within.

John Bunyan: The man who does not know the nature of the law cannot know the nature of sin. And he who does not know the nature of sin cannot know the nature of the Savior.

3. The law has no power to justify, but it guides us in the direction towards holy living. It is the believer's rule of life.

(Romans 3:31)

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, **we uphold the law.**

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

[8] For **by grace you have been saved through faith.** And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God,** [9] **not a result of works,** so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

(Romans 6:15-19)

[15] What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!** [16] Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? [17] **But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.** [19] I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, **so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.**

(1 Timothy 1:8)

Now we know that **the law is good, if one uses it lawfully,**

(Matthew 22:37-40)

[37] And he said to him, "You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment. [39] And a second is like it: You shall **love your neighbor** as yourself. [40] **On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

III. Gospel

A. There are four essential parts of the gospel

1. God - Creator / creature

(Acts 17:24-27)

[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, [27] that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

2. Sin - the law makes us conscious of our sin against a holy God

(Romans 3:23-26)

[23] **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

3. Christ - redeems / makes atonement

(Galatians 3:13)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so **that in him we might become the righteousness of God**.

4. Faith and repentance - not an option but a summons to believe in order to be saved

(John 11:25) Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. **Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,**

(Acts 3:19-20)

[19] Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, [20] that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

(Ephesians 5:8-10)

[8] for at one time you were darkness, but now **you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light** [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and **try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord**.

(Ephesians 2:8-10)

[8] For **by grace you have been saved through faith**. And this is not your own doing; **it is the gift of God**, [9] **not a result of works**, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them**.

[12] Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. [13] Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. [14] **For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace**.

(Romans 6:12-14 ESV)

IV. How can the Christian live joyfully?

A. Two extremes to stay away from: legalism and antinomianism

1. Legalism puts your trust in works for your salvation.

(Romans 3:28)

For we hold that **one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.**

(Matthew 23:27-28)

[27] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. [28] So you also **outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

2. Antinomianism means that you are against the law or treat the law with little or no importance.

(James 2:14-17, 20-24)

[14] What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

[15] If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, [16] and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? [17] **So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.**

[20] Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? [22] You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. [24] **You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.**

(James 1:22-25)

[22] **But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

B. Soak in the gospel

1. The more we understand the gospel, the more we will long for God and be joyful and free to live to reflect and glorify God.

(Psalm 63:1-4)

[63:1] O God, **you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you**, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. [2] So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. [3] **Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.** [4] So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

(Philippians 1:21-24)

[21] For to me to **live is Christ, and to die is gain.** [22] If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. [23] I am hard pressed between the two. **My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.** [24] But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

(Philippians 3:7-11)

[7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed, **I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, **in order that I may gain Christ** [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—[10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The Heidelberg Catechism

Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.