



LIFE NEWS

3 THREE USES OF THE LAW

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My first job in the ministry was at a church whose focus in teaching and preaching was Law and Gospel. This focus has been used throughout church history and gives us a great framework for understanding the scriptures - that as we walk through scripture, we need to understand that the Law condemns and the Gospel brings freedom and life. If we get this balance wrong, we will end up either in an antinomian freedom continuing in the sin we have been saved from or we will end up as legalists who believe we have achieved our salvation, sanctification, and someday our glorification through our own works. This is a helpful framework to use, especially as we read the Old Testament. We look to books like Numbers and can understand the points the Law is making and that Christ has fulfilled that Law. We can look to stories of the heroes of the Old Testament, and we will see a picture of Christ and the Gospel, which pushes us toward faith in Christ.

As I write about the Law, I want to be very clear: The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfill the Law. The Ceremonial laws point us to the death and resurrection of Christ. When we come to these texts, we are to respond by worshiping Christ and believing in him. So, when we say the Law has three uses, we are speaking to primarily the moral and civil laws; those laws concern behavior and government.

Within the framework of Law and Gospel, the Law has three uses. We begin with the second use of the Law; it is the easiest to understand. The Law's second use is that the governments of the world can look to scripture to understand how laws should be formed. To see that murder, stealing, and the like are morally reprehensible, and then the government is able to wield the sword to punish those who break the civil law. (Romans 13).

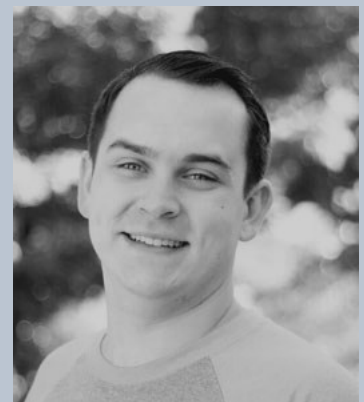
The first use of the Law is that we are condemned by the Law. This Law is not only presented in the first five books of the Bible, but there are many places in scripture we are confronted by the Law. The past few weeks, as our small groups have been studying the book of Proverbs, this use is extremely clear. When we read the Proverbs, we are shown the path of wisdom and the path of folly. We are told to follow the path of wisdom, and yet we often fall so short of this path of wisdom. When we fall short of this path, we realize we cannot hold up the standard of wisdom to which we have been called.

The Law and the Proverbs are a mirror of our failures. We then see our need for Christ every day. Christ has fulfilled the Law for us. He has perfectly kept the Law and the Proverbs. He is the Wisdom and Word of God. Through his death and resurrection, he offers us his right standing before God. For us to be right in the eyes

of God we must be in Christ, the wisdom of God. This is not only at the moment of our salvation, but each day we are told to abide in Christ, to put on his righteousness so that the condemnation of the Law can be silenced. This is crucial, and we fail daily to measure up. We need to repent daily of the works we have done and the good works we have left undone.

As we move toward the third use of the Law, it is essential that we pray with David, “Create in me a clean heart,” asking God to give us the right motives, the right heart, and the ability to do what God has created us to do. The third and final use of the Law is to show the Christian what is a good work. Jesus says the Law is summed up in two commands “Love the Lord your God...” and “love your neighbor as yourself.” Paul says God has prepared us to do good works. Often, we do not know what those good works look like. As we read the Law and the Proverbs, we find out what it means to love God and to love others. Then we - through the grace of God - complete the good works he has for us. Many of the laws will need us to understand the purpose of the Law being given (you may not have neighbors with an ox or donkey). These laws teach us about the character and concerns of God. We read to care for the poor, to help the oppressed, to steward the things God has given us. These show us how a good work would be done, and then we apply what we have believed – that Christ has given us his righteousness to our lives.

We read the moral Law and the book of Proverbs, and we apply these things to our lives because we have believed in Christ. James says that faith without works is dead. James is letting us know people will know if you believe in Christ by how you live. So our good works are done as result of our faith and are proof of the genuineness of our faith.



by Jeremiah Shawver, Youth Pastor