

Key Teachings of the Christian Faith

Vision: Strengthen our faith by examining key teachings of Christianity

Law and Righteousness

Goals of today's class:

1. God's use of His Law.
2. God's Gracious Righteousness given in Christ.

To suppose that whatever God requires of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect. – John Owen (Puritan)

Let's consider God's use of His Law and His Gracious Righteousness given in Christ as we attempt to better understand the words of John Owen.

Galatians 3:21-29

1. God's Law was not designed to give life. vs. 21
2. God's Law convicts everyone of sin. vs. 22
3. God's Law was/is a tutor pointing to Christ. vs. 23-24
4. Faith has come **through the promise**; we are justified by faith. vs. 24-26
5. God's Law is no longer a tutor leading to Christ for those who belong to Christ. vs. 25-29
6. We are sons of God, heirs according to the **promise**. vs. 26, 29

God's Law is useful to both the regenerate believer and the unregenerate unbeliever.

God's Life comes to His children not through the Law but through the promise of Faith.

Of the Law of God

Chapter XIX Section VI – Westminster Confession of Faith

VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned;[\[11\]](#) yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;[\[12\]](#) discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts and lives;[\[13\]](#) so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin,[\[14\]](#) together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience

The **Law of God informs everyone of the will of God** and their duty. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, true believers see their own sinfulness more clearly, develop a greater **hatred of sin**, and develop a greater **understanding of their need for Christ**.

Augustine wrote: “**If the Spirit of grace is absent**, the law is present only to accuse and kill us.”

In Romans 7, Paul explains the importance of being **released from the condemnation** of the Law.

Romans 7:5-6

1. The Law **arouses sinful passions**. (See also Romans 7:7-13.)
2. Sin brings **death**. (James 1:15)
3. Without a **radical release** from the condemnation of the Law, we have no life.
4. Scripture says **we must die to the condemnation of the Law**. vs.6

A dead person is usually released from all crimes committed while alive.

Summary Benefits of the Law of God:

1. Threats of punishment in the Law of God deter some people from sin (civil benefits).
2. The Law of God shows us our sin that we might seek forgiveness in Christ.
3. The Law of God provides precious knowledge of God to guide our prayers, thoughts, and actions.

Now, let's balance our look at the Law of God with the Gospel of Christ and the Righteousness of God it brings.

Romans 1:17

The gospel reveals the **righteousness of God** (not the righteousness of man).

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. (vs. 30)

Philippians 3:7-11

But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. **8** More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may **gain Christ, 9** and may **be found in Him**, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **11** in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Martin Luther called this righteousness of God an "**alien righteousness**".

alien: Belonging to, characteristic of, or constituting another and very different place, society, or person; strange. Dissimilar, inconsistent, or opposed, as in nature.

This **alien righteousness** is not only related to our justification but it is **the power providing our sanctification**. (See 1 Corinthians 1:30 again.)

2 Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that **we might become the righteousness of God in Him**.

How can we become the righteousness of God?

Is this only referring to justification or glorification or is it possibly related to sanctification as well?

Let's continue into the next chapter to see the context.

2 Corinthians 6:1-10

The context is activity in this life. This salvation is not a deferred salvation. This salvation is an ever present help in the time of need. This is the grace of God active in the life of believers; a divine influence producing real fruit in the lives of saints.

Brethren, we urgently need a better understanding of how the grace of God is activated by walking in the Spirit. We need more awareness of the righteousness of God given through faith in Christ. Christ lived and died to purchase this precious inheritance for us.

We are urged not to receive the grace of God in vain. (vs. 1)

Paul also instructs us about this relationship between the righteousness of God and grace of God in Galatians 2.

Galatians 2:21

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (New American Standard Bible)

I do not misapply God's grace, for if righteousness comes about by doing what the law requires, then the Messiah died for nothing. (International Standard Version)

I don't reject God's kindness. If we receive God's approval by obeying laws, then Christ's death was pointless. (GOD'S WORD translation)

I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought. (American Standard Version)

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (King James Version)

Once again we ask, **is this righteousness related to sanctification?**

And once again, the context is explicable clear. This **grace includes sanctification.**

Galatians 2:19-20

"For through the Law I died to the Law, so **that I might live to God. 20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Paul is talking about living for Christ here. The focus is not on positional righteousness only seen in the heavenly realm. The apostle is discussing the **life of Christ in us in this world**, in the flesh. This grace of Christ sends the Holy Spirit into our lives to produce life in the Spirit against such there is no law.

We are in Christ and Christ is in us.

Application:

This alien righteousness given by God as a gift produces a liberty unmatched anywhere in God's creation.

Galatians 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (KJV)

Galatians 5:13-15

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. [14](#) For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." [15](#) But if you bite and devour one another, **take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

Brethren, we can be very hard on one another. We set standards for one another that are not based entirely on the Word of God. When we do this, we destroy the Liberty with which Christ has made us free.

Let us consider this admonition from Chapter XX Section II of the Westminster Confession of Faith:

II. God alone is Lord of the conscience,[\[10\]](#) and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship.[\[11\]](#) So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience:[\[12\]](#)

Questions to Consider:

1. Are we sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. Are we sons of God by the law of God or by the promise of God?
3. Do we meditate on (give serious studied thought to) the promise of God?
 - a. Specifically, the promise of faith, the gift of faith?
4. In what ways does the Law of God provide benefit?
5. What is the chief means of revealing the righteousness of God?
6. How is the righteousness of God revealed?
7. What did Martin Luther call the righteousness imparted by God through faith?
8. Does this righteousness of God apply to our sanctification?
9. Can you see how this righteousness of God gives liberty of conscience?

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Extra Credit Questions:

1. If God asks us to do something, He must have given us the ability to do it. Is this true or false?
2. Would God be unjust to ask us to do something we cannot do?

Galatians 3:15-29

Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. **20** Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one. **21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. **22** But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. **24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. **26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Romans 7:7-13

7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." **8** But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead. **9** I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; **10** and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; **11** for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. **12** So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

13 Therefore did that which is good become *a cause of* death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

Of the Law of God
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VII. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it;[\[21\]](#) the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.[\[22\]](#)