

Second Presbyterian Church
Richard D. Phillips, Senior Minister

New Members' Class

Lesson #3: Law and Gospel

What Is the Law?

- What is God's Law?
 - Everything commanded by God to man in His Word.
 - Ten Commandments as summary
 - Jesus' macro-summary: two great commandments -- love for God and for neighbors as self (Mt. 22:36-39).
 - Moses' summary: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5).
- Three Types of Law
 - Moral Law – God's unchanging moral demands
 - Ceremonial Law – OT ordinances pointing forward to Christ's atoning death
 - Civil Law – Applications of moral law particular to Israel as theocratic state
- Three Uses of the Law
 - Mirror: shows us our sin so that we appeal to Christ
 - Curb: punishments restrain evil
 - Rule: guide for life for believers
 - "The third use of the Law. . .has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. ... For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge" (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.7.12).

The Ten Commandments

- Two Tablets
 - Love for God (1-5)
 - Love for Neighbor (6-10)
- Rules for Understanding the Ten Commandments (WLC99):
 - The law is perfect, requiring full conformity and forbidding the least degree of sin
 - The law is spiritual, reaching the understanding, will, and affections, as well as actions
 - The law both requires and forbids
 - Where a duty is commanded, the contrary is forbidden
 - What God forbids is never allowed; what God requires is always a duty
- Prohibitions Imply Obligations
 - 6th: “Do not murder” – implies protecting
 - 7th: “Do not commit adultery” – implies purity
 - 8th: “Do not steal” – implies providing
 - 9th: “Do not bear false testimony” – implies defending truth
 - 10th: “Do not covet” – implies contentment

The Christian and the Law

- Not under law, but under grace
 - “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).
 - “True believers are not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned” (WCF 19.5).
- Believers *able* to keep the Law
 - “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:2-4).
- Christians struggling with “two natures” in this life
 - “You have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:21-24).
 - “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).
 - “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 13:14).
- No Christians Perfect in this Life
 - “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12-14).

What Is the Gospel?

- The gospel is all that God has promised to do for his people and give to his people through Jesus Christ.
- God's redemptive-historical answer to the problem of sin (see Gen. 2-3).
 - Redemptive-Historical means God's acts in history to accomplish the redemption of His people.
 - Corresponds to the covenant of grace, which is God's oath-bound pact to save His people through Jesus Christ (see Gen. 3:15; 15:1-21).
- The gospel is centered on the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior
 - **First Coming: incarnation; perfect life; sin-atoning death; resurrection; ascension into heaven; sending of the Spirit at Pentecost.**
 - **Second Coming: Return to earth in glory; resurrection of the just; final judgment; heirship into eternal glory.**

What Is Justification?

- WCF 11.1 – What Is Justification? “Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justifieth”:
 - Not by infusion but by pardoning their sins;
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Rom. 3:23-25).
 - Not for the sake of any virtue in them or work by them, but for Christ’s sake alone;
“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).
 - Not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness;
“we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:16; cf. Rom. 3:28).
 - But by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith;
“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).
 - Which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.
“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

What Is Justification? (cont.)

- Romans 4:4-5
 - Works – Merit (his due) vs. Faith – Imputation
 - “Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:4-5).
- Westminster Shorter Catechism 33:
 - “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.
 - A divine *act* of free grace (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - Pardon of all sins (Ps. 103:12; Heb. 8:12).
 - Acceptance as righteous in God’s sight (Lk. 18:14; Heb. 12:23).
 - Only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:18-19).
 - Received by faith alone (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:24-26; Phil. 3:9).

What Is Sanctification?

- WSC 35: "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."
 - *Work vs. Act* of God's grace
 - Renewal of the whole man after God's image
 - Increasingly enabled to die to sin and live to righteousness.
- Sanctification, like justification, is by grace and through faith
 - Faith in justification is *passive*; in sanctification is *active*
 - "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).
 - "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).
 - Sanctification is practical and involves rejecting sin and obeying God's law
 - "you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:21-24).
 - "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" (Rom. 6:13-14).
 - "Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving" (Eph. 5:3-4).
 - Sanctification is directed by God's law and empowered by the grace of the gospel
 - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).
 - "Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (Jn. 8:11).

Justification and Sanctification

- Distinct but never separate
 - Dual graces and benefits from union with Christ
 - Sanctification begins with regeneration and is empowered by Christ's ministry through the Holy Spirit
- Sanctification is Necessary to Salvation
 - The error of antinomianism

"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'" (Mt.7:22-23).
 - Necessary as consequence not condition

"A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:18-20).
 - Good works inevitable and mandatory

"For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5).

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).
- Justification not based on Sanctification
 - The error of legalism

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

Justification and Sanctification

- Sanctification does *not* automatically ensue from justification (though they must always go together).
 - The error of Sonship theology
 - Sanctification *not* caused by justification, but resulting by God's grace through union with Christ.
- Sanctification advances by diligent application of the "means of grace."
 - Saving faith "ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word" and "is increased and strengthened" by the Word, prayer, and the sacraments
 - "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).
 - Sanctified by the Word
 - "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17; cf. Heb. 4:12; Eph. 5:26-27; Ps. 1:2-3)
 - Sanctified by Prayer
 - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7; Lk. 11:9, 13).
 - Sanctified by the Sacraments
 - "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16, KJV).

Justification and Sanctification

- Great Statements of the Christian Life
 - “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:19-20).
 - “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:1-2).
 - “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:8-11).
 - “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure” (1 John 3:1-3).