



April 2, 2023

Abounding Grace: The Law of God

Hosanna

Matthew 21:1-11

For Discussion and Reflection

1. The Westminster Larger Catechism, Q/A 149, asks, "Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God? Read the answer. Q/A 152, asks, "What does every sin deserve at the hands of God? Read the answer. Do you believe these answers? How does that belief frame your worldview? What does it teach you about God? Mankind? Yourself?"
2. Moses says that the law presented is life and death, Deuteronomy 30:19,20. Paul says, "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.' But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead," Romans 7:7,8. It appears that the law only brings death, but Calvin, commenting, says, "For if by the law, covetousness is not dragged from its lair, it destroys wretched man so secretly, he does not feel its fatal stab." (cf. James 1:15) How does the law bring liberty to the believer?
3. Two great statements about approaching the Law of God: Augustine says, "If the Spirit of grace is absent, the law is present only to accuse and kill us." Calvin says, "The law draws us to conclude we stand by grace alone." Discuss the truths of these statements.
4. The Psalmists regularly urge us to meditate on the law of God, Ps. 1:2; 19:7,8; 119:16, 23-24, 46-47. Why do believers resist that meditation? If the law is stripped of its condemnation, its loud thunder having been silenced, why would we avoid its instruction and application? Calvin says, "the law is the best instrument to learn the Lord's will to which we aspire...the law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and lazy ass to arouse it to work." (Calvin, Institutes)
5. Some argue that Jesus "fulfilled" the law (Matthew 5:17), so we are no longer responsible to obey it. The law is abrogated in Christ. Paul says we are released from the law, Rom. 7:6. Calvin pushes back on this understanding, saying, "The Law is fulfilled but does not pass away...the teaching of the law is inviolable (teaching, admonishing, reproving, and correcting) preparing us for every good work...No part of the law's authority is withdrawn. (Calvin, Institutes) Read Paul's full statement in Romans 7:6 and Jesus' full statement in Matthew 5:17-20. Are you clear on how the law has been defanged? Are you clear on the proper use of the law? Consider the Westminster Confession, 19:5,6,7.
6. John Calvin makes the point, "the ceremonial law is abrogated in use but not in effect." (Calvin's Institutes). He continues, saying, "The OT Jews confessed their sins with ceremonies rather than atonement, confessing themselves guilty of death, substituting purity for themselves, confessing themselves unclean." Consider what Paul says in Colossians 2:17. How do the Old Testament ceremonies speak to us of Christ? (Heb. 10:1, Lev.16:21) How does Scripture say OT believers' sins were pardoned? Heb. 9:15
7. In his book, *Delighting in the Law of the Lord*, Jerram Barrs lists eight post-modern views of the law. How do you see these in our culture? Do any of them reflect your perspective?
 - a. Law is not based on objective standards but is the expression of a culture's habits and customs.
 - b. Law and objective morality are opposed to freedom.
 - c. Law is simply about rights not responsibilities.
 - d. All that matters is legalistic obedience, not the spirit of the law.
 - e. Law is open to manipulation by pressure groups (special interest groups).
 - f. Reluctance to talk about guilt except in extreme cases.

- g. Punishment becomes rehabilitation or education, rather than retribution.
 - h. Loss of Judeo-Christian framework for moral reflection and for teaching moral order, law, and responsibility to our children.
8. Barrs says, "We should feel obligated to obey God's law because he is holy. Yet our deepest reason for obedience is love for him from hearts that are filled with thankfulness because he has redeemed us." (pg. 82) He draws this both from Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:37 and the opening line of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1,2. How do we grow in our love for God so that we experience a growing obedience?
9. What did you connect with from today's sermon? How can you pursue the full salvation of Christ in your daily life?