

Catechetical Sermon, January 19, 2025

Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 34, "Following the Law"

Scripture Lessons: Matt. 22:34-40; James 2:8-13

Lesson Aim	To understand that how the Law of God functions for the Christian who is saved by grace through faith in Christ.
Steps to Learning	Read the Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 34 and Matthew 22:34-40; James 2:8-13 . Discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	<p>If we have been saved by grace through faith in Christ, why must we obey the Law of God? The short answer is that we don't do so to "stay saved" but out of gratitude for Christ who obeyed the Law in our place.</p> <p>What is the Covenant of Works and why is it important to our discussion? God initiated the Covenant of Works with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, with Adam as the head of humanity. In this covenant, God and Adam made a mutual agreement that Adam, and all humanity who followed him, would be cursed (die) for disobedience to the Law of God and blessed (live forever) for obedience to the Law of God. When Adam and Eve sinned by being disobedient to the Law, they and all of humanity sinned and fell under the eternal curse of God; the demand for all people to obey God's Law remained. Therefore, all people today who are represented by Adam must obey the Law of God but can't and are under the eternal curse of God.</p> <p>What is the Covenant of Grace and why is it important to our discussion? The Covenant of Grace is the covenant God made with his people in the church who have faith in Christ and his work to obey the Law of God and be crucified and raised from the dead. God's people, like all people, have the obligation to obey the Law of God and to pay for their sins of not obeying the Law. Since we are in a position of obligations we can meet, God gave us his only begotten Son who worked in our behalf. Therefore, through Christ's work we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. The promise that God would save his people in this way was first published in Genesis 3:15, reiterated by the Abrahamic Covenant and fulfilled when the Son of God became man and then was crucified and raised from the dead.</p> <p>Given what the Covenant of Grace is, how are we to think about the Law of God? For the purposes of our discussion, we should think about the Law of God in two senses: First, it functions to convict us of our continuing sin, that we break the Law all the time. The result of this realization reminds us to rest in Christ and his salvation on our behalf. Second, the Law of God functions to provide a guide for us to live out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us.</p>
Bible Reading	Matthew 15-21 (Reading through the Gospels)