

Christ, The Law, & The Gospel

Memory Text: John 1:17: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

Key Thought: God’s law and His grace provide powerful evidence of God’s love for humanity and His desire to save us.

Illustration/Setting The Stage:

Did you know it’s illegal to ride an ugly horse in Wilbur, Washington. In Quitman, Georgia, chickens may not cross the road. In Mohave County, Arizona, if anyone is caught stealing soap, he must wash himself with it until the soap is gone. In Kansas, when two trains meet at a crossing, “both shall come to full stop and neither shall start up again until the other has gone.”

In almost every country we can probably find old laws that are still on the books but now appear very strange or even ridiculous to us. This is probably because they don’t address a real issue in our current culture. At one time, there was obviously a need that led to the establishment of a certain law.

For example the Arizona law prohibiting hunting camels, while camels are not native to North America, was designed to deal with after effects of the United States Camel Corps, an army experiment to use camels as a military animal in the desert southwest of the United States. The California law that made it illegal to lick toads was created to prevent individuals from getting sick from the toads’ poison.

In other countries, there have been, and sometimes still are, laws that are morally wrong. Most of the time, we can see that laws protect our property, our rights, and us. Naturally we would view these laws as being good.

Many Christians have come to view God's law as something of the camel variety, or even worse, as being somehow bad. But is this really the case? Can it be said that God's law is odd, outdated, or irrelevant? If it is, couldn't it be said that God is out of touch and distant from humanity to give us something passé? What does this type of thinking say about a person's view about the nature of God and His understanding of the Word of God?

In the average Christian's mind there is a conflict that exists between God's law and His grace; between His will and the cross; between His Word and the gospel, when that conflict doesn't actually exist, but harmony instead.

Sunday – Sin & The Law

Romans 7:7-12

Why would Paul ask, "Is the law sin?" (v. 7) Because sin and law are closely related in his mind. In what way are sin and law related? The same way in which criminal law and crime are related. Something is criminal only if a law depicts it as such. You break the law naturally you'll have the book thrown at you.

What was Paul's view of the law? "The law is holy...and just, and good." (v. 12) Laws are as law-makers are. Holy – demands holiness and is holy because it is agreeable to the holy will of God. Just – because it is compatible with the rules of equity and right. Good – because it was given for the good of mankind; for the conservation of peace and order in the world. It makes its observers good. The intention of it was to reform and better mankind. "Wherever there is true grace there will always be an assent to this." – Matthew Henry

What great advantages did Paul find in the law? 1) *It was revealing* (v. 7, 13) – something straight discovers something crooked and a mirror reveals what we really look like – no need, no Savior. 2) *It was humbling* (v. 9) – makes a good man

look bad – letter of law without meaning – shell but no kernel – in head & hand but not in heart – notion of it but not the power of it.

Why did Paul use the tenth commandment to make his point? 1) When compared to murder or stealing it doesn't seem so bad, but God thinks so and so must we. 2) Coveting lays at the foundation of all other sins.

Monday – The Law & Israel

Deuteronomy 30:15-18; Matthew 7:24-27

Why did God choose Israel from among the nations to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6) and then reveal His law to them? Mission drove election. God's purpose with the children of Abraham was to be a blessing and make God and His will known (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 42:6; 49:6). They were to showcase God's grace and lifestyle to the nations to exalt God's name (Deut. 28:1, 10). The law was to be a blessing not a curse. Is there anything in the history of Israel that pits God's law against His grace? *See Deut. 6:2 – guardrail designed to preserve life not inhibit true living.*

How do we keep a healthy tension between living as a holy nation and being a priestly people called to serve and teach others? Can we learn anything from ancient Israel? Israel was either influenced by the nations they were called to win thus not winning anyone, or they shunned those they were called to win thus again not winning anyone. *Compare Isa. 2:3 with the story of the little main in 2 Kings 5.*

Tuesday – The Law & The Nations

Acts 10:34, 35; 17:26, 27; Romans 1:20; 2:14

How could those nations who were not exposed to God's law or did not come into contact with Israel find a revelation of God? Nature directs people to God – instilled desire to find God that cannot be satisfied with anything other than God –

standard of judgment is law (written law or law of conscience developed by listening to the voice of God).

If God speaks to everyone what is the purpose of missionaries and evangelists? First, God has sent us, not as a suggestion but a commandment. Second, it is similar to a student reading the lesson verses being taught by a teacher (Ethiopian eunuch & Phillip).

Wednesday – Grace & Truth

John 1:17

What is meant by the statement “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”? Jesus isn’t undermining the validity of the law, but bringing to light the complete understanding of grace.

What does grace do? See Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 8:1-4; Heb. 10:16 – Grace not only frees us from the condemnation of the law but enable us to keep it. Grace is pardon + power = complete restoration.

Thursday – The Law & The Gospel

Romans 1:16, 17; Psalm 19:7

How impacted are we by sin? See Rom. 6:23a.; 7:24; Eph. 2:1 – The walking dead!

Is there any good news for us? See Rom. 6:23b.; 7:25; Eph. 2:4-6 – Jesus Christ!

Does Psalm 19:7 help us understand the relationship between law and grace at all? How does the law convert us? If I was pulled over for speeding and given a ticket, would that prevent me from speeding again? It might. What if the fine amount was significant, would that prevent me from speeding again? It might. What if in my speeding I hit a car and damaged it, would that do the job? These are good incentives to obey instead of breaking the law, aren’t they? But what if I hurt

somebody in my speeding? Would that get my attention? What if that person was someone I loved?

When we realize that breaking God's law hurts somebody, and not just anybody but the God of heaven that begins the process whereby God brings a change to our heart and mind. When we realize that my sin cost the death of the Son of God there is genuine sorrow for sin and a turning away from it – a conversion takes place...

The law has done its job when it has led us to Christ who is the only One who can bring about a true change in the life that brings about obedience of the same law. And in keeping that law (by God's grace of course) we experience what the psalmist said: "Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing shall offend them." (Ps. 119:165

Appeal: God's law, together with His grace, provides powerful evidence of His love for humanity and His desire to save us into His eternal kingdom. Let's embrace both!