

INTRODUCTION
TO
Law Gospel Distinction

What is the Gospel?

What is the Law?

BIBLICAL USES OF THE LAW

1. Threefold Division of the Law
2. Three Uses of the Law

DIVISION:

There are different kinds of laws found within the Mosaic Covenant.

- 1) Moral
 - a. The Ten Commandments
- 2) Ceremonial
 - a. Food laws
 - b. Cleansing = Sacrificial system
- 3) Civil
 - a. Cities of refuge (Josh 20:7-9)
 - b. Purging of the promise land

The moral law is contained in its most concise written form in the Ten Commandments, which concern our duties toward God and man. The ceremonial laws, such as those concerning the priests and the sacrifices, were typical ordinances that prefigured the person and work of Christ. These ceremonial laws are now abrogated since Christ offered the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Himself on the cross (see [Heb. 7-10](#)).

<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2023/07/the-three-uses-of-the-law/>

NOTE: "This is necessary because the three uses pertain to only one of those divisions.

USES:

The uses of the law are all related to the moral division.

- 1) The Pedagogical / Mirror
 - a. Romans 3:20
- 2) Civil / Restrain Evil
 - a. Romans 13:3-4

- 3) Normative / Guide / Revelation of the Will of God
 a. Romans 3:31

The Reformation was founded on grace and not upon law. Yet the law of God was not repudiated by the Reformers. John Calvin, for example, wrote what has become known as the "Threefold Use of the Law" in order to show the importance of the law for the Christian life (Institutes 2.1.304-10).

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/threefold-use-law>

To understand these three uses of the law, an example may be helpful. Consider the command "You shall not steal" ([Exod. 20:15](#)). The first use of this commandment reveals that stealing is a sin condemned by God and that we are inclined to steal. If we steal we need pardon. Since forgiveness is only in Christ, the law leads us to Christ in repentance and faith. In the civil use of the law, society is directed concerning the responsibility of the state to protect property, etc. Laws and their respective punishments consistent with this commandment should exist to inhibit theft. In the moral use of the law, we see that this law remains for the Christian as a necessary guide for his path of holiness. By this law we know what God expects and the high goal of holiness to which we should aim. We are reminded to avoid stealing and to cultivate honest relations with one another.

<https://thirdmill.org/answers/answer.asp/file/40602>

LAW GOSPEL CONFUSION

Mark 10:17 ¶ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Mark 10:18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Mark 10:19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"

Mark 10:20 And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."

Mark 10:21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Mark 10:22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Mark 10:23 ¶ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

Mark 10:24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God!

Mark 10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Mark 10:26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"

Mark 10:27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

Luke 10:25 ¶ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 10:26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

Luke 10:27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

Luke 10:28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

Luke 10:29 ¶ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.

Luke 10:31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

Luke 10:33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.

Luke 10:34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Luke 10:35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

Luke 10:36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"

Luke 10:37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Luke 10:38 ¶ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

Rom. 2:6 ¶ He will render to each one according to his works:

Rom. 2:7 to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life;

Rom. 2:8 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

Rom. 2:9 There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,

Rom. 2:10 but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.

Rom. 2:11 For God shows no partiality.

Rom. 2:12 ¶ For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

Rom. 2:13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

Matt. 16:24 ¶ Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Matt. 16:25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Matt. 16:26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Matt. 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Matt. 16:28 Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

MODERN DAY EXAMPLES

Titus 3:9 But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Titus 3:10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,

Titus 3:11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

John Piper – Confusing Works and the Gospel

These works of faith, and this obedience of faith, these fruits of the Spirit that come by faith, are necessary for our final salvation. No holiness, no heaven (Hebrews 12:14). So, we should not speak of getting to heaven by faith alone in the same way we are justified by faith alone. Essential to the Christian life and necessary for final salvation is the killing of sin (Romans 8:13) and the pursuit of holiness(Hebrews 12:14).

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/does-god-really-save-us-by-faith-alone>

[Jesus] says that on the day of judgment...people will “go away into eternal punishment” because they really failed to love their fellow believers: “As you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matt. 25:45-46). There is no doubt that Jesus saw some measure of real, lived-out obedience to the will of God as necessary for final salvation.

John Piper, What Jesus Demands from the World. Lifeway Press, 2015, 160.

Though it may cause confusion, it is possible to use the word “justify” to describe how the fruit of good behavior works in the day of judgment. The fruits can “justify” us in the sense of proving that we are believers and belong to Jesus and have a right standing with God in him. That is how I understand Matthew 12:37, “By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

What Jesus Demands from the World, 161n.

Present justification is based on the substitutionary work of Christ alone, enjoyed in union with him through faith alone. Future justification is the open confirmation and declaration that in Christ Jesus we are perfectly blameless before God. This final judgment accords with our works. That is, the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be brought forward as the evidence and confirmation of true faith and union with Christ. Without that validating transformation, there will be no future salvation.

John Piper and N.T. Wright, compiled by Trevin Wax. "The Justification Debate: A Primer." Christianity Today, June 29, 2009, accessed October 31, 2017,

Auchterarder Creed:

"It is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ."

The Marrow Controversy was a [Scottish](#) ecclesiastical dispute occasioned by the republication in 1718 of The Marrow of Modern Divinity (originally published in two parts in [London](#) in 1645 and 1649 by "E. F.", generally believed to be a [pseudonym](#) for [Edward Fisher](#), a lay theologian of the seventeenth century). The work consists of religious dialogues which discuss the doctrine of the [atonement](#) and aim to guide the reader safely between [Antinomianism](#) and [Neonomianism](#).

John MacArthur – Requiring Repentance for Salvation

MacArthur says of the rich young ruler: "No matter what he believed, since he was unwilling to forsake all, he could not be a disciple of Christ"
The Gospel according to Jesus (78)

Judas, MacArthur says, "had responded positively to Christ, but never with all his heart." The Gospel according to Jesus (103)

"Salvation isn't the result of an intellectual exercise. It comes from a life lived in obedience and service to Christ as revealed in the Scripture; it's the fruit of actions, not intentions. There's no room for passive spectators: words without actions are empty and futile... The life we live, not the words we speak, determines our eternal destiny."
Hard to Believe, page 93

This is a very similar language to the Roman Church. Canon XI of the Council of Trent states:

"If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God: let him be anathema."

Canon XII states: "If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: Let him be anathema."


Doug Wilson

Denies the covenant of works therefore denies Law Gospel Distinction:

We deny that law and gospel should be considered as hermeneutics, or treated as such. We believe that any passage, whether indicative or imperative, can be heard by the faithful as good news, and that any passage, whether containing gospel promises or not, will be heard by the rebellious as intolerable demand. The fundamental division is not in the text, but rather in the human heart.

JOINT FEDERAL VISION STATEMENT

Changing the definition of faith

In the New Testament, obedience is a good word. Also in the New Testament, works is not, unless it is modified with a word like good. We are called to good works (Titus 2:7 ) , but we are not saved by works (Eph. 2:8-9).

By way of contrast, sinners do not obey the truth (Rom. 2:8). The Lord is the author of eternal salvation for all who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). All nations are summoned to the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5). Obedience is unto righteousness (Rom. 6:16). Every thought is to be brought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). And of course, obedience is an evil thing when it is rendered to the wrong master (Rom. 6:12), which should be obvious enough. But the bottom line is that simple words obey and obedience should not set off alarm bells for people who read their Bibles. <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/like-a-gelatinous-pudding.html>

Faith is the only instrument God uses in our justification. But when God has done this wonderful work, the faithful instrument does not shrivel up and die. It continues to love God and obey Him. If it does not, but just lies there like a corpse, then we have good reason to believe that it was lying there like a corpse some days before—not being therefore an instrument of justification. Faith without works is a dead faith, and a dead faith never justified anybody. Reformed is not enough (p. 48).

The means by which men persevere in the covenant is faithfulness. In other words, to assert that men fall away because their salvation was contingent upon continued faithfulness in the gospel is not to deny the sovereignty of God at all.

Wilson, Douglas . Reformed Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant . Canon Press.

When asked in the interview, “Doug, when you cite ‘continuing in goodness’ in Rom. 11 in your 2002 lecture, is that the cause of our salvation or the fruit of it?”, Wilson replied:

Yes (laughter all around).

Look, in Colossians Paul says as you received Christ so walk in him. So the way we become Christians is the way we stay Christians is the way we finish as Christians—by faith from first to last.

So we continue in God’s goodness by trust. We stand by faith—they fell, but you stand—doing that to the end is how you come to your salvation. It’s the gift of God lest anyone boast. I believe we are saved by faith from first to last, which is why I have been accused of denying sola fide. Wisdom is vindicated by her children.

Christian Renewal, “The Monroe Four Speak Out,” cited in The Counsel of Chalcedon, Volume 1, May 2004, 38.

NEXT CLASS READING:

1) Book

- a. Rediscover Church by Collin Hansen & Jonathan Leeman (provided by GRC)

READING RECOMMENDATIONS:

Articles:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bible-support-female-deacons-yes/>

<https://thecripplegate.com/deaconesses-six-reasons/>