

Three Uses of the Law

- Is the only purpose of the law to point us to our justification? How does the answer to this question affect how we read the Bible and preach the Bible?

Three Uses of the Law

1. **First Use:** Civil (Romans 13). One use of the law is to restrain evil in society.
2. **Second Use:** Mirror—drives you to Christ. The law makes you realize God’s perfect standard, and how far we fall from it.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23).

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

The Law should make you feel utterly helpless. There is no way we will ever enter heaven on these criteria. It is impossible. We need Christ! This should drive us to the Lord!

3. **Third use:** The Law is a guide for Christian living. It frees us to live in good and right ways, pleasing to the Lord.

Often, when people think of the law, they think it is smothering or confining. It actually is none of those; it is freeing. A right understanding of the law enables us to obey the Lord, not in order to gain salvation, but because we are thankful for all that God has done. It allows us to graciously love and serve him, for his glory and for our good.

Overemphasis on the 2nd Use of the Law

- It is becoming common in many reformed circles to view the primary, and perhaps even only purpose of the law to be to drive a person to Christ. Many who hold this view would say that a preacher must include the second use of the law/an explanation of justification in every sermon. If he does not do so, many claim that he is not preaching the gospel.
 - “The sharp distinction between law and gospel is becoming popular in Reformed, as well as Lutheran circles. It is the view of Westminster Seminary California, *Modern Reformation* magazine, and the White Horse Inn radio broadcast. The leaders of these organizations are very insistent that theirs is the only biblical view of the matter. One has recently claimed that people who hold a different view repudiate the Reformation and even deny the gospel itself. On that view, we must use the term *gospel* only in what the Formula calls the “proper” sense, not in the biblical sense. I

believe that we should stand with the Scriptures against this tradition.” (John Frame, “Law and Gospel”)

- Exclusive redemptive historical preaching (a method of preaching which strives to take each passage in the Bible and put it in the framework of justification, reminding us that we are justified by grace, through faith in Christ). This is a wonderful method of preaching, but should not be the only method of preaching.
 - Why shouldn't this be the only method of preaching?
- “One of the primary concerns of Redemptive-Historical Preaching is to avoid any hint of moralizing. Consequently, in an over reaction to moralistic preaching Redemptive-Historical Preaching seeks to exalt Christ to the exclusion of exhorting the people of God to grow in their sanctification. In preaching from the Old Testament this can often turn into allegorizing the text in order to find Christ in every verse in an atomistic manner.” (Erik Wait, “The Danger of Redemptive Historical Preaching”).
 - Ex. Proverbs 31 and Proverbs 6
- “The assertion of advocates of exclusive Redemptive-Historical Preaching is that preaching is only to consist of proclaiming the indicatives of Scripture (“God has done this” or “you are this in Christ”), while the imperatives are to be left up to the hearer to discern. But the truly biblical preacher must do more than that! He must also counsel the church from the pulpit - he must preach the imperatives in declaring the whole counsel of God. The more the preacher counsels, admonishes, the church from the pulpit the less he will have to do so in his office during the week. It is for this reason that Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.” (1 Corinthians 4:14)” (Erik Wait, “the Danger of Redemptive Historical Preaching”).
 - If the preacher uses the 2nd use to the exclusion of the 3rd use of the law, the congregation is not encouraged in their sanctification, and is not taught what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ.
 - But is it ok for a second use emphasis to be my preference?