

Convent Avenue Baptist Church
Wednesday Bible Study 5-19-10
Pastor Jesse Williams

The Articles of Faith; What we believe...

Article XII. The Law And Gospel

Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 5:17-26, Romans 7:4-14, Galatians 2:16-21 & 3:24-26

This article highlights an important doctrinal teaching that helps us to bring balance to our understanding of why we need the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In it, we see that the Law of God is holy, just and good. That is certainly true since the Law reveals God's expectations of us as human beings and His standards for holiness and righteousness in our daily living as we worship God and interact with each other.

When we talk about the "Law", we must make some important biblical distinctions. Traditionally, when we see the word "law" in the New Testament, we think of it as referring to the 10 Commandments, otherwise known as the *Decalogue*. But the "law" also encompasses more than that! The Mosaic law consists not only of the Decalogue in Exodus 20-23; but also the *Deuteronomic code* and the book of the law that are found in the book of Deuteronomy. The word *Deuteronomy* literally means *second law* and it is traditionally understood that God was re-stating His laws a second time for Israel before they entered into the Promised Land. The Mosaic law also includes what is known as the *Holiness Code*, which appears in Leviticus chapters 17-26 where we see many straightforward do's and don'ts from God related to what is holy and proper and what is not. In all, the Mosaic Law is thought to consist of well over 600 laws and commandments that God told Israel to keep!

When we think about this in light of what Jesus says to us in the New Testament about the law, the reasons for thanking God for salvation through Jesus Christ become even more apparent. What human being could possibly keep all of the law of God perfectly without messing up? The answer is no one! Even when the Israelites did sin and would go through the ritual of sacrificing an animal for their sins; that soon became just another empty, meaningless ritual or practice that people did with their heads but not their hearts. They simply went through the motions to try to appease themselves and God.

But God loves us and is always interested in our souls and our salvation. What we could not do through human effort, Jesus Christ did! He was the only human being without sin! That's what enabled Him to be the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world! The fall of man caused us to be blemished by sin and incapable of fulfilling God's standards of holiness and righteousness that He has for us. So, God did it for us in Jesus Christ! The Law is good and holy because it seeks to guide us into being who God wants us to be, but it also at the same time condemns us because of our inability to keep it consistently. That is what points us toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only solution to our dilemma. Jesus fulfills the law for us, and when we accept Jesus Christ as our savior by faith, we inherit the salvation that His sacrifice makes possible for us. Although we did not obey the law, since Jesus did and we are in Him, we inherit His righteousness by faith and we must now live up to it. The law brought us to the point of seeing where we are incapable of being consistently obedient to God's law on our own, and therefore enabled us to see the need for Jesus Christ.

Regarding these issues of the Law and the Gospel, it is important for us to note the following;

-Breaking the Law is an act of rebellion against God

Whenever we do not live up to the standards of holiness and righteousness that God intended for us when He created us, it is sin. The laws are not simply polite recommendations from God about how we should live, they are God's blueprint for how we should live. When we break them, we break God's plan and purpose for our lives. The irony is that sin tries to use the law to tempt us and condemn us, when God's intent is to use the law to bless us.

-The purpose of the Law is to bring us into total submission to God

Obedience is important to God. God's law is designed to bring us to a point where we are truly in His image. Total obedience and total submission is what God expects from us since He is sovereign over us. It is clear that what the law could not do for us, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit can! The law is able to point the way and express the demands of God, but it cannot save us from the penalties of disobedience. Only Jesus can do that, and only the Holy Spirit can sanctify us and help us to live holy. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law completely! Now we can and should submit to God in *every* area of our lives.

-The Law is a Community responsibility

Church families and communities have a responsibility to follow God's law in our interactions with each other. God is concerned with the holiness of not just individuals, but also homes, families, churches, communities and nations. We are responsible to one another and we must live righteously with one another.

-The Law is an individual responsibility

Each person is also responsible for making a faith commitment to God through Jesus Christ and deciding to live God's way. In order for families, churches, communities and nations to change, it begins with individuals. Every child of God must decide that he/she wants to be holy and live holy for God.