

Lesson 23: 2LCF Chapter 19: Of the Law of God

*Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts. I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word. I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me. How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

Psalm 119:97-103

Few sections in the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith are as controversial and as oft-challenged as Chapter 19: Of the Law of God. With the introduction of more novel perspectives, such as Dispensationalism and New Covenant Theology, the views articulated in this chapter are often called into question by many modern Christians. In fact, the Confession's view of the law has sometimes been labelled "legalistic" by its contemporary opponents.

This fact would likely come as a surprise to the framers of the Confession, who simply articulated the majority view amongst the Protestant Christians of their day. From a cursory survey of chapter 19 in the 2LCF, Westminster, and Savoy, it is clear that the framers sought to keep this chapter nearly identical to its parent and grandparent confessions. While some minor adjustments in wording are present in the 2LCF, 95% of the text in the Westminster and Savoy are retained in the subsequent baptist version.

Nevertheless, for those who are prepared to honestly evaluate this chapter without prejudice, they will find that it is a remarkably clear, concise, and helpful explanation of the role of the law in the Christian's life.

Waldron has outlined this chapter of the Confession as follows:

Outline:

Paragraph 1

I. The original dispensation of the law of God

- A. Its substance
 - 1. A universal law
 - 2. A specific precept
- B. Its obligation
- C. Its enforcement
 - 1. Life for obedience
 - 2. Death for disobedience
- D. Its accompaniment

Paragraphs 2-4

II. The Mosaic codification of the law of God

- A. The repetition of the moral law (paragraph 2)
 - 1. The fact of its reiteration
 - 2. The circumstances of its reiteration
- B. The addition of the ceremonial law (paragraph 3)
 - 1. The purpose of the ceremonial law
 - 2. The abrogation of the ceremonial law

- C. The addition of the judicial law (paragraph 4)
 - 1. Its ancient expiration
 - 2. Its modern application

Paragraph 5

- III. The inherent obligation of the law of God
 - A. Its permanent duration
 - B. Its universal scope
 - C. Its heightened strength

Paragraphs 6-7

- IV. The Special Functions of the Law of God for Christians
 - A. The assumed qualification of these functions (paragraph 6a)
 - B. The specific enumeration of these functions (paragraph 6b)
 - C. The harmonious operation of these functions (paragraph 7)
 - 1. The fact of this harmony
 - 2. The explanation of this harmony²⁴⁹

Paragraph 1.

God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart, and a particular precept of not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it. Gen. 1:27; Eccles. 7:29; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10,12

Exposition

Paragraph one speaks to the created nature of humanity and the role of the law in the Covenant of Works (mentioned by name in the WCF). While this study will not address the Covenant of Works, this can be reviewed in the lesson on Chapter 7 of the Confession: “Of God’s Covenant”. Here the Confession acknowledges that man was not only given particular precepts related to the fruit of the trees in the garden, but also “a law of universal obedience written in his heart”.

This is observed by many, who see the necessity of the implanting of the law by necessity of the fact that man was created in the image and likeness of God. Richard Barcellos speaks to the created state of humanity, with a “mind stocked with the knowledge of God”:

Being the image of God for Adam, then, meant that his mind was stocked with and able to process true knowledge of God. His heart was morally pure; he was made upright. His will acted in accordance with the law of God... all men have the law of God written on their hearts due to being created!”²⁵⁰

Similarly, John Piper comments on this reality, writing:

The Gentile world in general... have enough knowledge of the moral law of God in their hearts by virtue of being created in God’s image so that their consciences are conflicted:

²⁴⁹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 278-79.

²⁵⁰ Richard C. Barcellos, *Better than the Beginning*, (Palmdale, CA: RBAP, 2013), 98.

sometimes approving, sometimes disapproving.... Every human being in the world has an inborn knowledge of God and his law.”²⁵¹

Moreover this is the plain teaching of Scripture. While some texts speak to the writing of the law on regenerate hearts (Hebrews 8:10, 10:16; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26), even unregenerate hearts bear the imprint of God’s law.

Romans 2:12-16

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. 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. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Commenting on this passage, R.C. Sproul points out that this mention of the law refers specifically to the moral law summarily contained in the 10 Commandments. Moreover, he confirms that this law is written on every heart by the very necessity of man’s created nature as an image bearer of God:

The “the work of the law” (v. 15) refers to the moral commandments of God accessible to the conscience of every person. The knowledge of the “work of the law” resides in the heart, because mankind was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). Since God judges people in accordance with standards known to them, a defense based on ignorance of the Mosaic law is irrelevant and illegitimate. It is not the degree of revelation received, but response to the revelation itself, however received, that will prove critical on the day when God will judge (v. 16).²⁵²

Paragraph 2.

The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.

Rom. 2:14,15; Deut. 10:4

Paragraph 3.

Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties, all which ceremonial laws being appointed only to the time of reformation, are, by Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only law-giver, who was furnished with power from the Father for that end abrogated and taken away.

Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:17; 1 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:14,16,17; Eph. 2:14,16

²⁵¹ John Piper, *How is the Law Written on Every Heart?*, Desiring God, Retrieved from: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-is-the-law-written-on-every-heart>

²⁵² R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (2015 Edition) (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 1981.

Paragraph 4.

To them also he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution; their general equity only being of modern use.
1 Cor. 9:8-10

Exposition

Paragraphs two through four provide a concise summary of the moral (paragraph 2), ceremonial (paragraph 3), and civil/judicial (paragraph 4) laws found in Scripture. Here the Confession does not enter into debate about the nature of this threefold division. Instead this division is merely assumed.

However, at this stage, it may be helpful to ask ourselves, “*Does Scripture actually contain a threefold classification of the law, or is this a mere invention of man?*”

It must first be noted that this is not an exclusively Reformed doctrine, but has been the widely held by believers for at least a millennia. Phillip Ross has summarized it this way: “[The threefold division] is not uniquely Eastern or Western; Roman Catholic or Protestant; conservative or liberal; Patristic or Puritan; Thomist, Calvinist, or anything else; the threefold division of the law is catholic doctrine.”²⁵³

Many biblical defences have been offered for the threefold classification of the law. Waldron offers a very compelling case, relying on the following three witnesses from Scripture:

- 1) The Biblical Distinction between the Ten and the Rest
- 2) The Actual Structure of Exodus
- 3) The Clear Evidence from Old Testament Believers

The Biblical Distinction between the Ten and the Rest

On this point, Waldron has argued that “the Bible clearly distinguishes between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Mosaic laws,” adding that the unique position and importance of the Ten Commandments is indicated by the following facts:

- They alone were spoken by the voice of God.
- They alone were written by the finger of God.
- They alone were placed in the ark of God (Exodus 25:16, 21; Deuteronomy 10:5; 1 Kings 8:9).
- They alone were accompanied by the display of God’s power on Mount Sinai.
- They alone were inscribed in stone.
- They are distinguished from the (other) statutes of the law (Deuteronomy 4:12-14; 5:1-3; 5:30-6:3)²⁵⁴

The Actual Structure of Exodus

Here Waldron points out that the very structure of the book of Exodus lends vital support to this threefold classification:

- In Exodus 20 the moral law is written by God on stone and given to Moses.
- In Exodus 21-24 the civil law is given to Moses, written in the book of the covenant, and ratified by blood.

²⁵³ Phillip S. Ross, *From the Finner of God* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2010), 6.

²⁵⁴ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 282.

- In Exodus 25-40 and the following chapters ceremonial laws regarding the construction of the Tabernacle are given.
- The Ten Commandments alone are written on stone by God himself, while the judicial law (and perhaps the moral and ceremonial law also) is written in a book by Moses. Cf. Exodus 31:18; 32:15, 16; 34:4, 28 with 24:4-7.²⁵⁵

The Clear Evidence from Old Testament Believers

Waldron also point out that, because of such distinctions, Old Testament believers distinguished between the moral and civil and ceremonial ordinances.

- **Psalm 40:6-8:** In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. Then I said, "Behold, I have come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."
- **Jeremiah 7:22-23:** For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. 23 But this command I gave them: 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'

Some might then ask what role these laws play in the life of Israel and in the lives of Christians today.

John Reuther comments on the use of ceremonial

Ceremonial laws are "typical ordinances," meaning that these laws are types or prefigurements of things to come. These are the laws given in Exodus and Leviticus concerning the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and purity in approaching God. The types are structures, official persons, actions, offerings, and rituals, which have counterparts that will be manifested in the future. When we speak of a "type," we are referring to the picture proclaimed in the structure (tabernacle, holy of holies), the official persons (priests), actions (setting up and taking down the tabernacle, building altars), offerings (burnt, grain, peace, sin, guilt), and rituals (ordaining the priests, cleansing after defilements). The ceremonies, therefore, are types of things to come... These "are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Col. 2:17).²⁵⁶

Speaking on judicial/civil law, David Jones writes the following:

Biblical civil laws are simply the application of God's moral standards to a particular time and culture. Behind each civil law, then, is a moral law. In fact, as Augustine famously noted, a civil law apart from a moral law is no law at all. Said differently, the civil law is the moral law applied... A benefit, then, of studying the civil law is that the civil law shows the breadth of the moral law as well as the different ways in which the moral law has been applied in various ages.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ John Reuther, "Chapter Nineteen: Of the Law of God," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 361.

²⁵⁷ David W. Jones, *An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 58-59.

Comparative Table: The Law of God in Four Theological Systems

Theological System	Moral Law	Ceremonial Law	Civil / Judicial Law
Covenant Theology	The moral law summarily contained in the Ten Commandments forever binds all, as it is a reflection of God's moral character and it remains written on the hearts of all men. Those justified in Christ continue to obey this law out of gratitude, not as a covenant of works.	The ceremonial laws (sacrifices, priesthood, festivals) were fulfilled and abolished in Christ, though they typify Him and His work.	The civil/judicial laws expired with Israel's theocracy but remain valid in their general equity (moral principles are still instructive).
Progressive Covenantalism	Christians are not under the moral law as a covenant, but do not reject the moral principles inherent in the law. The law has abiding intelligibility, validity, continuity, and fulfillment in Christ.	These laws were fulfilled in Christ; their meaning is now realized in the new covenant worship of Christ.	The civil laws ended with Israel's theocracy, but their underlying principles of justice reflect God's moral order and may inform Christian ethics.
New Covenant Theology	There is little or no recognition of the threefold division of the law. All Old Covenant laws have been entirely abrogated. Believers now live under the Law of Christ (Christ and the Apostle's moral instruction). All commandments contained in the decalogue are repeated in the New Covenant, except the Sabbath command.		
Dispensationalism	The Mosaic law was a "seamless garment" that was for Israel only; the church is not under this law. All or part of this Mosaic law may be reintroduced during a future period (ie. the restoration of Israel and/or the earthly Millennium).		

Table References²⁵⁸

Paragraph 5.

The moral law does for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it; neither does Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

Rom. 13:8-10; James 2:8,10-12; James 2:10,11; Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31

²⁵⁸ This reflects the work of several authors, including Andrew T. Walker (Progressive Covenantalism), Samuel Waldron (Dispensationalism), and Zachary Garris (Dispensationalism).

1) Walker, Christ Over All: https://christoverall.com/article/concise/ethics-through-covenant-a-primer-on-progressive-covenantalism-and-moral-theology-part-1/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2) Waldron, Covenant Baptist Theological Seminary: <https://cbtseminary.org/matthew-5-1/#:~:text=Both%20New%20Covenant%20Theology%20and,Cf.>

3) Garris, Knowing Scripture: <https://knowingscripture.com/articles/covenant-theology-vs-dispensationalism>

Paragraph 6.

Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience; it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof. The promises of it likewise show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.

Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 8:1, 10:4; Rom. 3:20, 7:7; Rom. 6:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:8-13

Paragraph 7.

Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

Gal. 3:21; Ezek. 36:27

Exposition

In paragraphs five through seven, the use of the moral law for the believer is highlighted.

Here it may be helpful to evaluate the three uses of the law as they have been articulated by John Calvin and the reformers:

1) Codemn (Pedagogical Use): It reveals our sin, it exposes our utter inability to obey God, and like a good tutor, it shows us our need for a Saviour.

Romans 3:19–20

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

2) Restrain (Political Use): To establish decency in the society at large; the law provides a general framework for law and order. Romans 13:1-7 teaches us that the state is a servant of God to punish bad conduct and to reward good conduct. We see this elsewhere in 1 Peter 2:13-14 where we read:

1 Peter 2:13–14

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.

3) Guide (Normative Use): to provide a rule of life for those who are already justified and regenerated through faith in Christ. The Sermon on the Mount, especially the first third, is largely an exposition of the moral law with Christ providing not only the letter of the law, but the Spirit.

How Does the Law Guide and Act as a Rule of Life for the Law?

Sam Waldron writes on this point:

Some Protestants concluded that since believers were not justified by the works of the law, the law had little use in the believer's life. Others were saying that justified persons were under no binding obligation to obey the law. Antinomian teachers deduced this from the doctrine of free justification. They argued that free justification completely freed one from the slavery of the law and that feeling bound to obey the law was slavery. Thus, feeling bound to obey the law was inconsistent with free justification. Unsaved and unjustified people were bound by the law, but not Christians. Such positions the Confession rejects and teaches instead both the inherent obligation of the law over all men and the positive usefulness of the law in the believer's life.²⁵⁹

But, where is this taught in Scripture. Again, Waldron is helpful on this point:

The law binds men forever, whether justified or unjustified, simply because as creatures they owe such obedience to the Creator. The New Testament teaches very clearly that the law binds unsaved persons (Matthew 19:16-22; Romans 2:14, 15; 3:19, 20; 6:14; 7:6; 8:3; I Timothy 1:8-11).

But it also teaches that the moral law, the Ten Commandments, also binds believers (Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 7:19 with Galatians 5:6, 6:15; Ephesians 4:25-6:4; James 2:11-12). In Ephesians 4:25-6:4 each of the last six of the Ten Commandments is applied to the church. Note particularly the assumption that the Fifth Commandment is authoritative by its explicit citation in 6:4.²⁶⁰

If we explore mentions of the moral law throughout the New Testament, we find that Jesus Christ and the New Testament authors held a high view of the Decalogue and even maintained that the general equity of the judicial law still had some moral use:

1. Jesus' Teaching

Matthew 5:17-19

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Here Jesus explicitly reaffirms and expands upon the continuity of the moral authority of the Law:

- **Murder (6th Commandment):**

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22).

- **Adultery (7th Commandment):**

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone

²⁵⁹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 284.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28).

- **False Witness / Oaths (9th Commandment in principle):**

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all...” (Matthew 5:33–34).

In this instance, Jesus not only applies the moral law to the believers’ life, but he enhances the application of the law to address the inward attitudes and actions of the heart.

2. The Greatest Commandments

Matthew 22:37–40

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Here Jesus does not do away with the Decalogue, but he demonstrates how this greatest of commandments actually upholds the whole law. Contained in this commandment is faithful adherence to the first table of the law—our ethical obligations concerning God (Commandments 1–4), and our obligations towards our neighbours (Commandments 5–10).

3. Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

Matthew 19:16–19

“And behold, a man came up to him, saying, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’... Jesus said, ‘If you would enter life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Here Christ cites the second table of the moral law (Commandments 4–9). In this case, he references these particular laws to direct the man’s gaze from his own “good deeds”. This is consistent with Paul’s words in Romans 3:20, “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

4. Paul’s Teaching

Romans 13:8–10

“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

As Paul issues these important instructions, he directly quotes from the Decalogue and teaches that love fulfills—not replaces or abrogates—the moral law.

Ephesians 4–6

As Waldron notes above, several commandments found in the Decalogue are applied to the church today.

- **Truthfulness (9th Commandment):**

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” (Ephesians 4:25)

- **Stealing (8th Commandment):**
“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands...” (Ephesians 4:28)
- **Purity (7th Commandment):**
“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you...” (Ephesians 5:3)
- **Covetousness / Idolatry (10th Commandment):**
“For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” (Ephesians 5:5)
- **Honour Parents (5th Commandment):**
“Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” (Eph 6:2-3)

Perhaps the most explicit reference to the Decalogue is found in this final instruction in Ephesians 6:2-3, where it is unmistakable that Paul has the fifth commandment in mind. The similarities are seen in the table below (similarities are emphasized):

Exodus 20:12
“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
Ephesians 6:2-3
“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. ”

1 Timothy 1:8-11

“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.”

Each category corresponds to one or more of the Ten Commandments:

- 1-3: *Ungodly and profane* → 1-4 Commandments
- 5: *Strike fathers/mothers* → 5th Commandment
- 6: *Murderers* → 6th Commandment
- 7: *Sexually immoral* → 7th Commandment
- 8-9: *Enslavers, liars, perjurers* → 8th-9th Commandment
- 10: *Whatever else contrary to sound doctrine* → Possible encompassing covetousness in 10th Commandment

Here Paul seeks to bring all people under the ministry of condemnation in the law. Nevertheless, his use of these does not imply that these laws are now abrogated. Rather the violation of these laws remain “contrary to sound doctrine.”

5. The General Equity of the Judicial/Civil Law

The Laborer Deserves His Wages

- **Judicial Law: Deuteronomy 25:4**

“You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.”

- **General Equity Application: 1 Corinthians 9:8–10**

“Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’

Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.”

- **General Equity Application: 1 Timothy 5:17–18**

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’”

Here Paul cites the original judicial law about oxen and draws out its moral principle—those who labor should share in the benefits of their labor. In this case, this applies to gospel ministers.

The Requirement for Witnesses

- **Deuteronomy 19:15**

“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong... Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.”

- **General Equity Application in Matthew 18:16** — Here Jesus says, “But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

- **General Equity Application in 2 Corinthians 13:1**

This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

- **General Equity Application in 1 Timothy 5:19**

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

The Payment of Wages

- **Deuteronomy 24:14–15**

“You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy... You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets.”

- **General Equity Application in James 5:4** — “Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you...”

The Death Penalty for Murder

- **Genesis 9:6**

Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

- **Numbers 35:30–31**

“If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness. Moreover, you shall accept no

ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death.

- **General Equity Application in Romans 13:3-4**

For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, or he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

When we examine the use of the moral law in the New Testament without prejudice, we see that the law continues to be binding upon all people. Moreover, it is consistently used by Christ and the New Testament authors as a "rule of life" for believers today. Nevertheless, this law must be used lawfully. It cannot be seen as a mechanism for works-righteousness, nor is the believer to come under it once more as a covenant of works. Rather, it is of great use to the redeemed in Christ, "as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty..."

We will conclude with remarks from Carl Henry and Charles Spurgeon on the subject:

Carl Henry:

The Bible is the superlative propositional revelation of God; in defining man's duties it is the repository of the world's noblest ethical ideals. It is the supreme evidence that God has not withheld from individuals and nations the moral instruction they need for the perfect fulfillment of their calling. Those who exhibit its moral claims assert them to be more than human representations; indeed, we do not hesitate to identify them as the very will of God, revealed and written. The Torah gained its hold on Hebrew life because it was considered to be revealed instruction. The reverence Jesus held for the Law in written form is clear in Matthew 5:18, "not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law." This implies that He appealed to the Old Testament as authoritatively containing the Divine command. Paul declares the glory of the Hebrews to be that they alone knew God's will (Romans 2:17), possessing the very oracles of God.²⁶¹

Charles Spurgeon:

The law is God's law, and therefore it is our love. We love it for its holiness, and pine to be holy; we love it for its wisdom, and study to be wise; we love it for its perfection, and long to be perfect. Those who know the power of the gospel perceive an infinite loveliness in the law as they see it fulfilled and embodied in Christ Jesus.²⁶²

²⁶¹ Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 265-66. 19.

²⁶² C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Volume 3, Psalms 111-119 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 330.