

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

SHORTER CATECHISM

LESSON # 27 (Q3LES1) - THE LAWS OF GOD, THE MORAL LAW

1. Prayer
2. Bible reading: Psalm 1: 1 - 6
3. **Review:** We have completed the first of three sections of the SC. This section comprised the first 38 questions of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and the first 90 questions of the LC. Remember SC question 3 from early in our study? (**What do the scriptures principally teach? “The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”**). The first 38 questions deal with what man is to believe concerning God. We’ve covered God, creation, the fall, Christ and redemption, salvation, resurrection and the day of judgement.
4. **Introduction:** In this lesson we will start on the second part of SC q3, **“what duty God requires of man.”**. The LC actually has a break at this point, between LC questions 90 and 91. This break states *“Having seen what the scriptures principally teach us to believe concerning God, it follows to consider what they require as the duty of man.”* This break is not present in the SC.

Questions 39 through 81 of the SC deal with the law of God. The first six questions are an introduction to the Ten Commandments. They discuss the origin of the law; it’s introduction to man, where it is presented to us, and the preface to the 10 commandments. Each commandment is then covered in detail. We will start with the first three questions. As usual, there is a lot more information in the WCF, and the LC. Chapter 19 of the WCF, Of the Law of God, is a really interesting chapter, and we will use a lot of material out of it.

It must also be noted that the Catholics, Jews, and Presbyterian churches number the Ten Commandments differently. The Jews consider what is considered the preface by the Presbyterians, as the first commandment. The Catholics combine the Presbyterians first four commandments into three, and split the tenth commandment into two separate commandments. There are other differences. But, all agree on the theology, as presented in Exodus, chapter 20.

5. **Questions:**

Question 39: What is the duty which God requireth of man?

Answer: The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to His revealed will.

Question 40: What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

Answer: The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

Question 41: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

Answer: The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments.

6. Obedience to his revealed will

- a. SC q39 and LC q91 are identical. The both ask: *“What is the duty God requires of man?”*

And both answer, *“The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will.”*

- b. Why must man be obedient to God? He says so. (**Micah 6:8** *“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”*)

(**1Sam 15:22** says, *“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”*) What is this verse saying?

TV has this to say: *“Obedience unto God is the duty of man, because God is his creator, and Benefactor and supreme Sovereign Lord and King.”*

- c. What does God require in his revealed will?

TV has this to say: *“God’s revealed will is concerning those things which may and ought to be done. And doth extend only unto those things which are duty, and which in themselves do tend to God’s glory; and this revealed will is the rule of God’s obedience.”*

- d. It follows that if God has a revealed will, that there must be a secret, unrevealed will.

Is man responsible for obedience to God's secret will? Can anyone think of a scripture verse to support a secret will? (**Deut 29:29** ***"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."***)

- e. What is God's secret will? TV says: *"God's secret will is concerning all things that are done, and shall be done; and doth extend even unto sinful actions, which he doth will to permit, and determine, and direct beyond man's will and intention, to his own glory."*

7. The moral law

- a. We've discussed God's laws and the moral law many times, I found the presentations in the WCF, LC and SC, very interesting, and their contents made the whole concept much easier to understand. SC q40 and LC q92 are virtually identical, although the answer to the LC question is slightly expanded.
- b. Let's deal first with the phrase "at first" in this question, as it deals with the moral law. What does "at first" mean?

Chapter 19, para 1 says: *"God gave Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity to life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it: and endued him with power and ability to keep it"*

God gave the moral law to Adam.

- c. How did Adam have the Moral law? How did Adam and Eve know what God wanted?

(Gen 1: 26 – 27 is the scripture proof for this question. ⁽²⁶⁾ ***And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*** ⁽²⁷⁾ ***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.***)

What does this scripture verse tell us?

God created man in his own image. **Does any one remember where they have heard this before?** How about SC q10. How did God create man? God

created man male and female, after his own image, in **knowledge, righteousness and holiness**, with dominion over the creatures.

Man, being created in the image of God, was created with the knowledge of the moral law.

God being moral, if man was made in his image, man must have been moral

- c. Question 92 of the LC is the equivalent of question 40 in the SC, but the answer is expanded, and gives us insight into the meaning. Question 92 asks: *“What did God at first reveal unto man as the rule of his obedience?”*

The answer is: *“The rule of obedience revealed to Adam in the estate of innocence, and to all mankind in him, besides a special command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, was the moral law.”* (**Back to Gen 1: 26 - 27 again**)

- d. Were A & E created with no knowledge of good and evil?

God created A & E with a knowledge of the moral law, and instructed them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, therefore it follows that they must have had some understanding of what it is.

- f. Question 93 of the LC asks a question not asked by the SC. Q 93 asks: *“What is the moral law?”*

It answers: *“The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man: promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it.”*

Let's look at what this answer tells us. The moral law is:

- Gods will to mankind
- Directing and binding every one.....thereunto
- In the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body
- Performance of all duties of holiness and righteousness, **which he oweth to God and man**
- Promising life upon the fulfilling
- And threatening death upon the breach of it

- g. The sequence:

- God created man in his image (knowledge, righteousness, & holiness)
- Being created in Gods' image, man was created with knowledge of the moral law. God additionally gave A & E a special command, which they broke, thus **breaking God's law**, and loosing communion with God.
- While loosing communion with God, man retained in his heart, the moral law, which has been passed on to all generations. (natural law)

8. GOD'S WRITTEN LAW

- a. SC question 41 asks: *"Where is the moral law summarily comprehended? The equivalent and identical question in the LC is q98, the first part of which is identical to the answer in the SC.*

The answer: *"The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments." (Deut 10:4 "And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me.")*

- b. Chapter 19, para 2 has this to say: *"This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and, and such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six our duty to man."*
- c. What other laws did God give the people of Israel?

Chapter 19, para 3 of the WCF says: *"Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, 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 are now abrogated, under the New Testament."*

- d. Chapter 19, para 4 of the WCF adds: *"To them also, as a body politic, He gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require."*

9. More on the moral law

- a. Chapter 19 of the WCF has more on the moral law, which, while not covered in the SC, is of importance. So we will take a little time to study this material.

b. Paragraphs 5 and 6 of chapter 19 seem to be somewhat contradictory. Lets look.

- WCF chapter 19, paragraph 5 states: *“The moral law doth 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 doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.”*

YET (this is kinda long)

- WCF paragraph 6 states: ***“Although true believers be 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 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 nature, 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, (that’s us) to restrain their corruption’s, 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 thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God’s approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof; although not as due to them by the law, as a covenant of works. So as, a man’s doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and not under grace.”***

c. Paragraph 5 says: “The moral law doth for ever bind all, as well justified person as others.”. Yet paragraph 6 makes it very clear that salvation is through grace, not works, starting: “Although true believers be not under the law,...”, and does further define it’s (moral laws) application”. Are these two statements contradictory?

The scripture proofs for paragraph 5 make it clear that:

- Salvation by grace does in no way make the moral law invalid. (1 John 2: 3 – 4, 7 – 8)
- Christ expects his church to understand and keep the moral law. (Rom 13: 8 – 10)

- d. Paragraph 6 makes it clear that salvation is not through works, but through grace. **BUT**, yet it is of great use to man. In what way is the moral law useful to man?
- It is a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty.
 - It directs and binds them to walk accordingly
 - Allows them to discover the sinful pollutions of their hearts and lives,
 - So that, examining themselves thereby, they may come to a further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin.
 - Develop a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of His obedience.
 - It is of use to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin:
 - The threatenings serve to show what their sins deserve and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for sin, although freed from the curse threatened by the law.
 - Show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect for the performance thereof.
- e. Paragraph 6 ends with: *“So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and not under grace.”*
- f. Chapter 19 ends with a short paragraph 7, which states: *“Neither are the forementioned used 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, requireth to be done.”*

Point here is that the moral law is not a factor in salvation, but in none the less still the true will of God, and will be observed by the elect.

10. SUMMARY

The duty which God requires of man is obedience to His revealed will, which is contained in His moral law. God revealed his will to man starting with Adam & Eve, which, being created in the image of God, they had from the creation. After the fall, the moral law continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness. God summarized His moral law to mankind through Moses, on two tablets, on Mt. Sinai. They are still God's perfect rule and direction to mankind for obedience.