

## Orthodoxy - Obedience

New City Catechism Question 7: What does the law require?

Answer: Personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience; that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves. What God forbids should never be done and what God commands should always be done.

*And [Jesus] said to him, "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." - Matthew 22:37-40*



As we stand at the corner, where truth from outside of us intersects our lives, we're met with the words, "the law". These words are shocking to our existential sensibilities, whether we call ourselves existentialists or not. We stand at the corner and breath the air of liberation. We breath in and out the air of how we are freed from the unjust and unchosen norms imposed on us against our will. We might even express that the writer of these words correct himself. 'How can you say that there is such a thing as "the law", and how can you dare to impose it's requirements on me?' And then we step from the corner out into the street and demand that it's people and it's gods love us. We walk not in freedom but in chains.

We know "the law". It is written on our hearts (Rom.2:15). We expect it in our standards for others, and we feel it's weight in the dark or in the guilty screams inside our own heads. We also know "the law" has a Giver. His glory is revealed to us each and every day, but we suppress this truth in unbounded expressions of personal freedom (Rom.1:18-19). We gather at our sporting events and sing out with great gusto the line, "o're the land of the free". But we will never know the freedom our hearts are longing for until we know 'the Giver' and "the law" by his grace.

When Jesus spoke the words above recorded in Matthew's gospel, he spoke them as God who had come in his grace for the salvation of his people. When God spoke the law to Israel, thousands of years earlier in the wilderness outside of Egypt, he spoke it to them as their gracious God. He said, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (Exodus 20:2) The law giver is the grace giver. What God requires in "the law" is what God gives by his redeeming grace.

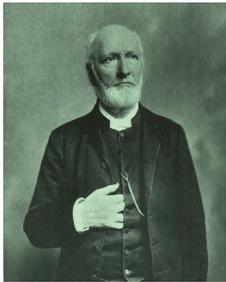
The law requires that we trust and obey God in everything because in his grace he has done everything for us. In his love for us he tells us what we should not do and what we should do. And we respond to his unfailing love by fulfilling the law in love to him and our neighbors by not doing certain things and by doing certain things from the heart by faith. This is freedom. His grace motivates and empowers our response to him and others in love. We love God by doing what he requires and not doing what he forbids. This love is the expression of our faith in him as our steadfast loving Savior. We love our neighbor by doing what is best for them that they may live in a loving relationship with God as their Savior. This love is the expression of our faith in God who has loved us and justified us when there was nothing in us to commend us to God.

But one reason we try to throw of "the law" in our existential expressions of freedom is, we're not able to do what the law requires. We're not able to love God and our neighbor as we ought outside of the intervening grace of God in Jesus Christ. The law is powerless to make us obedient children of God. But God by his grace did for us in Jesus Christ what the law could not do. God sent Jesus to live in the flesh in perfect and perpetual obedience to the law. He also sent Jesus to die in the flesh for the curse of the law because of our disobedience to his law. But though he died for the sins of the world, he was raised up from the dead being justified as a perfect sacrifice for

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sins. Therefore, all who live by faith in Jesus, live by faith in his perfect obedience, his sacrificial death, and his justifying resurrection. This is the grace and power of God for salvation for everyone who has broken God's law in any one part and has become guilty of it all. This is also the grace and power for a life of obedience to God's law for everyone who knows that they cannot be justified by obedience to the law, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. In this relationship of grace and faith with God through Jesus Christ we are given the Spirit of God to live in union with Jesus Christ for the fulfilling of God's law. This is the expression of our true free humanity founded and lived in Jesus Christ. The gospel of grace is the power to save us and it is the power to enable us to live by an obedient faith in the will of God, the giver of the law. We don't have to step away from the corner out into the street searching for personal recognition, fulfillment, freedom, and meaning. It's here at the corner where God's truth intersects with our lives in living out our destiny as grateful, faithful, obedient children of God in love to him and those around us by his enabling grace in Jesus Christ. It is the giver of the law who will strengthen you in Jesus Christ for the obedience of faith, and this is freedom.

## Today in Church History



Philip Schaff was born January 1, 1819 in Switzerland and studied there and in Germany under some of great theologians of his time. However, he said that a theologian without faith in Jesus Christ is like "a sky without a star, a heart without a pulse, light without warmth, a sword without edge, a body without soul." Schaff was an evangelical Christian during the rise of theological liberalism in Europe. He came to America to teach at the German Reformed Theological Seminary in Mercersburg, Pennsylvania in 1844. He was influential in his leadership in the church among evangelical Lutherans. He encouraged hymn singing and produced a hymnal, he worked on a committee to strengthen the German Reformed Church's liturgy, and he produced a newer version of the Heidelberg Catechism for the church in 1863. However, his greatest contribution to the church was his writings. Schaff's writings included six of the eight volumes of *The History of the*

*Christian Church*, editorial oversight of the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, a three-volume study of *The Creeds of Christendom*, an edition of *Lange's Commentary*, and oversight of the twenty-eight volumes of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. On October 20, 1893 Philip Schaff died in New York. He had moved to New York during the War Between the States and was teaching at Union Theological Seminary. In his later years, he suffered a stroke and was unable to talk. However, before he lost his ability to speak his last confession was, "I am a sinner and place my trust in my Savior who died for me."

## Emotional Multi-Tasking

Can you and do you emotionally multi-task? I sat joyfully and painfully through *Judy*, a movie about Judy Garland, played brilliantly by Rene Zellweger. During this two hour movie I found myself smiling, laughing, tensely crossing my arms, sitting upright in my seat, leaning forward in my seat, and crying. That's emotional multi-tasking in the space of two hours. The Hebrew poet writes, "For everything there is a season...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; - Ecclesiastes 3:4 Life in the real world, until Jesus returns, is one of emotional multi-tasking. Yet we demand it to be different.

When a child is born we expect to rejoice with the family. So, when that child's newborn life is complicated by sickness, we demand that someone who knows something about these things do something about it. We weren't prepared for our anxiety, sadness, and suffering. We expected to dance. When we go to work to carry out our God given roles through our God given talents, time, and resources we expect to get fulfillment from our work. We expect to rejoice and be at rest when the task is done. We expect others to appreciate what we've done and how well we've done it. We even expect to see things come together. So, when our gifts and talents aren't enough for the job, or if they are and no one seemed to recognize it, or our project gets sabotaged by a greedy coworker hungry for ego boosting recognition, or things just didn't work like you thought they would, we get angry, discouraged, and depressed, so we flee, even if it's just an emotional checking out. People told us it would be this way, but we prepared ourselves for something different. We didn't expect that in our work we would have to emotionally multi-task. So what do we do?

We can expect to emotionally multi-task in this life when we alter our expectations in a relationship with Jesus. We expect dancing and mourning in the same day as we follow Jesus. We expect a relationship with Jesus who is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters who weeps with us when we weep, and who rejoices with us when we rejoice. We expect a relationship with him in his strength for courage to love in hard ways, and a relationship with him in his grace and mercy to help us in all our weaknesses. Until he returns we can expect to emotionally multi-task.