

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to [oakhillpca.com/wsc](http://oakhillpca.com/wsc)

Q. 43. *What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?*

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments is in these words, *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

Q. 44. *What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?*

A. The preface to the Ten Commandments teaches us, that because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments.

God exercises his providential governing of mankind through his moral law, which is summarized in the Ten Commandments. We are embarking on a multi-week study of those commandments. The Catechism has us begin by considering the preface to the commandments, found in Exodus 20:1-2. There is a good reason behind this starting point.

The Westminster Confession of Faith contains an entire chapter on the Law of God (chapter 19). The Shorter Catechism is designed to supplement and help teach the truth of the Confession. What the Confession says about the use of the law proves helpful in understanding what the Catechism is emphasizing with this focus on the preface to the Ten Commandments.

In paragraph 19.6, the Confession outlines three uses of the law.

1. First, "as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, [the law] directs and binds them to walk accordingly." This may be called the "common" use of the law in that every single human being falls under this use. This is God's providential governing of all mankind. Under this use, everyone "sins and falls short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

2. Second, the law aids in "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." This may be called the "convicting" or "evangelizing" use of the law. The law exposes our sinfulness and drives us to the Savior, Jesus Christ.

3. Third, the law is "likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and... in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof." This may be called the "sanctifying" use of the law. The law serves Christians by helping us to hate our sin and walk in holiness. The Confession goes to great lengths to make sure we know this use of the law is "not contrary to the grace of the gospel (19.7). Obedience to the law does not save us.

It's this third use of the Law that the Catechism wants to emphasize when it highlights the preface. God has redeemed us out of bondage. We are regenerate, therefore we use the law to learn to hate sin and walk in holiness.