

THE OAKBRIDGE

Three Uses of the Law- A Rule of Life

From Pastor Seth

In October and November of 2019, we looked at two of the three uses of God's Law. We started by looking at what Luther called the *spiritual* use of the Law. This recognizes that God's Law functions as a mirror, revealing to a sinner the nature and extent of his sin, the righteous standard of God, and the sinner's utter helplessness before God's judgment seat. Then, by God's design, this same Law leads sinners to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for refuge (Galatians 3:19-26). As Augustine wrote, "The usefulness of the law lies in convicting man of his infirmity and moving him to call upon the remedy of grace which is in Christ." Then, we looked at what Luther called the *civil* use of the Law. This speaks of the application of God's Law to society, restraining evil and maintaining a measure of peace and stability in the social order. This month we will look at a third use of the Law—one that understands God's Law to be a guide, or a *rule of life*, for believers in Christ.



Calvin and the Third Use of the Law

John Calvin is credited as being the first to develop a clear three-fold use of the Law in Protestant understanding. Luther hinted at a third use, but never explicitly worked it out with his pen in any of his writings or teachings. Phillip Melancthon would eventually develop this idea further for Lutherans; but for Reformed churches, Calvin was the first to break this ground. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 2, chapter 7, Calvin writes, "Even the believers have need of the Law. The third and principle use, which pertains more closely to the proper purpose of the Law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns." Notice, he describes this third use of the Law as the "principle use," upholding the Law's "proper purpose." What is this "third," or "principle use" of the Law? First, Calvin writes, it is the use of the Law as "the best instrument for [believers] to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the understanding of it." In other words, the Law serves to help believers understand more fully what is pleasing in God's sight (Ephesians 5:7-10). He compares this to a servant, searching and studying out the will of his master so that the servant will better understand what his master wants him to do. Secondly, Calvin taught that this use of the Law is for "exhortation." Calvin writes, "by frequent meditation upon [the Law, the believer will] be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and be drawn back from the slippery path of transgression." "In this way," Calvin writes, "the saints must press on."

Is this Biblical?

The ultimate question for us, however, is not what Luther taught about the Law, or what Calvin taught. For us as Christ-followers, the question is always, "What does God teach in His Word?" As we turn to the witness of the Bible, we see that the Scriptures do teach this third use of the Law in many places. We do not have enough space to look at them all, but let me draw your attention to some.

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The book of Romans contains many passages that call upon believers in Christ to use God's Law as a rule for their lives. If you read Romans 6:14-22, you will

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see how it applies the use of God's Law to the whole process of sanctification in the Christian life. It does not save, but it is of use to those who have already been saved. Verse 19 explains that believers who have been set free from their bondage to sin through faith in Christ (vs 18), are now to "present the members" of their bodies as "slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification." Just before this, verse 18 describes our lost state in sin and impurity as a state in which "lawlessness" reigned. And this "lawlessness" is set up in contrast to the "righteousness" that believers are now to pursue. Therefore, in this process of sanctification, the Law of God becomes the new standard by which we order our lives, as opposed to the lawlessness in which we once walked when we were separated from Christ. This relationship between the Christian life and the Law of God is developed further throughout the book of Romans (Romans 7-8; 13:8-10). The basic principle is that Christians do not "overthrow the Law" by our faith in Christ. "On the contrary," the Christian life is one that "upholds the Law" (Romans 3:31).

Also, as we have been seeing in the Adult Sunday School class, in Matthew 5, Jesus teaches us how the Law of God applies to the life of the believer. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus makes clear that He did not come to abolish the Law (to destroy it), but to fulfill it. Then, in Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus explains how the Law of God is fulfilled in the lives of His followers. Rather than being annulled, Jesus brings God's Law to its intended purpose in our lives as believers. This is exactly what God promised to do in the New Covenant. As God says in Jeremiah 31:33, in the New Covenant, "I will put My Law within them and on their heart I will write it." In the New Covenant, God's Law becomes an internal principle at work in the hearts of His people. Jesus makes clear in Matthew 5 that this is exactly what He is bringing to pass.

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The Line in the Sand

There are many other places where the connection between the Christian life and the Law of God are clearly seen (1 John 3:4-10, 1 John 5:1-3, Revelation 12:17, Ephesians 6:1-3). However, in discussing the relationship of the Law to the life of the believer, there is one line that must never be crossed. The Law of God is never to be used as a means of gaining God's favor or approval. For in regard to salvation, "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). Christ has fulfilled the Law of God for us, accomplishing all righteousness for us in our place (Matthew 3:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21). He also fulfilled the Law for us by satisfying all the Law's demands that stood against us because of our sin (Galatians 3:10-13). This is why "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Christ has taken upon Himself all the condemnation of the Law that His people deserved. And all who put their faith in Christ alone to save them are clothed in a perfect, complete, irreproachable robe of righteousness. They can never add to the perfections of that robe by their own good works, and they can never diminish its beauty by their cancelled sin. The Law is never to be used to earn favor with God. It is only a rule, or a guide, whereby the believer can grow in understanding "that which is pleasing to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10, 2 Corinthians 5:9).

The relationship between being set free from the Law and yet living the Christian life under the instruction and guidance of the Law was captured perfectly by R. C. Sproul when he wrote, "Our redemption [in Christ] is from the curse of God's Law, not from our duty to obey it." As creatures made in the image of God, it is our duty to reflect His likeness in our lives. Though our ability to do this in our own strength has been shattered by our fall into sin, Ephesians 4:24 says, in Christ we are being renewed "in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Therefore, our ability to reflect the likeness of God as His image-bearers is being restored through our union with Christ. The Law simply guides our feet down the path of reflecting His likeness well. May the Lord grow in us a delight in His Law (Psalm 1:1-3), and may the Holy Spirit impart the wisdom we need to apply His Law to our lives in the freedom that is ours in Christ—freedom from sin, and freedom to serve and obey Him without fear (Galatians 5:1, 13; Luke 1:74).

A LESLIE UPDATE

The students returned to River Valley Academy on January 4, and Term 2 is well underway. As sophomore class sponsors, this term will be busy for the Leslie family. As many of you know, Josh's class is preparing to do "Valentine Sales". Now that may sound trite and unimportant, but at a place like RVA, it's a big deal. Rather than it being just a way to send a box of sweet-hearts to a sweetheart, it's an opportunity for parents, who are apart from their children, to show their love by sending a card, a small gift, and maybe even a singing Valentine. Our focus during this time is not on romantic love, but on loving and encouraging each other as recipients of God's amazing love for us. We want to thank you all for your participation in it by sending candy. We'll update you with some pictures in a few weeks!



Joshua, Jonathan, Lilli, Sophie and Tiana

We may not get asked directly, but we get the feeling that many wonder, "Why do you work at a school for missionary kids?" It's a good question. With so many unreached people groups yet to hear the proclamation of the gospel, why missionary kids in Kenya? We can make a very strong case that what we do here *does* help reach the peoples of Africa with the gospel.

But the longer we are here, the more we have become aware of the fact that missionary kids on the field are worth sending gospel-laborers to. It's not a competition of importance. Which is more important, the root or the fruit? The fruit is the goal to be sure, but without the root there would be no fruit. From our experience on the field, we can say without a doubt, if there were not those called to serve the kids of missionaries, the number of families willing to endure the hardships of the mission field over the long haul would not be what it is today.

These children are unique. Most of them didn't have a choice about coming to Africa. They've done school at home, in a remote village, at an international school in a big city. They've made friends and adjusted to multiple cultures. But they don't have a home. They may love and appreciate their new culture, but it's not home - and they may not even feel welcome there. Even their home country has changed and doesn't feel like home when they return for home-assignment or college. Who is going to try and understand these kids? Who is going to come alongside them and make them feel at home? Who is going to help them see that they are not alone? Who is going to keep pointing them to their sufficiency in Christ? Who can do these things, while at the same time act as partners, not replacements, to their parents?



Rift Valley Academy

This is why Rift Valley Academy came into existence in 1906 and endures today. It's a home for missionary kids. It's a great comfort for missionaries. We provide something here that is utterly unique, that no one can really understand unless you've been here, which we invite you to do!

That may not fully answer the question, but we hope it helps to understand a little of why we're here. We don't know when the Lord may call us to something different - perhaps to a less reached area of Africa, or perhaps somewhere to equip poorly trained pastors in discipleship and theological education. But for now He's called us here, and the task is just as great, just as important. In your global kingdom prayers for the nations, remember the ordinary families serving around the world who bear the daily responsibility of language learning, building relationships, preaching the gospel, but also caring for their children and preparing them for the future.

FEBRUARY BIBLE READING

M'Cheyne Bible Reading Plan

Family Reading					Personal Reading			
Date	Book	Chapter	Book	Chapter	Book	Chapter	Book	Chapter
1	Genesis	33	Mark	4	Esther	9, 10	Romans	4
2	Genesis	34	Mark	5	Job	1	Romans	5
3	Genesis	35, 36	Mark	6	Job	2	Romans	6
4	Genesis	37	Mark	7	Job	3	Romans	7
5	Genesis	38	Mark	8	Job	4	Romans	8
6	Genesis	39	Mark	9	Job	5	Romans	9
7	Genesis	40	Mark	10	Job	6	Romans	10
8	Genesis	41	Mark	11	Job	7	Romans	11
9	Genesis	42	Mark	12	Job	8	Romans	12
10	Genesis	43	Mark	13	Job	9	Romans	13
11	Genesis	44	Mark	14	Job	10	Romans	14
12	Genesis	45	Mark	15	Job	11	Romans	15
13	Genesis	46	Mark	16	Job	12	Romans	16
14	Genesis	47	Luke	1:1-38	Job	13	1 Corinthians	1
15	Genesis	48	Luke	1:39-80	Job	14	1 Corinthians	2
16	Genesis	49	Luke	2	Job	15	1 Corinthians	3
17	Genesis	50	Luke	3	Job	16, 17	1 Corinthians	4
18	Exodus	1	Luke	4	Job	18	1 Corinthians	5
19	Exodus	2	Luke	5	Job	19	1 Corinthians	6
20	Exodus	3	Luke	6	Job	20	1 Corinthians	7
21	Exodus	4	Luke	7	Job	21	1 Corinthians	8
22	Exodus	5	Luke	8	Job	22	1 Corinthians	9
23	Exodus	6	Luke	9	Job	23	1 Corinthians	10
24	Exodus	7	Luke	10	Job	24	1 Corinthians	11
25	Exodus	8	Luke	11	Job	25, 26	1 Corinthians	12
26	Exodus	9	Luke	12	Job	27	1 Corinthians	13
27	Exodus	10	Luke	13	Job	28	1 Corinthians	14
28	Exodus	11, 12:1-21	Luke	14	Job	29	1 Corinthians	15
29								



February 2020



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

*Let Your work be shown to Your servants, and Your glorious power to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us;
yes, establish the work of our hands!*

Psalm 90:16-17

2 8:30 a.m. - Prayer Time 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 12:30 p.m. - Emmaus Life/Care Grp	3 7:00 p.m. - Deacons Meeting	4	5 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	6 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Life/Care Grp	7 6:30 a.m. - OCC Men's Meeting	8 10:00 a.m. - Women's Ministry Study & Salad Lunch
9 8:30 a.m. - Prayer Time 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 2:00 p.m. - Good Samaritan 4:30 p.m. - Taste & See L/C Group	10 6:30 p.m. - Elders & Deacons Meeting	11 6:30 p.m. - Missions Committee Meeting	12 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	13 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Life/Care Grp 2:30 p.m. - Visual Arts Committee Meeting 6:30 p.m. - CTC L/C Grp	14 6:00 a.m. - Elders Meeting 1:00 p.m. - Options for Women Ministry	15
16 8:30 a.m. - Prayer Time 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 11:45 a.m. - Fellowship Luncheon 12:45 p.m. - Annual Meeting	17	18	19 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	20 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Life/Care Grp	21 6:30 a.m. - OCC Men's Meeting	22
23 8:30 a.m. - Prayer Time 9:00 a.m. - Sunday School 10:20 a.m. - Worship 4:30 p.m. - Taste & See L/C Group	24	25	26 9:00 a.m. - Prayer Time 6:30 p.m. - Connecting in Prayer	27 1:30 p.m. - Psalm 19 Life/Care Grp 6:30 p.m. - CTC L/C Grp	28 6:00 a.m. - Elders Meeting	29

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

February 1 — Esther Jones

February 4 — Caitlyn Hepfler

February 8 — David Butler

February 11 — Ron Buschman

February 12 — Abigail Hepfler

February 14 — Loren Hubin

February 15 — Beth Anderson

February 17 — Tad DeCaro

Oakridge Community Church

610 County Road 5
Stillwater, MN 55082
www.oakridgecommunity.org
Email: churchoffice@oakridgecommunity.org



OCC Vision

The vision of Oakridge Community Church is to spread a joyful passion for the absolute, eternal supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things, to all peoples.

OCC Mission

The mission of Oakridge Community Church is to glorify God by delighting in, declaring and displaying the gospel of Jesus Christ.