

LD 34 (QA 93); Psalm 95; Dt. 6:1-9; The Context of the Law I. The Law's Author II. The Law's Recipient III. The Law's Division

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, does ignorance of the Law excuse the breaking of the Law? For example, if you are driving on a road and you are going 70 in a 55-mph zone, if your excuse to the officer is that you did not know what the speed limit was, will your ignorance get you out of ticket? Of lets say that you are filing your taxes, will your ignorance of the tax code enable you to be free from paying taxes? Surely not! Well, what about he Law of God? Does ignorance of God's Law mean that humanity is free from it's requirements? Today as we return to the catechism, we begin our consideration of the 10 Commandments. This week we will look at the introduction of the Law and the context in which we receive it. We will consider this theme: Jesus Christ applies the Law to the heart of God's people.

I. The Law's Author

In our first point, we consider the author of the law. When we are reading the 10 Commandments, just who exactly is the one giving this law to us? So in our first point we learn that the Law is not an invention of man- but rather it is a gift of God! To start off we need to come to grips with the fact that man does not determine what is right and wrong. Humanity does not get to decide what is good or bad. The further our laws depart from God's norm, the more perverted our society will become. No, the norm of the Law is set by God. We receive the Law as God sets the standard. When anyone begins to tell you that their standard of life is built on how they feel or their own version of truth, you know that they are headed for trouble. God alone is good and true- and His way alone is right. You will remember that the major issue in the book of Judges is that everyone did what was right in their own eyes. People were acting like they were a law unto themselves. But as we read in the introduction to the Law; "I am the LORD your God." The great "I am" is speaking- it is He who gives us His standards. The LORD your God- Yahweh Elohim. The God of creation- the great God above all. Who is also the God of the covenant- the God who is and has come to be known by you. This dual basis as the LORD your God is affirmed again in the 4th

commandment. In Ex. 20 we find that the reason we are to keep the Sabbath Day is because God created everything in 6 days- the foundation for the Law is found in the creative work of the all-powerful God. But when we read this commandment in Dt. 5:15- we find that it was the LORD who brought us up out of Egypt by His mighty hand and outstretched arm. Here the foundation for the Law is in His Redeeming work- that HE has saved us! So the context in which we receive the Law is two-fold- God is both our creator and our redeemer. We receive the Law in the context of grace- having been already created and redeemed! So our obedience cannot earn our deliverance- it has already been given. Now we are purchased. And as such, He has the right to tell us how to live and act! To break the Law is to ignore the one who made you! It is to thumb your nose at the one to whom you belong! This is why God has the authority to write the Law- to tell us how to live! Because He has made us and we are His. Only a person in authority can write a binding law. For example, I cannot re-write the tax law or adjust the speed limit- I do not have that authority. But He has complete and absolute authority over everyone and everything! And since God does not change, His Law remains steadfast and endures. As Psalm 19 says, the Law of the Lord is sure and endures forever. And this is an important point to remember- God's standards do not change! What is wrong in God's sight remains wrong- no matter what people may tell you! God does not change His mind and His Law is not like a wax nose that you twist to mean whatever you want! This is so common today- playing games with God's law as if we had the authority to re-write what God has said! You will remember that this is the very sin of the fall! Has God really said? To question the Law of God or to twist its meaning to fit your own agenda is the very works of the Devil! So the Law begins- I am the LORD your God- this is my Law- listen to me!

II. The Law's Recipient

But to whom is the Law given? We know that the Law was first clearly spoken to and written down by Moses on Mt. Sinai. But who was and is the Law for? Only for the Israelites? Does it have an abiding place today? As we read in the Law from Ex. 20- I am the LORD YOUR God. I brought YOU out of Egypt.

And again- as we read in Psalm 95:7- you are my sheep- my treasured possession. Do not harden your hearts, listen to my word! So the Law was given specifically to those whom God has made and those whom God has redeemed. The creatures of His hand- the sheep of His pasture- the ones He knows and cares for. So there is a corporate community that is gathered together before God to whom He gives the law. Added to that, we can say that it is these people whom God has chosen to be His own- those who are redeemed- who are special- the apple of His eye! God has revealed Himself to His people- specifically the covenant people! Those who are called by His name- those who have the mark of the covenant- it is to these that He gives His law! The LORD your God calls you His own. And just as He brought the Israelites out of Egypt- liberating them from the house of bondage; so also our God has brought us out of the barren land of sin and has liberated us from the land of slavery to false gods. I am the God of your fathers as we read in Dt. 6:3 says. Yet our reading from Dt. 6 brings before us a specific reminder as well. Not only is the Law given to us- this Law is also to be impressed upon us and our children! Taught to the next generation. As I said before, there is a covenantal community that receives the Law. So that the next generation is also taught their identity! To say this another way, the children of believers need to teach their children about their identity as God's people and their calling to know and obey their God! This is the focus of Dt. 6:7- these words shall not only be upon your hearts; they are to be taught diligently to your children as well! Of note, the word use for teaching means that this truth will be impressed upon them. Their understanding is to be sharpened with the use of the Law. This is particularly important today as we have just witnessed the baptism of little Jay. In baptism, Eric and Sarah have made the promise that they will do all in their power to teach and train their children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. One of the key ways in which parents teach their children is to instruct them in way of the Lord as they bring the Law of God to bear upon the home! Parents are to remind their children of God's claim upon them- and their responsibility to live in a relationship of obedience to Him as well! So our reading from Dt. 6 says this to parents; teach the Law to your children! Impress the commandments of God upon

their hearts! Talk about God and His Word in the home- apply it to your daily life! The Law is to have a prominent place in our homes. The Law of God is not to be segregated or separated from our daily walk. In other words, the 10 Commandments are not just something we read once a week at church! No, the commandment to love God and love our neighbor is to be a consistent part of our daily lives! So parents are to instruct their little ones- you are a child of God called to live in His way! Your identity as His sheep is what calls you to holy living! So how should we teach God's law to our children? Diligently and consistently! Teach them diligently Dt. 6:7 says. When should we teach our children God's Law? At all times- in our sitting, standing, going in and going out.

III. The Law's Division

Having considered the context of the Law and the recipients of it, in our last point we consider the division and the summary of the Law. As our children all memorized, the summary of the Law is to Love God first and love our neighbor as ourselves as Jesus taught us. And as I said before, in the next weeks we will be looking at each commandment both as a way to expose our sins and as a way to call us to holy obedience. So when we look at the 10 Commandments, we can see that they are divided into two sections. First is that of our relationship to God and second, that of our relationship to other people. But of these two, the first and the primary love must be that of our love towards God. As we read in Dt. 6:4- The LORD our God- the LORD is One- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. These words shall be on your heart. So loving God must come first because He is preeminent. Worshipping God and loving Him before and above all things. We are to love God with all of our being and strength. Every aspect of our person- mind, heart and soul- enlisted in this faithful service. There is no room for divided attention or mixed devotion! Loving God with all your power, with all your purpose and with all your person. And how do we show our love for God? Well, as Jesus said in John 14, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. So one of the key ways in which we can show and prove our love for God is by obeying His commandments- keeping Him and His word before our eyes. Having a Love for God is foundational to

both the OT and the NT. And in many ways, loving God and glorifying Him is the purpose for which humanity exists! But this love for God extends to others as well. I John 4:8 puts it like this, anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love! And again in I John 4:11- if God so loved us, we ought to love one another. To connect these two tables of the Law then is very important. Loving God leads to our loving others. Because God has loved us, we will love Him and we will love those made in His image as well. So the 2nd table of the Law is summarized in our loving our neighbor as ourselves. This is the division of the 10 Commandments that we confessed in QA 93- the first 4 commandments teach how we should live in relation to God and the second six commandments teach us what we owe our neighbor. True love for one always leads to love for the other. You cannot love your neighbor who you can see- and pretend that you love God whom you cannot see as I John 4:20 puts it. The beautiful thing about love is that love is a gift that God gives to us. It is freely given- and now that love transforms us into loving people! This transformative work is done within us by the power of the Spirit sent by Jesus Christ. Although the Law was inscribed on tablets of stone in the OT, that Law no longer remains outside of us. This internal application is the very thing that Christ is doing by His Spirit- writing the Law on the tablet of our hearts as Heb. 10:16 says- the Law is put on their hearts and written on their minds. In this way, Jesus enables us to bring to mind all that God reveals in His word as that Word take roots and produce fruit within us. So as we will see in the next week, the Law continues to grow within us teaching us to say no to unrighteousness and yes to obedience in love.

To conclude, the Law of God is a standard, rule and norm for the Christian life. This Law was revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai- but now has been inscribed within. As our theme states: Jesus Christ applies the Law to the heart of God's people. God alone has the authority and prerogative to tell us how we should live since He both made us and redeemed us to be his own. As we heard from Psalm 95, when you hear His voice do not harden your hearts. Rather listen to and obey the Law of the LORD.