

Westminster Confession: Chapters 19 & 20

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November, 2012

This presentation covers the Westminster Confession chapters 19 (The Law of God) and 20 (Christian Freedom and Freedom of Conscience).

Outline

1. Chapter 19

- 1.1 law given to Adam
- 1.2 Ten Commandments
- 1.3 moral, ceremonial, judicial laws
- 1.4 moral laws helpful
- 1.5 moral laws not contrary to the Gospel

2. Chapter 20

- 2.1 freedom of damnation under the Gospel
- 2.2 follow law through love, not fear
- 2.3 conscience free of the commandments of men
- 2.4 abusing Christian liberty to practice sin
- 2.5 using Christian liberty to oppose laws is not allowed

Chapter 19: The Law of God: Adam

God gave **Adam a law** as a covenant of works. He required Adam and all his descendants to obey this law, individually, completely, perpetually, and in precise accordance with its provisions. God promised life for keeping it and threatened death for disobeying it, and he gave man the power and ability to keep it.

The Law of God: Proof

Genesis 2:16-17: Then Yahweh God gave the man this command, "You are free to eat of all the trees in the garden. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you are not to eat; for, the day you eat of that, you are doomed to die."

The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (Benjamin West)



Chapter 19, Section 2: Ten Commandments

After the fall this law continued to be a **perfect rule of righteousness** and was given, as such, by God on Mount Sinai in the Ten Commandments, written on two tablets. The first four commandments establish our **obligations to God** and the remaining six our **obligations to human beings**.

Ten Commandments: Proof

Matthew 23:37-40: Jesus said to him, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets too.'

Moses Receives the Ten Commandments

I. I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD,
WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT
OF THE LAND OF EGYPT.
THAT PLACE OF SLAVERY.
YOU SHALL HAVE NO
OTHER GODS BESIDES ME.

II. YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE
NAME OF THE LORD IN VAIN.
FOR THE LORD WILL NOT
HOLD HIM GUILTY WHO
TAKES HIS NAME IN VAIN.

REMEMBER TO KEEP HOLY
THE SABBATH DAY.
SIX DAYS YOU SHALL
LABOR AND DO ALL YOUR
WORK, BUT THE SEVENTH
DAY IS A SABBATH TO
THE LORD YOUR GOD.

IV. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND
YOUR MOTHER, THAT YOUR
DAYS MAY BE LONG IN THE
LAND WHICH THE LORD
YOUR GOD GIVES YOU.

V. YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

VI. YOU SHALL NOT
COMMIT ADULTERY.

VII. YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

VIII. YOU SHALL NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS AGAINST
YOUR NEIGHBOR.

IX. YOU SHALL NOT COVET
YOUR NEIGHBOR'S WIFE.

X. YOU SHALL NOT COVET
YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOODS.

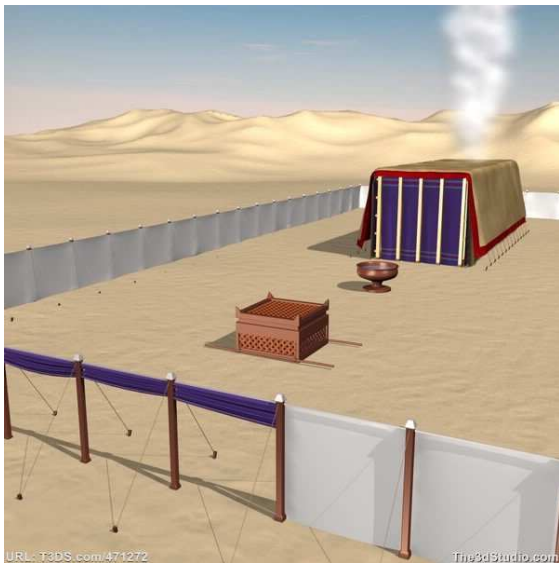
Chapter 19, Section 3: Ceremonial Laws

In addition to this law, ordinarily called the **moral law**, it pleased God to give the people of Israel, as a pre-Christian assembly of believers, **ceremonial laws**, containing many typical ordinances. Some of these ordinances pertain to worship and foreshadow Christ, his grace, actions, suffering, and the benefits to be had from believing in him. The rest of these ordinances contain various instructions about moral duties. All of these ceremonial laws are now nullified under the New Testament.

Ceremonial Laws: Proof

Collosians 2:16-17: Then never let anyone criticise you for what you eat or drink, or about observance of annual festivals, New Moons or Sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what was coming: the reality is the body of Christ.

Hebrew Tabernacle



Chapter 19, Section 4: Judicial Laws

God also gave the Israelites, as a political body, various **judicial laws**. These expired with the state of Israel and make no further obligation on God's people than seems appropriate in contemporary legal codes.

Judicial Laws: Proof

1 Corinthians 9:8-10: Do not think that this is merely worldly wisdom. Does not the Law say exactly the same? It is written in the Law of Moses: You must not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the corn. Is it about oxen that God is concerned here, or is it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake, because it is right that whoever ploughs should plough with the expectation of having his share, and whoever threshes should thresh with the expectation of having his share.

Do Not Muzzle the Ox



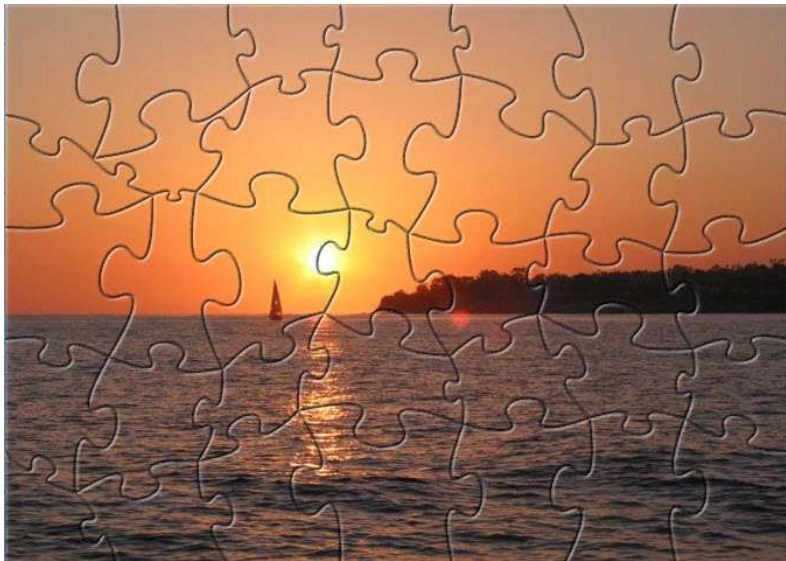
Chapter 19, Section 5: Moral Law

The **moral law**, however, does pertain to everyone, saved and unsaved, forever, not just with respect to its content but also in relationship to the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel Christ does not in any way remove this obligation, but rather strengthens it.

Moral Law: Proof

Matthew 5:17-18: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved.

Completes the Law



Chapter 19, Section 6: Usefulness of Law

Although true believers are not justified or **condemned by the law** as a covenant of works, the law is nevertheless very useful to them and to others. As a rule of life, it informs them of **God's will and of their obligation to obey** it. It also reveals to them the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives, so that, examining themselves from its point of view, they may become more convinced of the presence of sin in them, more humiliated on account of that sin, and hate sin the more. Thus they gain a better awareness of their need for Christ and for the perfection of his obedience. The prohibitions against sin in the law are also useful in restraining believers from pursuing the desires of their old nature, and the punishments for disobedience in the law show them what their sins deserve and what afflictions they may expect for them in this life, even though they have been freed from the curse threatened in the law. The promises of the law similarly show them that God approves obedience and that blessings may be expected for obedience, although not as their due from the law as a covenant of works. The fact that the law encourages doing good and discourages doing evil does **not mean** that a person who does good and refrains from evil is **under the law** and not under grace.

Usefulness of Law: Proof

Romans 7:6-7: But now we are released from the Law, having died to what was binding us, and so we are in a new service, that of the spirit, and not in the old service of a written code.

What should we say, then? That the Law itself is sin? Out of the question! All the same, if it had not been for the Law, I should not have known what sin was; for instance, I should not have known what it meant to covet if the Law had not said: You are not to covet.

Tour Guide Malcolm Metcal



Chapter 19, Section 7: Freely Follow the Law

None of these uses of the law is contrary to the grace of the gospel. They rather beautifully **comply** with it, because the **Spirit of Christ** subdues and enables the **will of man to do voluntarily** and cheerfully what the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

Freely Follow the Law: Proof

Ezekiel 36:26-27: I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws, and respect and practise my judgements.

Holy Spirit



Chapter 19: Questions

1. How is Adam's law different from Moses's Law?
2. How is moral law different from ceremonial or judicial law?
3. How is God's law helpful to us?
4. What does it mean to freely follow the law?

Chapter 20: Christian Freedom and Freedom of Conscience: Benefits

Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel **freedom** from the **guilt of sin**, from the condemning **wrath of God**, and from the **curse of the moral law**. He has also freed them from the **evil world** we live in, from **enslavement to Satan**, from the dominion of **sin**, the evil of afflictions, the **sting of death**, the victory of the **grave**, and from everlasting **damnation**. In Christ believers have **free access to God** and can **obey** him, not out of **slavish fear**, but with a **childlike love** and a **willing mind**. All these freedoms were also held by believers under the law. However, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians has been enlarged to include freedom from the **yoke of the ceremonial law**, to which the Jewish church was subjected. Christians also have greater boldness of access to the **throne of grace** and a fuller gift of the **Spirit of God** than believers ordinarily had under the law.

Benefits: Proof

Acts 26:17-18: I shall rescue you from the people and from the nations to whom I send you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, and receive, through faith in me, forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance of the sanctified."

Remorse or Sphinx Embedded in the Sand (Salvador Dalí)



Chapter 20, Section 2: Obey Out of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the **doctrines and commandments of men** which are in any way contrary to or **different from his word** in matters of faith or worship. And so, believing any such teachings or obeying any such commandments of men for conscience's sake actually betrays true freedom of conscience. Requiring implicit or **absolute, blind obedience** also **destroys freedom of conscience** as well as the free use of reason.

Obey Out of Conscience: Proof

Acts 5:29: In reply Peter and the apostles said, 'Obedience to God comes before obedience to men;

Sheep Follow their Shepherd



Chapter 20, Section 3: Abuse of Liberty

Those who practice any sin or nourish any sinful desire on the pretext of Christian freedom destroy the whole purpose of Christian freedom, which is, that, having been rescued out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear and in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.

Abuse of Liberty: Proof

Galatians 5:13: After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to one another in love,

Costa Concordia Off Course



Chapter 20, Section 4: Obey Lawful Power

God intends that the authorities he has ordained on earth and the freedom Christ has purchased should not destroy but mutually uphold and preserve each other. And so, those who oppose any lawful power or the lawful exercise of power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, on the **pretext of Christian freedom**, are actually resisting God. The support, promotion, or **practice of such opposition**, which contradicts natural understanding or the known principles of Christianity on matters of faith, worship, and associations, which denies the power of godliness, or which disrupts the peace and unity among believers, should **lawfully be called to account and proceeded against by the church**.

Obey Lawful Power: Proof

1 Peter 2:13-17: For the sake of the Lord, accept the authority of every human institution: the emperor, as the supreme authority, and the governors as commissioned by him to punish criminals and praise those who do good. It is God's will that by your good deeds you should silence the ignorant talk of fools. You are slaves of no one except God, so behave like free people, and never use your freedom as a cover for wickedness. Have respect for everyone and love for your fellow-believers; fear God and honour the emperor.

Nicole L. Kipfmiller Sentenced



Chapter 20: Questions

1. Why is blind obedience to the law disparaged?
2. Why is abuse of liberty a problem?
3. Can any civil laws be broken by Christians?
4. What ecclesiastical (church) laws do we have today?

The Assertion of Liberty ... (John Rogers Herbert)

