

**Bible Text:** Lord's Day 34; Hebrews 8  
**Preached on:** Sunday, March 19, 2017

**Southwest Protestant Reformed Church**  
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Our reading this morning is Hebrews 8. Read the first 12 verses of Hebrews 8.

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. 3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man [and this is, of course, Jesus] have somewhat also to offer. 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law [that's, of course, the priests of Aaron] 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he [God said this], that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. [Now in verse 6 he picks up again Jesus] 6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them [that is, with Israel], he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

So far we read in God's holy word.

The basis of this and many other passages of God's word is the instruction of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 34. Question 92 asks, "What is the law of God?" which we read earlier this service, so we turn to Question 93 which will be the essence of the sermon this morning, and we will take 94 and 95, the Lord willing, next time.

Q. 93. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two tables; the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; and the second, what duties we owe to our neighbor.

Beloved, in the Lord Jesus Christ as we begin our study of the law of God as the Catechism will guide us, we notice that the believer is faced with many questions regarding the law, questions you may have thought about, pondered, or that others may have confronted you with as regards God's law. For instance this question: how binding is the law of God upon us today? How binding is it? How do we know that the 10 Commandments are still in force, must be obeyed? There are people who question that, who say, "Look, the Old Testament, that was the dispensation of law but the New Testament in which we live is the dispensation of grace. The law, therefore, is to be put away. You are not to bother yourself with trying to keep the Commandments." For this reason, some Reformed churches that once read the law weekly have discontinued that. That may be a motive that some of them had for discontinuing reading the law.

Other questions. How much of the law is binding? How much of the law? In the Old Testament, there are a lot of laws. Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy repeats them. Laws about sacrifices. Laws about home life and what to do if someone, a child will rebel against parents. There are all sorts of laws. How many of these laws are still binding on us today? And if you say, "Well, they're not." Well then, why? Why do we insist on preaching on the 10 Commandments and we do not have any Lord's Days on sacrifices or on the civil laws or planting crops? Why are those laws not binding any longer whereas the 10 Commandments we say are still binding? How do we answer that question that people may press upon us?

Other questions. What is the good and right use of the law? What's the good and right use of the law? Is it legitimate to say that the law's purpose, first of all, is to show us our sins? I think we would all agree with that. Then, secondly, the law is a rule of gratitude. I think we would all agree with that. What about the third use, that the law of God is given with the third purpose to restrict the wickedness of man? Now, before you throw that out totally, let me tell you that's Calvin's view.

So what is the right use of the law? Lots of questions and that's why we consider the law today all by itself. What is this law before we even get to the first commandment? And in connection with the fact that we are considering these Lord's Days from the point of view of the covenant, that raises a question: what's the relationship between the law and the covenant? What's the relationship between those two? Surely, it is not that the law, keeping the law is some kind of a condition to the covenant; you have to keep the commandments in order to either get into the covenant or to stay in the covenant to

maintain or ratify the covenant. We don't want anything of that, but what is, then, the relationship between the law and the covenant? That there is a relationship is obvious from Deuteronomy 5 where Moses said, "God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Here are the statutes and the judgments that God made. When he made a covenant with us, he gave us this law." So what's the relationship between the law and the covenant?

Many questions we can face. We'll do that this morning taking as the theme, "The Reformed, Covenantal View of the Law." We'll notice in the first place, a perfect revelation. The law is a perfect revelation of God, as we'll see. Secondly, an unceasing demand. The law does not fall away. And thirdly, we'll notice a loving obedience, what God requires of us.

First of all, then, the law is a perfect revelation of God. Part of the whole revelation of God is his law and it reveals God from a particular point of view by showing us what is the will of God. The Heidelberg Catechism says we can know God by many different ways, the Essentials book rather in our Catechism says you can know God in a number of ways: his names; his being; his works; his attributes. Well, the law is one of the ways that we can know God, reveals his will. His will. That it is a revelation is evident simply from the fact that God spoke. That's how the law begins. "I am the LORD thy God." God spoke and whenever God speaks, he speaks a word in a language that his people can understand and a language that, therefore, will be about God. It will tell us something about him. Whenever God speaks, we must not just hear what he has to say and say, "Well, now those are the words, but what is it teaching us about him?" That's what he wants us to hear.

The law is God's speech to his people. It is not Moses' summary of what he heard there on the mount, Moses' interpretation of what God said on the mount. No, when Moses came down from the Mount both in the 10 Commandments and in all the other commandments, he brought God's word to his people. God's word. Galatians says that God delivered the law by the hand of angels. It was hand-delivered to Moses. This is the law of God. Scripture speaks of the fact also that God from the top of the mountain, so to speak, spoke the word, spoke the law in the ears of all Israel. Then you have that striking description in Exodus 31:18, we read, "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone," and then this, "written with the finger of God." Moses received God's revelation of himself in his law.

The commandments reveal God by revealing his will. Now, if you think about it, that's always true. When a man gives a command to his children or whatever it may be, he is revealing something about himself. You take, for example, when Abraham said to his servant Eliezer, "You go to find a wife for Isaac. Do not take a wife from here. Do not take Isaac away from here. Isaac must stay here but he must have a wife from somewhere else." You can see something about Abraham himself, his concern for the covenant; his love for the covenant seed; his determination that that covenant continue. All of that comes into evidence from the command that Abraham gave.

Now, when you look at the commandments of God, you see something about God himself from the commandments that he gave. We'll look at that as we go through the commandments, what is God teaching us about himself. So the very idea of law is to teach and that, by the way, is the Hebrew word. You may have heard the word "torah," comes from a verb which means "to set forth or to teach," and that's what God exactly commanded Moses to do. In Exodus 24:12 we read this, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." And the "them" is Israel, that you may teach the people. Using this torah, using this law of God, you must teach the people, teach them who God is by means of his law. And it is a law. It is a law. It is God's will. It is not merely God recommending, God suggesting, God saying it would be a good idea if, the Bible calls it commandments, statutes, judgments. Law. It is God's revealed will to us. This is how he demands that we live.

Now, God has a law for every creature that he has made, everything from the angels to the planets to the plants in the earth to man. God has a law that governs every creature God has made. God has a law for the stars, a law for the planets. God has a law for plants, that plants ordinarily are rooted in the ground and that they draw from the ground the things that they need, the nutrients and the liquids so that they are able to produce leaves and fruit. That's the law for that plant. God has a law for each animal. Some of the animals' law is that they live on the ground; some of them are called to live in the water; some of them live under the ground; some of them come out at night. That's God's law for that animal. It governs that animal.

That will of God revealed in the laws that he has given reveal something about the Creator. First of all in a general way, it reveals his orderliness. God is a God of order. This is how a deer acts. This is how a whale acts. This is how an eagle acts. God has all of that perfectly determined as a law for each and every creature that he has made. Some of those things reveal not only that God is a God of order, but they can even reveal something about himself. The way a chicken acts with the chicks and calls the chicks to her and covers them with her wings, the way an eagle acts with the young, those are revelations of something about God himself. The beauty of a flower that is produced points to the beauty of God's grace. The graciousness of a dolphin swimming through the ocean waters points, again, to the beauty of God's grace. So many different things in the creation.

So God has a law for every single creature that he has made and he has a law for man, but this is a different kind of law. Every law that God has made for the other creatures, he puts that law into them. We call it instinct. It's a law that God has put right into that animal and that animal does it without thinking. But man has a law, the only creature besides the angels, the only creature on this earth that has a law that God has spoken to man. And man has a mind and a will and he's able to think on that law and determine how should I serve God, how must I keep his law for me? Only man has that ability but he has a law from God that he must keep, a law that is in perfect harmony with the kind of creature man is, a covenant creature. A covenant creature man is. As a covenant creature, he consciously thinks about the will of God for him and seeks to take that law

and apply it to this situation in life and to that situation in life and to live in harmony with the will of God for him as a covenant creature, friend, servant of the living God.

God definitely reveals himself in the law. How does the law begin? "I am the LORD thy God, which I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt. I am," says God. "I am the LORD. I am Jehovah. I am the unchanging God, the I Am that I Am. I never change and that means if I make a promise to you, I will keep my word. I am a covenant God who will never fail in one promise that I make to you. I am God. I am exalted over all things." Everything else is creature but God says in his law, "That's who I am, I am the God of heaven and earth." But then he adds this, "I am thy God." Do you understand the 10 Commandments are not spoken to the whole world? The 10 Commandments are spoken to God's covenant people. "I am thy God. I am your God," he says to us. Individually, thy. It comes right down to the person.

So then God begins to reveal himself. Now, who am I, and the first commandment says, "I am the only God. I have absolute sovereign power. There is not me over here with some power and somebody else over there. No, I have all power because I am God. There is no other God. You may not have a single other god beside me."

In the second commandment he says, "Let me tell you something else about myself: I am spiritual, I am glorious. You cannot make an image of me. If you would try to make an image of me, not only would you fail, you would rob me of my glory. Do not make an image of me."

Thirdly he says, "I am a holy God. I am so holy that if you would take my name upon your lips without due reverence, you break my will. I am holy."

Fourth, "I am a covenant God. I am a covenant God. I have a rest determined for me and for you, to live in that rest. The Sabbath day is but a picture of the eternal Sabbath."

And then he goes on in commandments 5 through 10 to say, "And let me tell you something else: I hate all sin. I hate iniquity. I require love and obedience perfectly."

The law tells us about who God is and what kind of God he is and in all of that, God reveals that he is a covenant God. A covenant God. Not only in the introduction but especially there, "I am the LORD thy God," he says, "which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt." Now, historically God did that. All the children know that God led Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, brought them to Mount Sinai. God delivered them from the slavery of Egypt and every Sunday when the law is read, that part is read.

Now, maybe some of you children say, "Why do we read that part of the law? We're not Israelites. We were never in Egypt. We were not in bondage. Why do we have to read, 'I am the LORD thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage?'" The reason is because that applies to you and me just as much to Israel in a spiritual way. We were delivered from the bondage of Satan. We were delivered from the

bondage of sin, very real bondage. God is saying to you and to me, "I am the LORD thy God. I have brought you out of the bondage of sin and death and Satan."

And now the connection between that introduction and the law is this: therefore keep the commandments. "I have delivered you out of the house of bondage, out of sin and death, therefore here is my will for you, keep my commandments." That's the point. He's the covenant God. He took the people of Israel out of Egypt and he brought them to Horeb or Sinai, same place, and we read in Hebrews 8:9, "Not according to the covenant," he's talking about a new covenant, but he says, "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt," he took them out of the land of Egypt, established his covenant with them and said, "Now here's what I expect of you as my covenant people. This is how you must live."

God is holy. If you want to live with God, you must be holy. No question about that. Covenant fellowship is experienced only in the way of obedience. You disobey my law, you cannot expect that God is going to look upon you with favor and have all kinds of nice fellowship with you. It will not happen. He will be angry. He will discipline. God demands obedience. Scripture says, "You break my law, you have broken my covenant." That's how serious it is. Not that you can actually break the covenant so that it is no more. No, but when you break the commandments of God, you break his covenant relationship, that is, you have violated your relationship with God. You deserve to be thrown out of the covenant family.

Now, God reveals himself as a covenant God through the law, but always the revelation of God is through Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, says Paul to the Galatians in chapter 3 and chapter 4, the law was a schoolmaster. Now, that's not the best word there because it isn't a schoolmaster, it's not a teacher, but the law was a governor. A governor is someone who tells the child, "Okay, it's 7 o'clock, time to get up. Here's your clothes. Here's your breakfast. Here's your studies. Get to work. And now are you still working? Are you doing your work?" That's what a governor does. The law was a governor for Israel. "This is what you must wear today. This is what you must eat. This is how you sow your fields. This is how you must live with your neighbor." All those things were in the law of God. It was a governor pointing them to Christ, making sure that they looked and found Christ there in the law.

Now, the law is not our governor any longer that way because Christ fulfilled the law, but the law still points to Christ. Christ is still there in the law. God always reveals himself through Jesus Christ, that's how we know God as our Savior. Christ is revealed in the law itself. It's a law of the covenant, Christ is the Mediator of the covenant. He's the Mediator that comes to us and says, "This is how you must live with God." Jesus is the one who led them out. He was the angel of Jehovah who led the Israelites out. He is the one who leads us in our daily life. There is one God, Jehovah, Jesus is the Word of God revealing to us who God is. He is the holy one of Israel. He earned the eternal rest that we have in store for us.

Not only that, he's the servant of God, the servant of God who fulfilled the law perfectly in his own life. He was never ever dishonest with his father or mother. He never hated sinfully. He never lusted. He never lied. He never even coveted someone else's goods. He fulfilled the law in thought, word and deed perfectly.

The same thing is true of the ceremonial law. If you look at the Old Testament there is still profit in looking at that because every lamb that was slaughtered on the altar pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God. The high priest who would cut the throat of the animal and sacrifice the animal, the high priest pointed to Jesus Christ. Every activity of the priest, his incense and the offerings and the shedding of blood, it all pointed to Jesus and his work on the cross. The temple itself is a picture of the body of Jesus Christ, God and man brought together. The temple pointed to him and the whole civil law besides. The law of Israel given to govern them as a nation pointed to the glorious reality that God ruled over Israel and when all things would be perfect, Jesus Christ would be the King of Israel and rule in peace. A beautiful and glorious kingdom.

Everything points to Jesus Christ, the Savior, and because the law points to Jesus Christ, the law is Gospel. It is Gospel. It isn't that we say, "Oh, we have a Gospel and we have a law," and try to separate the two. The law is Gospel to us. It's setting forth Jesus Christ crucified, the Lord of all, our King.

It was a complete law, the law of God, absolutely complete. The civil law covered all of the life of Israel, everything from, again, what they would sow in the field to how they would live with their neighbor and their rulers. The ceremonial law covered all of the worship of God, including what must I do if I break a commandment; how must I go to the temple; what must I bring there. And the 10 Commandments are obviously complete. The number 10 itself points to the completeness of the moral law of God. Ten is the number of completeness in the Bible.

There are two tables and the two tables, as the Heidelberg Catechism, point to the two sides of our life here. First of all, the first one teaches us how we must behave towards God and the second what duties we owe to our neighbor, and the fact that they are complete is evident even from this symbolic, this picture of the Old Testament that when Moses carried those two tables of law down from the mountain, they were written on the front side and on the back side. There was no room to add one more word. The law is complete. It covers the whole of our life, what we owe to God and what we owe to the neighbor. The law is God's complete will for us.

Not only that, but it is in the second place, a demand, an unceasing demand. Notice again what the Catechism says. The first teaches us how we must behave towards God and the second what duties we owe to the neighbor. These are required demands of God that do not go away. Again, contrary to many who would try to say, "No, we live in the new dispensation," as I indicated briefly in the introduction, we talk about the Old Testament, "Well, that's a dispensation of law. God dealt with his people through law but now we are in the new dispensation. Christ has fulfilled the law and Romans 6 even says in verse 14, 'ye are not under law but under grace.' You are under grace now so there is no need for

you to pay attention to the law. You may put it aside. It's not what governs your life. Now just live according to the Spirit. God will direct you in your life. You do not need to know anything about his law." And these are basically Antinomians, anti-law is what the word Antinomian, are so insistent on that that they say, "I don't even want you as a preacher to come and say to me, or the elders, for that matter, to come and say to me, 'You must or you may not.'" Who says, "The law is gone. I don't have to listen to the law any longer. I live by the Spirit. I live out of grace. I don't need a law to tell me how to live."

Beloved, that's simply not true. The law of God abides. I would like to give you six reasons from Scripture that demonstrate that the law of God abides as a rule for our life. It is, in the first place, that introduction, remember? "I am the LORD thy God which have brought you out of the land of Egypt." For Israel that was an historical event. For us, it is a spiritual event, a real spiritual event. God has brought us out of the bondage of Egypt, "therefore," he says, "keep my law." Those things have not gone away. We are delivered from the bondage of sin so that we may keep his commandments as a way of obedience, of course, as a way of thankfulness, but it's still there. "You are my covenant people, this is what I expect of you." That first of all.

Second, that God intended particularly the Ten Commandments to be kept literally is evident from the fact that they were written on stone. Stone indicates the permanence of them. The rest of the laws were written on paper but the law is on stone. You may not simply say it has fallen away.

Third, Jesus himself said this, "Think not that I am come to destroy. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill." Destroy the law and the prophets is what he's saying. "I have not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill. Until heaven and earth," he added this, "until heaven and earth pass, one jot and one tittle shall not pass from the law until all be fulfilled." Now, we'll see in a little while that he fulfilled the civil law, he fulfilled the ceremonial law, he kept the 10 Commandments, but they abide. One jot and one tittle shall not pass from the law until all be fulfilled.

So the introduction of the law says keep the law even today. Secondly, God wrote them on stone to indicate the permanence of them. Third, Jesus said, "I have not come to destroy but to fulfill." Fourth, turn to the New Testament epistles and what do you find as Paul is writing to the saints in the New Testament? You see, "Children, obey your parents. You may not have idols. You may not kill. You may not steal. You may not commit adultery." He's repeating all the Old Testament commandments. The 10 Commandments are not found merely in the Old Testament, they are in the epistles to the New Testament church because they are still binding.

Fifth, this is God's will for us. The law is God's will for us. He has a law for the eagle, he has a law for the dolphin, he has a law for man and the will of God has not changed. This is still his will for us. He expects us to live according to his will for us, the 10 Commandments.



And sixth, finally, we have an eternal covenant of grace with God. An eternal covenant of grace. God when he formed his covenant of grace with Israel in the Old Testament, he led them to Sinai and he said, "This is my law for you." And now we read in Hebrews 8:10 about the new covenant, "this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write it upon their hearts." The law didn't go away. The law is still part of the covenant, the eternal covenant of grace that we have through Jesus Christ. God's law is still binding.

Now, before we go to the other laws that we wonder about, the ceremonial and the civil law, let's make a bit of an aside here: there are other laws of God for us that are found embedded in the creation, they are called creation ordinances. One of them, one of the most important ones is this relationship that God has established between one man and one woman married for life. That's a creation ordinance that God set forth there when he took Eve and brought her to Adam and he married them and he said, "Now you are bone of my bone," or Adam said, "This woman is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." God put them together. That's a creation ordinance. The whole world from the beginning understood one man, one woman for life. Another creation ordinance is found in Genesis 9 after the flood in the covenant with the whole creation and God said to Noah, "Noah, any man that puts someone else to death, that man must be put to death. The murderer must be put to death." That's a creation ordinance. Another creation ordinance, relative positions as far as authority is concerned between a man and a woman, that a woman is not to exercise authority over a man. Not in the home. Not in the church. Not in society. That's what God said in the creation itself. And finally, the fourth creation ordinance is the Sabbath day. Six days of work, one day of rest. That's a creation ordinance.

So long as this creation abides, those ordinances, God's will for us, abide. When this creation is finished, the ordinances are gone. Gone will be marriage. No marriage in heaven. Gone will be that relationship where God said a woman is not to exercise authority over man. That won't apply to heaven. No murderers, obviously, will be there so we don't have to worry about that ordinance. And six days of labor and a seventh day of rest in heaven, we have an eternal Sabbath in heaven. So the creation ordinances will fall away when this creation is no longer, but until that day, those ordinances abide too. God's will.

Now, what about those other laws, the civil laws, the ceremonial laws? I'll tell you, our Belgic Confession is very helpful here. The Belgic Confession sets forth the right view of the commandments of the Old Testament. In the Article 25, wrongly entitled "The Abolishing of the Civil Laws," that's a title that shouldn't be there that way, as you read the Article, you'll see that that's not what it's talking about. It's not talking about the abolishing but it's saying why do we not keep the ceremonial law? Why do we not keep the old civil laws of Israel? Why not? Why do we not abide with them strictly as they did? And the answer to Article 25 is this, "We believe that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ and that all the shadows are accomplished so that the use of them must be abolished among Christians." You may not bring a lamb and sacrifice that lamb to God. You may not. If you would do that, you would be denying Jesus accomplishing the perfect atonement on the cross. You may not.

So they must be abolished among Christians yet, and then notice this, "the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ in whom they have their completion." Think about that. The truth and substance of those Old Testament laws remain with us. They do. I'll demonstrate that in a bit. In the meantime, we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets to confirm in us the Gospel and to regulate our life in all honesty to the glory of God and according to his will.

Alright, now we face another threat in today's world called the theonomists who are saying, "You need to take all those Old Testament laws and you need to make them apply to America again. You need to take the civil laws of Israel and say, 'If we can make them to be the laws of America, we will be blessed.' When Israel walked in obedience to the commandments of God, they were blessed. If we would do that in America again, we will be a blessed nation." But again, they do not understand the Belgic Confession and the truth of the Belgic Confession, that those laws fall away as far as the strict observance of them. The United States is not Israel. Israel was not only a people, Israel was the church ruled by God. "You are my covenant people therefore, and here are the commandments." That's how God dealt with Israel in the Old Testament.

It is true, of course, that if a country passes laws in harmony with the 10 Commandments, if a country puts murderers to death, if a country forbids adultery, if a country requires that one man and one woman are married for life, if a country will impose those laws, it will be a good country to live in. But the reason is not that somehow they have earned the blessing of God, the reason is simply this: the laws of God are good. The laws of God are good for man. They're not a burden. They're not something that are bad for us. The laws of God are exactly good. God's good will for his creature. But we must not think somehow we can make America to be blessed by God by passing the laws.

Besides that, keep in mind, the law of God is to his people. The unbelievers cannot keep the law of God. Even if they never steal, even if they never murder, even if they live with their husband or wife all the days of their life they're not keeping the law of God. The law of God is to his people. It comes out of the heart as we'll see in the third point. They cannot keep the law of God. The most that they can do is external observance.

Romans speaks of the fact that they have the works of the law written in their heart. There are many misconceptions of that, people who would misquote Romans 2 and says, "Well, the unbelievers have the law written in their heart." They do not. Let's read that explicitly. Romans 2 speaks of what the Gentiles have in their heart. Romans 2:14 says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law," they don't have the law, "are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts," they have something written on their heart, the work of the law, and then what happens then? "Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." The work of the law in their hearts simply means they know it's wrong to steal, they know it's wrong to take the neighbor's wife, they know it's wrong to get down and worship an idol. They know that. They have a conscience. They have something that

testifies within them when they do something wrong, "That was wrong," but they do not have the law written on their hearts. Only the works of the law are found in their heart. They know the difference between good and evil, but that's the extent of it. They cannot keep God's law. So they pass the laws for America, it might bring a nicer country to live in, but you will not bring God's blessing upon America. It is not the church.

All the ceremonies, all the civil laws have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That's the point of the Belgic Confession Article 24. And yet there is instruction there. The Old Testament law that said that a child who struck his parents must be brought to the elders and the elders will stone him to death, the point is this, you have a child that is disobedient, bring him to the elders, some child that simply will not listen, will not listen to you, bring them to the elders. When that child, it's obvious that we're not talking about a 3 or 4 year old here, we're talking about a teenage son, and that son that will not listen to you and will not listen to the elders, he will be thrust out of the church. That's excommunication. That's stoning in the New Testament way. A husband or wife that is unfaithful is to be brought to the elders and the elders will thrust them out of the church if there's no repentance. That's the stoning of the New Testament, excommunication. They are out of the kingdom of God. The law, "Thou shalt not muzzle an ox that treadeth the corn." Paul says, "Do you know what that law is really about? Make sure your minister is paid well enough so that he can do the work. He shouldn't have to look for a job. He should be paid by the church so that he can do the work. You may not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." And so on. You can go through the Old Testament laws and say, "What's the essence of this? What can I learn from this?" The sum and substance abides with us yet today.

So the Reformed faith says the law has essentially three purposes. 1. It will show us our sins. It will show us our sins. The Catechism taught that in the first section of the Catechism. How do you know your misery? Out of the law of God. The law of God is your mirror. You look into that spiritual mirror and you see what you are, you see what God's requirements are, and you say, "Now I understand why I'm miserable. I'm not living in harmony with the will of God for me. That's my misery. His wrath is upon me because I am not in harmony with his law." That's the first use.

The second use of the law is an expression of gratitude. How can I show God my gratitude for his delivering me out of the house of bondage? Here it is, it's the law of God. "This is my will for you. This is how you show your thankfulness to me. This is the covenant life that I expect from you." There is a very direct comparison to any family, any covenant family. When the children are born into the family, they are immediately part of the family. They are part of the family. There were no conditions involved for them to become a part of that covenant family. They are there. They are born into it. And yet the father says, "Alright now, you're my son, you're my daughter, this is what I expect of you." And as your children grow up, suddenly the rules kind of maybe get larger and more extensive because they're breaking things and you say, "No, you mayn't do that." It isn't that those laws are conditions to him being in the covenant, the law of God is not a condition to your being in the covenant, but this is what God expects in his family. This is the kind of life he expects of you. "Keep my commandments. That's my will for you."

As a father says to his children, "Live according to my will. You will have a beautiful family life here if you live according to my will." When it is patterned after God's will, of course. That's the beauty of the law. God says to us, "This is what I expect of you. In these boundaries we will have a beautiful covenant life together."

And there is that third aspect of it, sometimes given as restraint of the unbeliever. As I said, Calvin held this view and there's something to that, something to think about, that the law of God if you find it enforced, if you find it in harmony, if the laws of the country are in harmony with the law of God, that is one way that God restricts the sins. If there is no law against stealing, then what kind of life do we have? If there is no law against murder, what kind of a life do we have here? At least from that point of view, the law is something God has given that may restrict somewhat, though we understand too, that if you actually set the law before an unbeliever, it becomes a goad to break it. That's our nature too. So it's limited.

So God comes to us with a demand to obey, but obey, he says, out of love. God demands an obedience that comes out of love for him. God is not an idol. You can set up an idol of wood and stone and you can put your incense in front of it and your food in front of it, and that idol doesn't know anything about your heart. It can't tell if you're doing it because you love him or out of gratitude or if you're just going through the motions because it's just a piece of stone. But God knows what's going on in your heart and mind. He understands why is this person doing this, because he loves me or is he just going through the motions from an external point of view? God hates that. He hates pretending. He demands that we perform our obedience out of a love for him. That's the only thing that is pleasing to him. Everything else is an abomination. That's Deuteronomy 5. "Love God with all your heart and soul and strength," and Jesus confirmed that. "Love the neighbor for God's sake." Without love, we are not keeping the commandments of God.

Can you do that? Obviously, we do not and that's why we look to Jesus Christ. He kept the law perfectly. There is our obedience from an objective point of view, it's in Jesus Christ. He kept the law. Every day of his life he woke up and the first thing on his mind was, "I love God. How can I serve him today?" And he did perfectly in perfect love. Even when he went to the cross and he went there with our guilt on him, he bore the wrath of God saying, "I love thee." He said that continually for the three hours of bitter, shameful bearing of the wrath of God. And he accomplished our righteousness therefore because he kept the law in love, and that righteousness is imputed to us, it covers us. There is no other hope.

But the Spirit works in us, subjectively a power. We're not a people that just say, "Well, if Jesus covered my sins, so I can live as I please." That's not the way it works. The Spirit works in us and the passage that we read in Hebrews emphasizes that as far as the covenant is concerned in Hebrews 8:10, "this is the covenant that I will give to them, I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts." What does that mean? That God would take his law now and put it into our minds means he will make us to know the law and he will make us to understand the law and will make it so that we're able to obey that law because we will understand his will for us. A beautiful thing.

The law of God is put into our minds and not only that, but he will write it upon our hearts. Those are two different things and the heart is the core of your being from a spiritual point of view. Out of the heart are all the issues of life and when God writes it upon the heart, he not only makes us to know the law spiritually but that law begins to change our hearts. It makes it so that we want to keep the commandments of God; so that we have the power to begin to keep the commandments of God; so that we can sing, "O, how love I thy law," because he has put that love in our hearts, he has put a love for the law in our hearts and we sing that and we mean it. We feel a little guilty when we sing it because there is such a small part of us that loves God's law, but it's there. It's written upon our hearts. We love to keep the commandments of God.

So now we'll turn to the law. It must be taught. It must be taught because God is revealing himself to us in that law. It must be taught because we have to understand what does God require of us, we're his covenant people, what does he expect of us? And we pray that God will mold and shape us to live, to pattern our lives according to this law in thankful obedience. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy word. We thank thee for thy law and for the right understanding of thy law. We do not seek to earn our righteousness, we never could, but we do seek to obey because we love thee, because we are so grateful that we have been delivered from the bondage of death, that we have an eternal rest awaiting us. So work in us that desire and that power. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.*