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Preaching the Ten Commandments

In church we are about to start a series of studies in the Ten Commandments. This may seem a relatively straightforward matter. However, it is not as uncomplicated a task as it may seemⁱ.

Many will disagree with this assertion. If you attend a Sunday service in a typical evangelical church you may well hear a preacher assert that the Ten Commandments are the laws of Christian living; the Christian life of faith is obeying the Ten Commandmentsⁱⁱ. A non-evangelical church may even say that living or at least attempting to live by the Ten Commandments is the essence of being a Christian; those you commit themselves to the good life of the commandments and to keeping them will go to heaven. Both these positions are wrong.

It seems vital to me that before any preacher and any congregation embark on a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments both need to be clear (the congregation in at least a rudimentary way) regarding the proper place and purpose of the Decalogue (Ten Words) in the Bible. Where this is fudged, **legalism** (seeking to inherit eternal life through rule keeping) and **nomism** (seeking to live the Christian life through rule keeping) will follow. Preaching of the Commandments that fails to place them correctly within their redemptive-historical context can only result in mere moralising and actually obscuring the gospel.

What do I mean by redemptive-historical context? Simply, it is the place and purpose that any event is intended by God to have in his plan of salvation. In this sense the Mosaic Law, the heart of which is the Ten Commandments, is people, time, and purpose specific. Let me enlarge.

1. The Lawⁱⁱⁱ was people specific. It was given by God to the nation of Israel alone.

The Law was a covenant God made with specifically with Israel. It was a sign of their special privilege and position in God's heart. It was the moral demand of God's redeeming action in bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 20:2) and forming them into a nation special to him (Ex 19:4-6). The Law was emphatically not given to other nations (gentiles) as any jealous Jew would have been only too quick to assert (Roms 9:4; 2:17-20, 14; 3:1, 2; 1 Cor 9:21)

It is quite wrongheaded to think of gentiles as answerable to the Law. God did not make a covenant in tablets of stone with gentiles; he made it with Israel^{iv}. Nowhere do we read that these laws were extended to all nations, indeed, as the above references demonstrate, precisely the opposite is true.

This is not to say that gentiles are not accountable. They are accountable for not recognising God as Creator and worshipping and serving him as such (Roms 1:18-24). They are responsible for not living by the standards of right and wrong that they themselves approve (Roms 1:32; 2:1-3). Indeed the morality they pursue shows that 'the works/requirements of the law' though not written on external tablets of stone are written on their heart, that is, they know intuitively what behaviour is appropriate (Roms 3:14, 15). In the early chapters of Romans Paul regularly contrasts Jews who have the law with gentiles who do not (Roms 2, 3).

It is worth noting that sermons addressed to gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles do not refer to the Ten Commandments or responsibility to OT Mosaic Law but to the ways that God has spoken to them in creation and conscience (Acts 13, 17).

The Ten Commandments (the Mosaic Covenant) were given to ethnic Israel and to no-one else.

2. The Law was time specific. It was a covenant^v made with Israel at Sinai which lasted until the coming of the Messiah (the Christ) and the arrival, in him, of a new covenant.

The NT makes it clear that the Law covenant had a limited shelf life. It was given at Sinai and existed only until Christ. It was an interim measure (Matt 11:3; Lk 16:16; Jn 1:17; Roms 5:13, 20; Gal 3:17; 3:25-4:5; Eph 2:15; 2 Cor 3:9-11). 2 Corinthians speaks of the 'fading' splendour of the law covenant now that the 'greater glory (light)' of the new covenant in Christ has arrived. Hebrews reminds us that the new covenant in principle makes the old covenant obsolete - one that according to the writer was already passing away^{vi} (Hebs 8:13).

It is interesting to notice how the attitudes to old covenant cultural demands gradually change in the first decades of the church. Initially there is great tolerance for Jewish believers who still feel a great loyalty to the demands that the Mosaic Law placed on them. Gentile believers are encouraged to respect the 'weaker consciences' of their Jewish brothers^{vii} (Roms 14, 15). The temple and synagogues are still visited and sacrifices and vows that were part of the old covenant were offered and taken (Acts 18:18; 21:23, 26). However, as time passes, Jewish converts are expected to educate their conscience and wean themselves away from the religion of Sinai. The book of Hebrews^{viii} shows clearly that the old covenant was inferior and had been superseded by 'better' realities in Christ (Hebs 7:19, 26; 8:6; 9:23; 11:6). Sinai religion (Judaism) has become the 'camp' hostile to Christ (Hebs 13:12-14). Jesus had been put outside the camp (by being rejected and crucified outside Jerusalem) and Jewish believers are encouraged to leave Judaism (the temple, synagogue and distinctively Jewish Sinai religion) and identify with Christ, rejected by the nation.

3. The Law was purpose specific: it produced sin and pointed to Christ.

The Law was given to Israel at Sinai. The promise of the law was, 'this do^{ix} and you shall live^x' (Deut 27:26; Gals 3: 11, 12; Roms 10:5, 6). However, in reality (as God, the Law-giver knew only too well) no-one could keep it. 'The flesh', the principle of rebellion and sin that lies in the human heart means that no-one could keep God's law. In fact the law was given to show that even a privileged people like Israel (chosen by God, given the promises etc Cf. Roms 9:4, 5). Fallen man, at his best and most favoured, is a hopeless failure before God. It was not long before a patient and longsuffering God was obliged to bring the covenant curses^{xi} upon his people; the final curse being exile from the land (Deut 29:27, 28). What the Law primarily did, as the NT makes clear^{xii}, is reveal sin (Roms 3:20). The paradox is that God's Law, holy just and good (Roms 7:12) identifies sin^{xiii} (Roms 3:20; 7:7) and incites sin^{xiv} (Roms 5:20). Rebellious human nature when confronted by a command from God instinctively wants to disobey (Roms 7:5). The result is condemnation, wrath and death (Roms 5:12-20).

In a word the Law produces sin, wrath and death. In fact, the Law has done all it can when it leads to an individual seeing they are condemned and crying out in despair, 'O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from this body of death' (Roms 7:24).

A godly OT Jew^{xv}, living under law, while in his mind he rejoiced in God's law found in reality he could not keep it, indeed it seemed to make him sin all the more (Roms 7^{xvi}). His only hope lay outside the law in the promises God had made to Abraham and the fathers; in a word, in the gospel, preached to Abraham and promised beforehand through the prophets (Gal 3:8; Roms 1:3; Hebs 4:2)^{xvii}.

In this sense the Law prepared the way for Christ. Its oppressive influence made godly Jews long for the liberty of sonship, of the gospel (Gal 3:23-4-7). Indeed within the Law itself the eye of faith could see the basic principles of the gospel to come – for the Law like all the Scriptures spoke of Christ (the righteousness of Christ is seen in its moral standards and the work of Christ in its sacrificial system). All the imperfect events (e.g. the Exodus), imperfect places (Canaan); imperfect people (Isaac the promised son, Moses the prophet, Aaron the High Priest; David the king etc); imperfect covenants (Sinai) simply alerted the faithful to the fact that these were but shadows of a 'perfect' that was yet to come; that perfect was Christ (Hebs 7:19). He came not to abolish the law (disregard and dismiss it) but to fulfil it (Matt 5:17; Lk 16:17); Christ, as Paul states, is the end of the law^{xviii} (goal and terminus) of the law to all who believe (Roms 10:4).

The Christian and the Law

The Bible's position on this is quite clear. The Christian has no relationship with the Law at all. The Christian has died to the Law (Roms 7:1-6). Indeed he has died to the whole realm where Law had authority and power. He has been taken out of this world (the old creation) and been placed in a new creation – the Age to Come, the realm of the Spirit or the Kingdom of God. In this realm law has no authority nor does sin. In Christ we belong to a new reality and have died to this world and all the powers that dominate it, including God's Law^{xix}. It is a Kingdom of grace; where righteousness is a gift of God and not a work of law keeping; where the life of God is produced in the heart by the Spirit of God and not by an external code; where the measure of godliness is the sacrificial life of Christ and not a moral code; where the dynamic for godliness is Christ crucified and resurrected – our calling is to live by the Spirit a crucified life (dead to world, self, Satan, and Law) and by faith a resurrected life (living in step with the Spirit, led by Him, illuminated by him, taught by him, empowered by him, filled by him etc) rather than the thundering of Sinai or even the redemption of the exodus^{xx}.

Given this, it should not surprise us that Paul never refers to the Law as an authority for Christian ethics. Occasionally he cites the law in support of his teaching but frames his comment carefully so that there is no mistaken idea that the command of the law is itself a binding authority (1 Cor 14:34).

To see the Law as a 'rule of life'^{xxi} for the Christian is effectively to view ourselves as still in 'the flesh' (and indeed as Jewish). Paul insists that we must not view ourselves as 'in the flesh' but 'in the Spirit' – this is the perspective of faith which overcomes the world (and sin, law etc). In the NT church there were a number who viewed themselves as 'teachers of the law'. They are not viewed with favour by Paul (1 Tim 1:7). For Paul it was not Law that taught holiness but the grace of God in Christ (Tit 2:11, 12).

What is true however, as we noted above is that the Christian can learn by the Spirit from the Law. Jesus showed the disciples in all the Scriptures 'the things concerning himself' and this included the Law. The Old Testament revelation was canonised (written and preserved as God's word) for our learning; Paul speaks of 'all Scripture being profitable for doctrine, training in righteousness etc and he had in mind specifically the Old Testament (1 2 Tim 3:16; Cor 10:6). We can find in the Law abiding moral principles^{xxii} for godly living and prescient examples of Christ and his work but we can only interpret and apply these rightly if we see that they are part of a historical-redemptive process and cannot be willy-nilly applied to Christians today.

Conclusion

Preachers, preaching on the Ten Commandments must be aware of at least the basic contours of the above. Without this they are likely to approach the law in the wrong way and make fundamental mistakes in what they say. They must make clear from time to time the redemptive- historical context and purpose of the Law. If they don't they will simply moralise. Goldsworthy points out that a sermon on the OT that could equally be preached by a rabbi or Imam is not a Christian sermon. To point to the redemptive-

historical means they will keep the hearers aware that the Law was given to Jewish people, that it was intended to impress on the people the utter bankruptcy of the human heart and that it contained pointers to the gospel in Christ.

I suggest an introduction to any sermon on the Ten Commandments contains words something like these:

We are studying today the Ten Commandments. These commandments were part of a covenant or contract God made with Israel in the OT. They are not in the strictest sense addressed to either gentile people or Christian people. However, we can learn lessons from them about what God is like (holy and Just), what we are like (obdurate and sinful) and what the gospel is like – for it rescues people from the tyranny of rules that they cannot keep. The rules themselves while in the strictest sense given only to Israel enshrine values that properly understood can help us grasp the basics of righteousness that God expects, and that are vital for any kind of right living or just society. However, we fail if we see them only in terms of good living or good society we must see them as pointers to the demands God makes and recognise our utter failure before them.

The answer to our failure to live by the Ten Commandments is not to try harder or to give up or to resent God but to embrace the freedom from condemnation and guilt that is found in Jesus....

ⁱ In this essay I have tried to keep the contours of the main text as straightforward as possible. The footnotes consider some aspects in more detail and should be consulted for a more thorough grasp of the issues.

ⁱⁱ A popular slogan of evangelicals, especially reformed evangelicals is, ‘the law leads you to Christ for justification and Christ leads you to the law for sanctification’. The first half of this slogan is partly right, the second part wholly wrong.

ⁱⁱⁱ I shall try to develop a little later more precisely what ‘the Law’ is. At this point it is sufficient to grasp that in the NT ‘the Law’ normally refers to the Mosaic Law, given by God at Sinai. It has at its core the Ten Commandments but also includes the many other civil and ceremonial laws given to the people. We tend to divide the Law into moral, civil and ceremonial. This is fine so long as we recognise that the Bible sees ‘the Law’ as one complete whole. It was a covenant made by God with Israel and each law is part of that covenant. The person who failed to keep any single law had violated the terms of the covenant and its curses fell on him. In this sense to fail in one point is to be guilty of the whole. In one sense it is artificial to speak of moral, civil and ceremonial: all is moral since each law is a command of God.

^{iv} The very first Law makes it clear that the basis of the laws were relationship. Israel knew God as ‘the Lord’; it was a title of covenant relationship. The laws were based too on the fact that he had brought them out of Egypt (Ex 20:1).

^v A covenant was similar to a contract. The main difference being it invoked the witness of god(s) and so was more serious.

^{vi} The recognition that there would be a new covenant that would supersede the old is not only a NT observation. The OT itself anticipates the demise of the old covenant (law). As far back as the second giving of the law itself Moses anticipates its breakdown and the need for a new (Deut 30:1-6). This sentiment is echoed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel who prophesy about a new covenant (Jer 31:31-33; Ezek 36:26).

^{vii} Paul accommodates the weaker consciences of Jewish believers (who feel loyalty to the law and its ceremonial demands) but resists passionately any attempt to impose the law (circumcision, special days etc) on gentiles. Paul circumcises Timothy to make it easier to preach to Jews (when he preaches to Jews he becomes a Jew 1 Cor 9:20;

21) but refuses to circumcise Titus for that would have meant acceding to the legalistic demands of the church Judaizers and Paul will not yield to them an inch.

^{viii} Hebrews is written to Jewish believers who were tempted to return to Judaism. Christianity was a matter of faith in invisible realities and these Jewish converts were being persecuted for their allegiance to it. Judaism with its temple and sacrifice system was a highly visible faith and seemed more concrete to the weakening faith of the Jewish believers. What is more allegiance to it would mean an end to persecution. Its attraction was obvious. The writer writes to show that however, concrete it may appear Sinai religion was but a shadow of the concrete realities to be found in Christ; it was in God's plan a kindergarten whereas the maturity lay in Christ (Hebs 10:1; 6:1 Cf. Gals 3:23-4:4; Col 2:17)

^{ix} 'Do' means keep the **whole** law. The Law was a covenant (contract). Great kings often entered into covenants with lesser kings. If the lesser king and his people obeyed the terms of the covenant they would receive the patronage and protection of the greater king (the blessings of the covenant). If however, they failed to keep the terms of the covenant (and so rebelled against it) they would incur the anger of the king and the curses of the covenant would fall on them. At Sinai Israel entered such a covenant (contract) with God. They agreed to the terms of the covenant (all the laws he gave them, especially though not exclusively, the Ten Commandments. They were not at liberty to pick and choose which to obey; they had contracted to keep al (Deut 27:26). To break any command was to renege against the terms of the covenant and open oneself to its curses. This is why in the NT both Paul and James insist on the Law as a unity; to fail in one part is to fail completely (Gal 3:10; Jas 2:10).

^x 'Live' here is a synonym for salvation. 'Life' was enjoyment of Canaan – God's promised hope. Despite the attempts of some to lessen the content of 'live' it is clearly redemptive life. A cursory reading of Paul's letter to Galatians makes this crystal clear. Galatians, juxtaposes two ways to live; the way of law and the way of faith. The essence of the law covenant was, 'this do and you shall live': the essence of grace was 'the just shall live by faith'. The former (law) reveals the hubris of flesh – the arrogant assumption that we can earn our salvation; the latter (faith) the proper position of a creature before God – utter dependence on him. It is impossible to assert that the 'life' in 'the just shall live by faith' is different from 'this do and you shall live'; the 'life' is the same it is the means of achieving it that is radically different. See specifically Galatians 3:11, 12, however, follow carefully the argument of the whole book. Cf. Lk 19:28. The law could offer life but it could never be achieved because of 'the weakness of the flesh' (Roms 8:3; Gals 3:21 Cf. Roms 4:14). The law which promised life, because of the flesh was always an administration of death (Roms 7:5, 9-13, 8:2; 2 Cor 3:7).

^{xi} It is interesting to note that in the second giving of the law (Deuteronomy) to a fresh generation about to enter Canaan the threatened curses of the covenant are more numerous than the promised blessings. The implication seems to be that Israel is almost expected to fail and require judgement. Indeed as we read Deuteronomy the expectation of failure is openly affirmed. Moses recognises that they will be unable to keep all the 'words of the covenant' and the curses will inevitably fall on them – including the final and ultimate curse of exile from the land (Deut 29, 30, 31:16,17). Moses, knows that a previous generation failed to keep the covenant and as a result all perished in the desert. He is realistic enough to know that a new generation and subsequent generations are going to fare no better. Even at this point Moses recognises the need for a new and better covenant of grace and predicts it (Deut 30:6). As we read the OT we see little of obedience bringing blessing, however, we see a great deal of disobedience bringing curse. As the NT says, the law brings wrath (Roms 4:15).

^{xii} It is a well worn principle that if we are to rightly read and understand the OT then we must do so through the eyes of the NT. The NT writers, taught by Jesus, teach us the proper way to understand the old (the Law, prophets, psalms and wisdom literature). It is frustrating that those who champion this principle most vociferously in say the matter of prophecy are most reluctant to embrace the perspective of Paul when it comes to the place of Law.

^{xiii} It defines sin in that without a law wrongdoing is not clearly known. The first direct command to man after the command to Adam is at Sinai. The command objectifies wrongdoing making it a transgression (a breaking of a stated law). In this sense it makes sin, more sinful since it involves deliberately breaking a given command, wrongdoing becomes disobedience, rebellion – a transgression of the law (Roms 4: 15; 5:13, 14; 7:7-13).

^{xiv} Because of the rebellious human heart God's law provokes flesh to rebel (Roms 7:5). This means that when confronted by God's law we find ourselves wanting to rebel against it. Sin takes advantage of our contrary nature to provoke us into transgression (Roms 7:8, 11). This is what Paul means when he says, 'the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law' (1Cor 15:56).

^{xv} A godly OT Jew was not one who self-confidently boasted in the law and his allegiance to it. He was one who like Abraham believed God (and all the promises he had made). He committed himself to the law as God's will. He delighted in it because it was God's word (Cf. Psalm 119) but constantly felt his guilt before it. His answer to guilt

was not to test himself by law but cast himself on the grace of God as revealed in the promises to the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). Romans 7, properly understood, is a description of a godly OT believer.

^{xvi} Romans 7 properly understood, describes the experience of a godly Jew of the old covenant; it shows the impossibility of the law to produce holiness. The only solution is Christ who delivers from the covenant of law altogether. See Roms 7; 25-8:4. Seeking, even by faith, to keep the law could only lead to wretchedness. It is hard to resist the impression that Paul views the whole experience of being 'under law' as an essentially negative experience. To be 'under law' is to be a 'prisoner' (Gal 3:23); 'under a curse' (Gal 3:10); 'a child' (Gal 4:1); 'a slave' (Gal 4:1); 'in fear' Roms 8:15). The law neither provided righteousness nor near relationship. To know God intimately as Father requires the gospel blessing of sonship (Gal 4:1-4; Roms 8:15). Law was 'a burden' (Acts 15:10, 28). Perhaps most damning of all he equates the law with 'the weak and beggarly elements' of pagan gentile faith (Gal 4:10. Cf. Col 2:20-23). The negative experience of law is clear even from its inception; Sinai was a place of terror not love (Ex 20:18-21; Cf. Hebs 12:18-24).

^{xvii} The tragedy is the majority of the Jewish nation at the time of Christ could not see this. They saw their salvation not in Christ but in the law and their commitment to it; they 'relied' on the law (Roms 2:17; Gal 3:10). This is disputed today. The new perspective claims that the Jews at the time of Christ (and the judaizing teachers in the early church) did not really believe they could gain heaven by keeping the law. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were not legalists but nomists; they believed they were 'saved' by being a member of the nation of Israel (the elected covenant people) and their commitment to the law was merely a response to God's electing (promises to fathers) and redemptive (the exodus) grace. This is a big subject but a few points are worth noting. Firstly, some scholars point out that there were a variety of views about the role of law in salvation in C1 Judaism. Some point out that a conflict existed in the minds of many rabbis over what gave them a standing before God, was it being a member of the covenant people or keeping the law. Thankfully we need not be at the mercy of scholars as the NT gives us plenty of guidance.

1. It is hard to see how Jesus could be so hard on the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law if they were simply teaching that law observance was a response to grace. He does not consider them as slightly misguided children of God but as people who belong to 'their Father the devil'.
2. Paul regards the Judaizers in the church as enemies of the gospel and calls down a curse on them (Gal 1) scarcely the language he would use to describe wrongheaded brothers in Christ.
3. To argue for covenant relationship plus law-keeping as the basis of life is effectively to subvert grace; Christ supplemented is Christ supplanted.
4. The Law itself offered life to the keeper (Roms 10:5; Gal 3:12). It would be surprising if human nature did not grasp hold of something that apparently offered it the opportunity to vindicate itself.
5. Paul's argument in Galatians is much deeper than mere badges of national identity (as the new perspective seems to argue). It is a contrast of two opposite and opposing ways of finding 'life', the way of law (this do and you shall live) and the way of grace (the just shall live by faith). The same distinction is found in Romans – the righteousness that is by faith contrasted with the righteousness of Law. Paul's arguments are not hypothetical they are based on real life situations the gospel faced (Roms 4:14). He plainly believed that many of his own nation tried to find acceptance with God through law-keeping (Roms 2:17; 4:13; 9:30-33; Gal 3:10). However, while opposing if viewed as ways of salvation we should note that when viewed correctly law and gospel are not opposed for the gospel is the fulfilling of the law (Roms 3:31; Matt 5:17; Roms 10:4; Gal 5:13, 14).

^{xix} The fact that believers are removed from the realm of accountability to law (either the Sinai law in the case of Jewish believers or the 'works of the law on the heart' in the case of gentile believers) is tied up with their Union with Christ. This is a huge subject and cannot be discussed here. (See my essay: Union with Christ). However, Christ came into the world a Jew, born under the law that he might redeem those who are under the law (Gal 4:4, 5). Those who had broken the law came under the curse of the law; Jesus took this curse (judgement) upon himself (Gal 3:13). He abolished in his flesh the commandments (Eph 2:14, 15) and brought together Jew and gentile in one 'new man'. By faith, and through the Spirit, we are united to Christ. He is our head. He has taken upon himself the judgement of a broken law. He has met its righteous requirements (condemnation and death). The 'life' that the law offered but could not deliver we have as a gift from God in Christ; it is a life based upon a status of being righteous (we are justified, right before God and in the eyes of his law) and is lived in the realm of the internal Spirit not an external code (Roms 8:1-4). It is the life of the new covenant. The verdict of 'being declared righteous' that the law could only bestow upon total obedience, God has, in the gospel, bestowed as a gift. It is received by faith. The just live by faith.

Jesus removed the curse of the law by his death on the cross. This death removed him from this world altogether. The world and its various authorities no longer had any authority over him; he was beyond sin, beyond law. When he rose from the dead he left this world and went to heaven, to the father's right hand. There is no sin there; no law to which he is subject. This is how Christians must view themselves too. United to him we have died to sin, law and death (Roms 5-8). We are seated with Christ in heaven (Eph 1:3). As he is so are we in this world (1 Jn 4:17). We live in perfect love. Our lives are hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3). We must (by faith) recognise this as true (reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God). This is the perspective that controls our thinking. We live in the realm of the new creation. Law does not belong to the new creation; it is not made for the righteous (1 Tim 1:9). The ethical impetus of the new creation is the Spirit producing his fruit (Gal 5:22, 23). From a human perspective this means 'faith working through love' (Gal 5:6). To look to the law as essential for a relationship with God is to 'fall from grace' (Gal 5:5). The moral focus of the Christian is not a written code but the person of Jesus; the example of his life on earth (1 Jn 2:6; Phil 2:2-12; Hebs 12:3, 12:2; Col 2:6, 7, 3:13, 15, 16; Eph 5:2, 25 etc), identifying with him in his death (Phil 3:10) and the morally separating effect of focussing by where he is in heaven (Col 3:1-5). The secret of godliness is not rule-keeping but Christ humiliated and exalted (1 Tim 3:16). Of course to live like Christ by the Spirit and walk in love is to pursue the righteousness that the law demanded for love is a fulfilling of the law (Gal 5:18, 23). In this sense Christian living fulfils the heart of the law. Indeed Christ-like living goes much further than law ever demanded. Law never called for us to lay down our lives for our enemies.

^{xx} The covenant at Sinai has as its basis the redeeming of the people from Egypt. The problem with the Exodus redemption is that it was imperfect (like all OT shadows of NT salvation). The people were redeemed but still 'in the flesh'. Paul makes it clear that 'Law is given to a people 'in the flesh' (Roms 7:5, 6; Gal 4:21-31). The gospel is a perfect redemption for it is internal and brings us 'into the Spirit' (Roms 8:9).

^{xxi} This is the classical reformed position. However, it finds no support in the NT. The law as a 'rule of life' is neither necessary nor sufficient, as an above footnote makes clear.

^{xxii} The only law that does not find itself reiterated in some form in the NT is, 'Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy...' For those who see the law as a 'rule of life' the NT approach to the Sabbath is a major embarrassment. The complete silence of the NT on authenticating the Sabbath is bad enough, however, the problem is worse; the NT actually criticises the Sabbath observance (Gal 4: 9-11; Col 2:16), Sabbath observance was only tolerated for the sake of the weak Jewish consciences (Roms 14:1-12). What is more the day of Christian worship is a Sunday (the first day of the week) not the Sabbath (a Saturday, the last day of the week). Significantly and ironically, during the Jewish Sabbath, their Messiah, the only one who could give them the 'rest' the Sabbath anticipated, lay in a grave after they had crucified him. Nothing could more clearly signal the redundancy of the old covenant – the law. The first day of the week (a new beginning) is the Christian day of worship – the day of resurrection, of new creation, the Lord's Day (incidentally all recorded resurrection appearances happened on a Sunday). The Lord's Day stands in contradistinction to the Jewish Sabbath not in continuity with it. The Sabbath celebrated the old creation (to which the old covenant belonged); The Lord's Day celebrates new creation. In no sense is Sunday a Christian Sabbath. The Law provided no warrant for a change in the designated Sabbath day. Even in Genesis (2:1-4) it is explicitly The Seventh Day – not any day out of seven. The biblical significance of the seventh day requires much greater treatment than we can offer here. Sufficient to say it always pointed to a time of completion, perfection and rest (Gen 2:1-4), in this way Canaan seemed to be a 'sabbath rest', however, the imperfection of that rest pointed to a coming rest for the people of God (Hebs 3,4). Christians 'celebrate' the 'sabbath' of creation by resting by faith in Christ for salvation (Hebs 3,4). The Sabbath is an ideal example of how the OT law including the Ten Commandments cannot simply be transposed from one salvation context to another without careful reflection on the redemptive-historical implications. See the excellent article in *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* Eds. Alexander Carson et al.