

Catechesis Minute

The Purposes of the Law

There are three purposes of the Law: 1) It is a curb, setting limits for society to keep some semblance of order. 2) It is a mirror, showing us our sin and how short we fall of God's glory. 3) It is a guide or a rule, a measuring stick to show us how to live. While the first two purposes are for all people, the third use of the Law applies only to Christians, since, as the ***Explanation of the Small Catechism*** says: *The power to live according to the Law comes from the Gospel.* It is this use we will focus on today.

Scripture

Psalm 119:9

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

1 John 4:9, 11

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Luke 10:27

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

The Law does not save us. What it does is it shows us God's will for our lives. This is how God wants us to live. People like to add to the Law. The Jews added more than 600 laws. The Roman Catholic church added penance to Confession and Absolution. The church I grew up in, the Friends church, at least, when I was a kid, added drinking, smoking, card playing, dancing, and going to movies to the list of "thou shall nots". But Jesus made it simple. He boiled it down to two, love God and love your neighbor.

The Word of God, especially the Ten Commandments, show us what it means to love God and our neighbor. When the Holy Spirit works faith in us and we receive salvation, He also gives us God's love. This gives us the desire to love God and our neighbor and the power to fight against our sin nature to be able to love God and our neighbor. We follow the Law, not for salvation, but because we are saved. So, the Law is not something that is oppressive to us or feared by us. The Law is the *lamp to our path* as we seek to live a life pleasing to God. May we be able to say with the psalmist, *I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you (Psalm 119:11).*