**The Marrow of Modern Divinity**

Lesson 8 – The Law of Christ

**The Nature of the Law of Christ & Its Rule of Life for Believers**

1. Turning to the law of Christ, Evangelista states, “As far as its substance is concerned, the law of Christ is the same as the law of works, or covenant of works. The matter that it deals with is summed up in the 10 Commandments, commonly called the moral law. This law contains the things that are agreeable to the mind and will of God: piety toward God, charity toward our neighbor, and self-control toward ourselves. It was given by God to be a true and eternal rule of righteousness for men of all nations and times. So the gospel directs a man to no other obedience than that over which the law of the Ten Commandments is the rule.”
2. But here is where the difference comes in:
	1. For all people in their fallen state, the law says “**Do this and live**.” Of course, being sinners, that is impossible so all are under the curse and condemnation of the law as lawbreakers. In this case, the law of God as Creator is given to those who are outside of Christ as Mediator.
	2. For those in Christ, Christ says, “**Live, and do this**.” This is only possible because Christ has given us the life and the heart first in order to seek to please God and pursue His holiness. In this case, the law of God as Redeemer in Christ is given to those who are united to Christ by faith.
3. The law to unbelievers says, “Do this in order to receive life.” The law to believers says, “Do this because you have received Christ’s life from Christ.” To unbelievers, the law is not mediated. To believers, the law is mediated through Christ.
4. This law of Christ was a rule of life even to believers in the Old Testament because they saw by faith the coming Messiah through the shadows and types of the Old Testament.
5. But the question arises, “How do we know that the 10 Commandments continues for the believer from the time of the Christ?” To this Evangelista answers that when the things that the 10 Commandments require are repeated as commands in the New Testament, and when the things the 10 Commandments forbids are condemned in the New Testament, then we see how the 10 Commandments continues into the New Testament as the law of Christ for believers.
	1. The first commandment regards having no god but the true God. Jesus says in John 3:18, “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” On the flip side, 2 Thessalonians 1:8 says, “….inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” So we see the substance of the 1st Commandment repeated in the NT.
	2. The second commandment regards the true worship of the true God. The New Testament commands the reading and preaching of God’s word (John 5:39; Revelation 1:3), prayer (Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17), and singing (Colossians 3:16; James 5:13). It also forbids idolatry. 1 Corinthians 10:14 says, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” So we see the substance of the 2nd Commandment repeated in the NT.
	3. The third commandment forbids the profaning of God’s name (character, actions, etc.). Jesus says in Matthew 15:7-9, “You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” The NT also forbids long repetition in prayer in order to be heard (Matthew 6:7) as well as hearing the Word without doing it (James 1:22). The NT also requires the worship of God in spirit and truth (John 4:24). So we see the substance of the 3rd Commandment repeated in the NT.
	4. The fourth commandment requires the worship of God on the Sabbath day (1 day in 7). Christ arose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:2), that is when the disciples assembled and Christ appeared to them (John 20:19, 26), that is when the disciples came together to break bread, collect offering and preach (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), and that is the day in which John was in the Spirit and called it “the Lord’s day (Revelation 1:10). This demonstrates the same principle of 1 day in 7 being set apart to worship God which is the substance of the 4th commandment.
	5. The fifth commandment requires the honoring of parents as well as all those in rightful authority over us. Paul instructs children to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-2). There are also other commands given regarding inferiors and superiors (Ephesians 5:22, 25; 6:4-5, 9; Colossians 3:18-22; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:18; 3:1). Thus we see the substance of the 5th commandment repeated in the NT.
	6. As far as the other commandments go, Paul states them all together in Romans 13:9, “For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” So commandments 6-10 are all repeated in the NT. Thus though we do not see the 10 commandments given in the same form as Exodus or Deuteronomy, they are still repeated and applied in the New Testament. Thus the substance of the law of Christ is the 10 Commandments as mediated by Christ.
6. Luther and Calvin follow this understanding as well. Luther says, “Apart from the matter of justification, we ought to think reverently of the law, to commend it highly, to call it holy, righteous, just, good, spiritual, and divine.” Calvin says, “No man should think that the law is superfluous to the faithful. For the law does not cease to teach, exhort, and motivate them to do good, even though before God’s judgment seat [justification] it has no place in their conscience.”
7. So, under the 10 Commandments as the law of Christ, a Christian is not at liberty to do things that are ungodly and wicked. Evangelista says, “A Christian man who transgresses what is commanded in the Decalogue sins more outrageously than one who is still under the law as a covenant of works.” This is because the Christian knows full well that he is acting contrary to the holy nature of God.
8. So Evangelista warns the antinomian that if, using Christ as an excuse, he tries to exempt himself from being under the law of the 10 Commandments as the law of Christ, it is a sure sign that you are not yet in Christ. He says, “If you were in Christ, then Christ would be in you. And if Christ were in you, then He would govern you and you would be subject to Him. Truly, Jesus will not be Savior to anyone except those to whom He is also Lord.”
9. And this shows itself in fruit. 1 John 3:10 says, “By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God.” Luther writes, “In the sense that they are fruits and signs of faith, works are to be extolled and commended. The person who has no regard for how he lives his life is not yet a Christian.”
10. But there is also the danger of appearing to have fruit and not have the root, or to have the signs without the reality that produces the signs. Evangelista says, “Although we cannot say, every one that has a form of godliness also has the power of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), yet we may truly say, that he who does not have the form of godliness, has not the power of godliness.” To put it more simply, “All that glitters is not gold, but all gold does glitter.”
11. But if God’s law is written on our hearts and we have the Holy Spirit, why do we need the 10 Commandments as the law of Christ? To put it another way, “If we have everything internally, why do we need the external law of Christ?” Calvin answers, “One proper use and end of the law, with respect to believers, is this: Although they have the law written on their hearts by the finger of God, the written law is a good means for teaching them what the will of the Lord is. Let no one of us exempt himself from this need, for no man has attained to such great wisdom that he does not need to be daily instructed by the law.” You see we only have the “firstfruits of the Spirit” according to Romans 8:23. If we only have the Spirit as a down payment, and will not have the Spirit in fullness until the New Heavens & Earth, then the law is not perfectly and completely written on our hearts, thus we need the perfect law of the Lord as given to us as the law of Christ.
12. Another objection raised at this point by Antinomista is: If a believer is perfectly justified and has no reason to fear punishment, why bother to try to keep the law and do good works? Evangelista responds that according to Scripture the law is profitable to believers, even though the law does not justify. 1 Timothy 1:8 says, “Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully.” Titus 3:8 proclaims, “The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.” It is not profitable for justification, but pursuing the law of Christ and good works is profitable for sanctification and spiritual growth into maturity. To use an analogy, money cannot buy you justification, but that doesn’t mean it’s not useful and profitable to use. So in the same way the law of Christ is profitable for every believer to use and profit from for the good of your soul and pursuit of Christ in this life.