

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



*Buy me a coffee*

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_sbet-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbet-01.php)

## EDITORIAL

I found it a valuable experience recently to preach simultaneously through the book of Exodus and the Sermon on the Mount. Readings at church from the laws of Exodus 20-24 in the morning services were complemented in the evening by Jesus' teaching on the law in Matthew 5:17-6:6. Christ's sermon is most helpful for viewing God's grace to us in Christ. I offer the following observations which I understand follow from his teaching.

*God's Law is a central theme in the Sermon on the Mount.* In preaching the gospel, Christ doesn't avoid the subject of law, or suppress the law, nor does he overthrow the law. Christ addresses the subject plainly, directly and unashamedly. The crowds were 'astonished' when Jesus finished these sayings. In his hands the Law isn't a recipe for boredom!

*God's Law is his holy standard for all time.* Christ distinguishes between fulfilling the law and abolishing it. He came to accomplish the former, not the latter. Therefore he applies and does not repeal the commands 'You shall not murder' (the sixth command), 'You shall not commit adultery' (the seventh command) and 'You shall love your neighbour' (the summary of the law; Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

*Christ faithfully applies God's Law.* He doesn't strengthen or ease the law. He doesn't add commands or omit them. He faithfully applies God's laws with a view to their true end – each and every part of a person's life. The law has reference to the whole of human life. Accordingly, an application of the sixth command is that hatred towards a brother is murder (Matt. 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15); an application of the seventh command is 'lustful intent' is adultery (Matt. 5:28) and with respect to the whole law, loving your neighbour means, not hating your enemies but loving them and praying for those who persecute you. Christ thereby teaches that obedience to God's law requires heart, soul, mind and strength (Deut. 6:5). These applications of the law are not new interpretations or new directions for the law, nor are they new laws. Simply put, they are the law.

*Jesus' sermon raises the question, 'Who can do this?'* Jesus addresses a series of glosses customarily made to the law that mask the impossibility of fallen humans keeping it. Christ, unmasking his hearers, brings to recollection the questions, 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?' The corresponding answer is, 'He who has clean hands and a pure heart' (Ps. 24:3-4). He is the 'end' (*telos*; the goal toward which a movement is directed) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes' (Rom. 10:4). 'Who can do this?' was a common question raised upon hearing Jesus' ministry (Mk. 2:7; 10:26; John 6:60). Jesus'

message was not 'You can do this!' but 'Who can do this?' The answer to the question is Jesus. The ointment for law-breaking is not law-easing, but the grace of Jesus Christ.

*Since the goal of the law is Christ, the law is an instrument of his mercy.* The law directs us to God's mercy in Christ for its fulfilment. The principles Jesus teaches regarding God's Law are later applied again in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, the story of the rich young man and the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The man who wishes to justify himself goes home disappointed while the man convicted by the law of his transgressions and who calls upon God's mercy in Christ goes home justified.

*God's mercy to us in Christ means a new disposition towards the law.* A Christian is justified, no longer a sinner only but a justified sinner. It is through Christ's justification that the law is fulfilled – not abolished – in a Christian's life. Now it is a means of honouring and loving God. Expressions of wonder, love and praise (Ps. 119:18; 119:97 and 119:64) abound to God for his law. We may join with the Psalmist in praise to God for his law, 'I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight' (Ps. 119:174).

CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS NUMBER

Rev Andrew Rollinson is retired Minister of St Andrews Baptist Church.

Mrs Jenny Stirling is Pastoral Assistant of Cornerstone St Andrews.

Rev Dr Alasdair Black is Senior Pastor of Stirling Baptist Church.

Dr Terry Johnson is Senior Minister of Independent Presbyterian Church in Savannah, Georgia, USA.

Dr Michael A. G. Haykin is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies in Louisville, Kentucky.

Rev Dr Joe Mock is ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Australia. He ministers in the Presbytery of Sydney, NSW, having spent many years as pastor and lecturer in Indonesia and Singapore.

Dr Terry Johnson's paper was presented at the 16th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on the subject of Reformed Worship, Palmerston Place Church, Edinburgh, 31st August – 3rd September 2015. The first part of the paper was published in the previous edition of SBET.

Rev Andrew Rollinson's paper along with replies from Mrs Jenny Stirling and Rev Dr Alasdair Black were delivered at an online meeting of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society on Monday 2nd November 2020.