



The Knowledge of God
Law and Gospel

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19 Minutes with Luther

Introduction to the Law

"And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall . . .'" Exodus 20:1-3

1. Romans 2:14,15 reads: *"When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, . . . they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."* According to that, how does God give his law to all people?
2. In what two ways will a person's conscience err and show itself to be undependable?
3. Because a person's conscience is not always dependable, God gave his law a second way—written in the Bible in the form of the Ten Commandments—so that we might know exactly what his will is. In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus summarized the commandments: *"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"* How did Jesus summarize the first table of God's law (Commandments 1-3)?

How did he summarize the second table (Commandments 4-10)?

With which word did he summarize the entire law?

4. Define the following:

sin

sin of omission

sin of commission

transgression

iniquity

5. Since God demands that we keep the commandments perfectly, it is impossible for the commandments to save us. Saint Paul wrote: *"No one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law"* (Romans 3:20). Nonetheless, God's law still serves several good purposes. What, according to each of the following passages, is the purpose of God's law?

"We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels" (1 Timothy 1:9).

"Through the law we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:20).

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

6. First John 4:19 reads: *"We love because he first loved us."* What does this verse tell us about the power to obey God's commandments?
7. Why did God introduce the commandments as he did (see Exodus 20:1-3)?

8. Evaluate the following statements:

Let your conscience be your guide.

When I want my kids to behave, I just lay down the law.

Obeying God's commandments takes all the fun out of life.

Luther said:

"Before receiving the comfort of forgiveness, sin must be recognized and the fear of God's wrath must be experienced through the preaching or apprehension of the Law, that man may be driven to sigh for grace and may be prepared to receive the comfort of the Gospel." (Plass, Vol. 2, page 738.)

Closing Prayer

Lord God, thank you for your law. Move us, by your love, to live according to your law to your glory and for our welfare. In our Savior's name we pray. Amen.

At home

Memorize Romans 3:20 and Psalm 119:105.

Helps

(1) God gives his law to all people by writing it on their hearts. The conscience is the voice within a person that bears witness to God's law. (2) A person's conscience may become so hardened that it no longer bothers him when he sins, or it may tell him something is sinful when it is not. (3) Jesus summarized the first table with "Love God!" and the second with "Love your neighbor!" The entire law can be summarized with the word *Love!* (4) Sin means to "miss the mark" of perfection that God demands we hit. A sin of omission is failing to do what God demands us to do. A sin of commission is doing what God forbids. Transgression is "crossing the line" into what God forbids. Iniquity is "failing to measure up" to God's standard of perfection. (5) The law serves as a curb, preserving order in this world by keeping the wicked actions of all people within bounds. The law serves as a mirror, showing all people their sin and their need for a Savior. The law also serves as a guide, showing Christians the way of life that is pleasing to God. (6) The law does not give us the strength to obey the commandments. Only the gospel of God's love for us in Christ inspires and empowers us to obey the commandments. (7) God introduced the commandments as he did to remind us that he is our loving Maker and Savior so that we are willing and glad to obey what he commands. (8) Sin has made our consciences unreliable; we cannot depend on conscience alone to tell us God's will. The law can only curb sinful behavior; it cannot motivate our children or any of us to joyfully obey God's commandments. Our sinful nature thinks that, but Christians who know God's love find their enjoyment in serving him.