

An Exposition of the 2nd (1689) London Baptist Confession
Chapter 19.6-7: Of the Law of God

19.6 Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned,^a yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin;^b together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience; it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof. The promises of it likewise show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.^c

^a Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:16; Rom. 8:1, 10:4 ^b Rom. 3:20, 7:7, etc. ^c Rom. 6:12–14; 1 Pet. 3:8–13

1. True believers are not under the law as a covenant of works (Romans 6:14, see “Covenantal Framework” below)...
 - a. To be thereby justified (Galatians 2:16).
 - b. To be thereby condemned (Romans 8:1).
2. But the law is of great use to them as well as to others (see “Uses of the Law” below)...
 - a. It serves as a rule of life...
 - i. Informing them of God’s will (Romans 3:20; Deuteronomy 29:29).
 - ii. Informing them of their duty (Romans 7:7).
 - b. It directs them and binds them to walk accordingly (Romans 6:12-14).
 - c. It reveals the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts and lives (Romans 3:20; 7:7).
 - d. It gives a means of examination so that...
 - i. They may come to further conviction of sin (James 1:23-25).
 - ii. They may be humiliated by their sin (Luke 18:13).
 - iii. They may grow to hate their sin (Psalm 119:104).
 - e. It gives them a clearer sight of their need of Christ and the perfection of His obedience.
3. It is likewise useful to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions.
 - a. Because it forbids sin (Romans 7:12-13).
 - b. Because its threatenings show what even their sins deserve (Galatians 3:10).
 - c. Because it shows what *afflictions* in this life sin may cause, though freed from its curse. (Hebrews 12:6).
4. The promises of the law likewise show believers (1 Peter 3:8-13)...
 - a. God’s commendation of obedience.
 - b. The blessings of obedience (though not as something earned).
5. A believer’s obedience informed by the law...
 - a. Does not make him a legalist.
 - b. Does not deny that he is under grace.

19.7 Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but do sweetly comply with it,^a the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.^b

^a Gal. 3:21 ^b Ezek. 36:27

1. The uses of the law given in 19.6...
 - a. Are not contrary to the grace of the gospel (Galatians 3:21).
 - b. Sweetly comply with the grace of the gospel.
2. The Holy Spirit subdues and enables the will of believers (Ezekiel 36:27)...
 - a. To do God's will freely.
 - b. To do God's will cheerfully.

A Covenantal Framework:

- The covenant of works
- The covenant of grace

The authors of the three major Reformed confessions held to a form of Covenant Theology in which the covenants of works and grace framed God's redemptive plan. Each confession clearly distinguished between the law as it functioned under the covenant of works and the law as it functions as a rule of life for believers under the covenant of grace. This covenantal framework and its implications for the law-gospel relationship mark a key difference between Reformed theology and the views of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Arminian, Dispensational, and New Covenant theologians.

The Three Uses of the Law:

- The Civil Use – the law as restraint.
- The Pedagogical Use – the law as a mirror.
- The Normative Use – the law as a guide.