

If as Christians we are bound to love our neighbors as ourselves, then it follows that we are bound by love to help our neighbors obey God's Law. Why are we bound to help our fellow human beings obey God's Law?

We are bound by love to help our neighbors obey God's Law because we know that continued transgression on their part will make their lives on earth more and more meaningless, empty, and miserable; will multiply their sins against God; and will aggravate their guilt and punishment in eternity. On the other hand we know that even external obedience on their part will save them from much harm and pain and grief in this life; will restrain them from certain forms and expressions of sin against God; and may even lessen their guilt and punishment in eternity. (Incidentally, this last point rests on the implications of Luke 12:42-48 -- the slave who knew his master's will but did not do it shall receive many lashes, whereas the slave who did not know his master's will and committed deeds worthy of flogging shall receive few lashes; and the implications of Revelation 20:12 -- the dead whose names are not in the book of life will be judged according to their deeds, which implies degrees of punishment)

We are also bound by love to help our neighbors to obey God's Law because we know that even external obedience, if it is seriously attempted by our neighbors, may be used by the Holy Spirit to drive them to despair of earning a right standing before God by their own works, and to lead them to Christ, whose righteousness they may have as a free gift of God's grace through saving faith! Thus the Law of God will operate as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ.

The believer has a responsibility to attempt to change the spiritual and moral character of his neighbors by proclaiming the gospel as the means that the Holy Spirit uses to radically transform human nature through the application of Christ's saving work.

The believer also has responsibility to attempt to influence the moral conduct of his neighbors for good. To this end, we have recognized that the universal standard of right conduct is the revealed will of God directed to man's obedience, which is the Law of God; and that this Law, written into the hearts of mankind at creation, continues to express itself from time to time in moral actions which externally conform to the Law of God given through Moses. We have also acknowledged that the Law of God continues to bind the consciences of all men. Even though external obedience cannot please God, yet it is of value in a number of ways, and definitely preferable to external disobedience. This leads us to the conclusion that, obligated by God's command and motivated by Christ's love, we are bound by love to help our neighbors obey God's Law.

This being the case, we now see that as believers we have two powerful tools to attempt to change the character and conduct of our neighbors: the gospel, which alone is the dynamite that can transform character; and the Law, which not only shows human beings their sin, but also restrains them from fuller expressions of their depravity and teaches them how God wants them to live.