

Expositional Preaching from the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible

Current Book: The Acts of the Apostles

Quote from *Church History*: “The Law is our ablest auxiliary. The Law serves a most necessary purpose. They will never accept grace, until they tremble before a just and holy law.”

- Charles Spurgeon (*Prince of Preachers* – 1800’s)

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at the saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” - Jesus (*Mark 10:17-22*)

“But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;” - Paul (*1 Timothy 1:8*)

Scriptures for Today: Galatians 3:19-28 The *doctrine* of the Law – it is good if used properly!

Questions to be answered today:

- If the **Law** was not given for righteousness or salvation, why was it given?
- What is the purpose for the **Law** at this time in history?

PRINCIPLES

1. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” There is a two-fold **PURPOSE** of the Law.

- ✓ The **first** purpose is **civil** in nature. God has ordained civil laws to punish crime. God has instituted governments, parents, laws, restrictions, and civil ordinances. The civil restraint by the Law is intended by God for the preservation of all things, particularly for the good of the Gospel that is should not be hindered too much by the wicked. But Paul is not now focusing on the civil use and function of the Law.
- ✓ The **second** purpose of the Law is **spiritual** and divine. Paul describes this spiritual purpose of the Law in the words, “**Because of transgressions.**” That is, to reveal to a person his sin, blindness, misery, his ignorance, hatred, and contempt of God, his death, hell, and condemnation.

NOTE This is the principal purpose of the Law and its most valuable contribution. As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, or thief, he would swear that he is righteous. How is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God’s wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sound of trumpets, to tear to pieces the monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right, he is going to be proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises of Christ. The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous.

KEY This monster of self-righteousness, this stiff-necked beast, needs a big axe. And that is what the Law is, a big axe. Accordingly, the proper use and function of the Law is to threaten until the conscience is scared stiff.

Quote "The Law is meant to produce the same effect today which it produced at Mount Sinai long ago. Let all who fear God, especially those who intend to become ministers of the Gospel (which should be ALL of us), learn from the Apostle Paul the proper use of the Law. I fear that after our time the right handling of the Law will become a lost art. Even now, although we continually explain the separate functions of the Law and the Gospel, we have those among us who do not understand how the Law should be used. What will it be like when we are dead and gone?" - a 16th century Philadelphia Church period preacher

LAW The Law is also a light like the Gospel. But instead of revealing the grace of God, righteousness, and life, the Law brings sin, death, and the wrath of God to light. This is the business of the Law, and here the business of the Law ends, and should go no further.

GOSPEL The business of the Gospel, on the other hand, is to quicken, to comfort, to raise the fallen. The Gospel carries the news that God for Christ's sake is merciful to the most unworthy sinners, if they will only believe that Christ by His death has delivered them from sin and everlasting death unto grace, forgiveness and everlasting life.

Quote "By keeping in mind the difference between the Law and the Gospel, we let each perform its special task. Of this difference between the Law and the Gospel, nothing can be discovered in the writings of the monks or scholars, nor for that matter in the writings of the ancient church leaders. The silence in the Church concerning the difference between the Law and the Gospel has resulted in untold harm. Unless a sharp distinction is maintained between the purpose and function of the Law and the Gospel, the Christian doctrine cannot be kept free from error." - a 16th century Philadelphia Church period preacher

2. "It was added because of transgressions," It DEFINES what sin is – breaking God's Law.

✓ In other words, that transgressions might be recognized as such and therefore increased.

NOTE When sin, death, and the wrath of God are revealed to a person by the Law, he grows impatient, complains against God, and rebels. Before that he was a very holy man; he worshipped and praised God; he bowed his knees before God and gave thanks, like the Pharisee. But now that sin and death are revealed to him by the Law, he wishes there were no God. The Law inspires hatred of God. Thus sin is not only revealed by the Law; sin is actually increased and magnified by the Law.

✓ The Law is a mirror to show a person what he is like, a sinner who is guilty of death, and worthy of everlasting punishment.

NOTE What is this bruising and beating by the hand of the Law to accomplish? This, that we may find the way to grace. The Law is an usher to lead the way to grace. God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted. It is His nature to exalt the humble, to comfort the sorrowing, to heal the broken-hearted, to justify sinners, and to save the condemned. The bizarre idea that a person can be holy by himself denies God the pleasure of saving sinners.

KEY God must therefore first take the sledge-hammer of the Law in His fists and smash the beast of self-righteousness and its brood of self-confidence, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and self-help. When the conscience has been thoroughly frightened by the Law it welcomes the Gospel of grace with its message of a Savior who came into the world, not to break the bruised reed, nor to quench the smoking flax, but to preach glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, and to grant forgiveness of sins to all the captives.

✓ Without the Law, man tries to find himself more laws to satisfy his conscience.

NOTE "If I live," says he, "I will mend my life. I will do this, I will do that." Man, if you don't do the very opposite, if you don't send Moses with the Law back to Mount Sinai and take the hand of Christ, pierced for your sins, you will never be saved. When the Law drives you to the point of despair, let it drive you a little farther, let it drive you straight into the arms of Jesus who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

3. *"Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."* The Law has an **END**.

- ✓ The Law is ***not*** to operate on a person after he has been humbled.

NOTE After a person has been humbled by the Law and frightened by the exposure of his sins and the wrath of God, it is time for the Law to be done with the person. We must then say to the Law, "Mister Law, lay off him. He has had enough. You scared him good and proper." Now it is the Gospel's turn. Now let Christ with His gracious lips talk to him of better things, grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

- ✓ Men fail to understand the Law properly; the result that they become secure hypocrites.

NOTE Moses was the mediator of the Law with the children of Israel. He covered His face with a veil. But that is as much as he could do. He could not deliver men's consciences from the terror of the Law. The sinner needs a better mediator. That better mediator is Jesus Christ. He does not change the voice of the Law, nor does He hide the Law with a veil. He takes the full blast of the wrath of the Law and fulfills its demands most meticulously. How did Christ do it? "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col 2:14)

KEY In Christian theology, the Law does not justify. In fact, it has the contrary effect. The Law alarms us, it magnifies our sins until we begin to hate the Law and its divine Author. The Law can do nothing for us except to arouse the conscience. Before the Law comes to me, I feel no sin. But when the Law comes, sin, death, and hell are revealed to me. You would not call this being made righteous. You would call it being condemned to death and hell-fire.

4. *"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid."* The Law supplies a **NEED**.

- ✓ Paul stated that the Law does not justify. Shall we then ***discard*** the Law? No, no!

NOTE The Law supplies a critical need. It supplies men with a needed realization of their sinfulness. Just because the Law increases sin, it does not therefore obstruct the promises of God. The Law confirms the promises, in that it prepares a person to look for the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ!

KEY The Law makes afflicted consciences hungry for Christ. Christ tastes good to them. Hungry hearts appreciate Christ. Thirsty souls are what Christ wants. He invites them, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ's benefits are so precious that He will dispense them only to those who need them and really desire them.

5. *"But before faith came..."* Paul explains the **SERVICE** which the Law is to render.

- ✓ God uses the Law to bring life.

NOTE Previously, Paul had said that the Law was given to reveal the wrath and death of God upon all sinners. Although the Law kills, God brings good out of evil. He uses the Law to bring life. God saw that the universal illusion of self-righteousness could not be put down in any other way but by the Law. The Law dispels all self-illusions. It puts the fear of God in a man. Without this fear there can be no thirst for God's mercy. God accordingly uses the Law for a hammer to break up the illusion of self-righteousness that we should despair of our own strength and efforts at self-justification.

KEY The Law is a prison to those that have not as yet obtained grace. The Law enforces good behavior, at least outwardly. But the Law is also a spiritual prison, a veritable hell. When the Law begins to threaten a person with the death and the eternal wrath of God, a man just cannot find any comfort at all. He cannot shake off at will the nightmare of terror which the Law stirs up in his conscience. Of this terror of the Law the Psalms furnish many glimpses.

- ✓ The freedom of faith must succeed the imprisonment of the Law.

NOTE Happy is the person who knows how to utilize the Law so that it serves the purposes of grace and of faith. Unbelievers are ignorant of this knowledge. When Cain was first shut up in the prison of the Law he felt no remorse for the crime he committed against Abel. He did not understand that he was brought face to face with his crime so that he should hurry to God for mercy and for pardon. Cain remained in the prison of the Law and despaired.

KEY As a stone prison proves a physical handicap, so the spiritual prison of the Law proves a chamber of torture. But this it should only be until faith is revealed. The unbeliever's conscience must be educated to this. Talk to their conscience. They are in a spiritual jail all right, but they do not have to stay there forever! It is written that we are "shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed." Christ will lead you to freedom!! Do not despair like Cain and Judas. They might have gone free if they had called Christ to their aid. The prison of the Law should teach the conscience to appreciate Christ.

- ✓ There is a time for the Law and a time for grace.

NOTE The doctrine of the Law must be studied carefully lest we either reject the Law altogether, or are tempted to attribute to the Law a capacity to save. There are three ways in which the Law may be abused.

1. First, by the self-righteous hypocrites who think that they can be justified by the Law.
2. Secondly, by those who claim that Christian liberty exempts a Christian from the observance of the Law. These according to Peter, "use their liberty as a cloak of maliciousness," and bring the name and the Gospel of Christ into ill repute.
3. Thirdly, the Law is abused by those who do not understand that the Law is meant to drive us to Christ. ***When the Law is properly used its value cannot be too highly appraised. It will take me to Christ every time!***

6. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." This is the **KEY** for us.

- ✓ The Law is **not** just another schoolmaster – it is a **specialist** to bring us unto Christ.

NOTE What would you think of a schoolmaster who could only torment and beat a child? Yet of such schoolmasters there were plenty in former times, regular bruisers. The Law is not that kind of a schoolmaster. It is not to torment us always. With its lashings it is only too anxious to drive us to Christ. The Law is like the good schoolmaster who trains his children to find pleasure in doing things they formerly detested.

KEY The Law was designed by God as an evangelistic tool – ten cannons strong – to lead sinners to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! If you aim it at the conscience in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, you will be guaranteed that it will hit the mark every time.

- ✓ The Law is **not** to teach us another Law – beware of this truth.

NOTE When a person feels the full force of the Law he is likely to think "I have transgressed all the commandments of God; I am guilty of eternal death. If God will spare me, I will change and live right from now on." This natural but entirely wrong reaction to the Law has bred the many ceremonies and works devised to earn grace and remission of sins.

KEY The Law means to enlarge my sins, to make me small, so that I may be justified by faith in Christ. Faith is neither law nor word; but confidence in Christ "who is the end of the law." How so is Christ the end of the Law? Not in this way that He replaced the old Law with new laws. Nor is Christ the end of the Law in a way that makes Him a hard judge who has to be bribed by works as taught by the Roman Catholic church. Christ is the end or finish of the Law to all who believe in Him. The Law can no longer accuse or condemn them.

7. *"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."*

- ✓ What does the Law accomplish for those who have been justified by Christ?

NOTE The Apostle Paul declares that we are free from the Law. Christ fulfilled the Law for us. We may live in joy and safety under Christ. The trouble is, our flesh will not let us believe in Christ with all our heart. The fault lies not with Christ, but with us. Sin clings to us as long as we live and spoils our happiness in Christ. Hence, we are only partly free from the Law. "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom 7:25)

KEY As far as the conscience is concerned it may cheerfully ignore the Law. But because sin continues to dwell in the flesh, the Law waits around to molest our conscience. More and more, however, Christ increases our faith and in the measure in which our faith is increased, sin, Law and flesh subside.

- ✓ The Law cannot beget children of God.

NOTE The Law cannot regenerate us. Faith in Christ alone regenerates us into the children of God. John bears witness to this in his Gospel, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12)

KEY What tongue of man can adequately extol the mercy of God toward us miserable sinners in that He adopted us for His own children and fellow-heirs with His Son by the simple means of faith in Christ Jesus!!

8. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek...for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."*

- ✓ In the matter of salvation, rank, learning, righteousness, influence count for nothing.

NOTE With this statement, Paul deals a death blow to the Law. When a person has put on Christ nothing else matters. Whether a person is a Jew, a strict and circumcised observer of the Law of Moses, or whether a person is a noble and wise Greek does not matter. Circumstances, personal worth, character, achievements have no bearing upon justification. Before God they count for nothing. What counts is that we put on Christ.

KEY Whether a servant performs his duties well; whether those who are in authority govern wisely; whether a man marries, provides for his family, and is an honest citizen; whether a woman is chaste, obedient to her husband, and a good mother: all these advantages do not qualify a person for salvation. These virtues are commendable, of course; but they do not count points for justification. All the best laws, ceremonies, religions, and deeds of the world cannot take away sin guilt, cannot dispatch death, cannot purchase life.

KEY There is much disparity among men in the world, but there is no such disparity before God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23) Let the Jews, let the Greeks, let the whole world keep silent in the presence of God. Those who are justified are justified by Christ. Without faith in Christ the Jew with his laws, the monk with his holy orders, the Greek with his wisdom, the servant with his obedience, shall perish forever.

PRACTICES

1. **Unbeliever**, listen to the voice of your conscience *right now*.

- ✓ Have you *repented* of your sins and *put your faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation?

2. **Believer**, what did the *Holy Spirit of God* speak to you about through His **Holy Bible**?

- ✓ What *one thing* does God want you to *do* or *repent of* right now?