

Why the Law then.

Exodus 20: 1-21

Romans 10: 1-9

Galatians 3:19-25

We are now about half way through the book of Galatians. We have covered quite a lot. from Paul's arguments proving his apostleship, to his reminding the Galatian churches that they received the spirit by the hearing of faith not of the works of the law.

He then went even further, telling the Galatian gentiles that THEY who are of faith are the true heirs of Abraham, the true children who will inherit the promises given to Abraham by God. Then, as if that was not enough he shows that all of those who are under the works of the law are under a curse. And that each and every point of the law must be kept, he told them that if you fail in one point of the law you are guilty of all. But now the promised Seed, who is Christ has come to become a curse for us so that we may be reconciled before God, and though Christ's imputed righteousness we may be accounted as righteous. Making us, all those of faith, children of Abraham.

Paul's arguments against the Judaizers and the practice of the old covenant laws is so strong, it seems to make the law worthless and without meaning. Since everything that God has offered to Abraham and his heirs comes by the way of promise, then who needs the law?

Well it isn't as though the law did not serve a purpose, It was God's law given to Moses and has a place in God's plan, but what is that place, and what is the purpose?

Well Paul says that the law was added because of transgressions, until the promised Seed comes. One way you could say it was that the law was given to deal with bad behavior. Every civilization throughout time has had a series of rules, or laws directing its people toward correct conduct. These laws are always complete with requirements and punishments to those who fail to meet the requirements. So on one level you can say that the law functioned this way for the Israelites. They came out of captivity in Egypt, not having a form of government until God set forth his law, making Israel a nation set apart for himself, to be a holy nation. But I think that was more of the initial effect of the law and its purpose goes much deeper than just the establishment of a nation. .

The way that Paul has argued against the law shows that it is much more than just a list of regulations establishing a nation and how that nation should act. Paul says the law is a curse, and anyone who lives by it is cursed. So, really the law was not given to deal with bad behavior, or to make people holier and restrain sin, or decrease transgressions, but actually it has an opposite effect, it was given to increase transgressions, and to make sin exceedingly sinful.

In short, the law exposes sin for what it really is, namely a violation of God's holy standard. God gave the law showing what was required to be holy, but as Paul pointed out many times the law was never meant to save, but rather condemn, for it is impossible for man to completely fulfill God's law. Remember, if you fail in one, you are guilty of all.

Paul explains the law's effect on his own life, in Romans. Lets turn and read Romans 7-9

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said “you shall

not covet” But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once, without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. “

We have all experienced something similar in our lives. What do we always want?...what ever it is we can not have! We see it with our children, and we see it in ourselves. That which is forbidden always seems to be the most enticing.

That is Paul's experience with the law, without it he would not know that coveting was bad, but now he knows, and now he realizes he can't stop it on his own. That is why the arguments we hear from people who believe the law was a form of salvation given to the Israelites is a false idea. We already went over the argument that God's work of salvation by faith, through Christ was God's plan from the beginning. So the law didn't just come along the side offering a different form of salvation through self righteousness. The law came to convict of sin, to show that no man is holy, and no man is capable of being holy.

In the Dispensational school of thought, they see the church age, as a parenthesis. Something added later. Some of the more hardcore Dispensationalists say that since the law did not work to make man righteous God made it easier by only requiring faith so we see the church age parenthesis added until God fulfills his promises to Israel in the last day. I like how Aaron put it last week, it isn't that the church age is a parenthesis, if there is a parenthesis it would be the law given to Moses on mount Sinai. For right standing before God has always been through faith, not works.

So really, what we see here is that the law was not given to prevent sin, but rather it was given to provoke it, the law was given to make a bad situation worse. God did not give the law to reveal how to be justified, he gave it to show the evil power that sin has over mankind. As Martin Luther wrote. “ The true function and chief and proper use of the law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well deserved wrath of God. “

There is a common view in the reformed camps refereed to as the 3 fold use of the law. Saying that the first use of the law is to reveal sin, the second use is to restrain evil, and the 3rd shows how the Christian should live for Christ.

Even though this is the standard view of many Christians, in light of Paul's handling of the law I do not think this view is correct.

We have gone this far, through this book and each step Paul is arguing against the practice of the law. Later we will see in chapter 5, Paul says all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this : love your neighbor as yourself. We will deal with that more in the coming weeks when we get there but what I want to take away from it now is Paul is saying you don't have to follow the mosaic code, the 10 commandments are not binding to you as a rule for your life, but rather your mark you should strive for isn't to follow a list of do's and don'ts but rather your goal's should be set on a life of sacrifice in love for your Father in heaven. We are to be like Christ, as Paul says in chapter 5 we are to love our neighbors as ourselves fulfilling the law. And Christ puts the bar higher and says that we are to love our enemies.

Matthew 5:43-48 says You have heard it said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven, for He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if

you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect.

We are to Love as Christ loves, and in doing so you will fulfill the law. But even in this we fail. Rarely is a man willing to lay down their life for an enemy, for someone who hates them. Thank God for his Son to become a curse for us, fulfilling the law on our behalf! Salvation is more than a reformation of your life, it is a change of heart. God changes our hearts of stone, to a heart of flesh making us capable of such love.

So all this to say, I don't think that the idea that the 10 commandments is the rule and guide for the christian life is correct. In an effort to make this doctrine work as we have mentioned before, those who believe that the 10 commandments are a guide for the christian today think that the law is split into 3 parts, civil, ceremonial, and moral. but that view is not found in scripture. So with that presupposition they separate the 10 commandments from the others, making the law into something it is not and never was intended to be. Instead of trying to make ways to make scripture fit our belief system we should rather look to scripture itself and see what it says. The holy spirit given to us who believe is our guide for our christian life. And Christ's life is our example, we should strive for a life lived in faith, and love just as our saviors, not trying to form our life around any set of laws.

So, now that Paul has answered the questions, what is the purpose of the law, and why was it given. Paul then goes on to ask another rhetorical question knowing that it is the logical flow of the argument. In verse 21 he asks, Is the law then against the promises of God? To which he replies, Certainly Not. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

Once again Paul goes back to show, and remind us again that the law was never intended to give life, it was never intended to be a way of salvation, or a way for us to be made right before God. If the law could give life, then the promise would have been unnecessary.

This is exactly what the Judaizers were telling the Galatians, to be right with God, to be an heir to the promises to Abraham you must keep the law. But they were wrong, the law is not life giving, it is death producing.

Paul continues to show that the promise is superior to the law, he says that even in its administration. The law, when given to Moses was appointed by angels, and Moses was the mediator between God and Israel. The promise that came to Abraham was direct, by God, to Abraham. Not through the hands of a mediator, but directly from God to the intended recipient.

We do not see any mention of angels in exodus account, but Paul mentions it here and it is also mentioned in 3 other places. In Duet 33, Moses mentions a host of angels with God who ascended on mount Sinai. It is mentioned again when Steven was preaching the gospel to the Jewish leaders in Acts, where he said that the law was delivered by angels, and 3rdly in Hebrews the law is called, the message delivered by angels.

So since the law was given through a mediator it distinguishes the law from the promise and shows how sin has put man at a disadvantage. One quote I read this week was by Stephen Neil who said "The promise came to Abraham first hand from God, and the law comes to the people third hand, from God, the angels, Moses the mediator, then the people. Paul is using this as an argument to further show

that the promise is superior to the law

Continuing on verse 22 says, but the scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Paul concludes his argument by uses the example of a guardian. What he is actually referring to here, is a pedagogue, which was a slave who was appointed to serve as a child's protector. This was common practice among wealthy Greek families. The children would be raised by pedagogues from age 6 until adolescence and would be under constant care and supervision. The role of a pedagogue provided both protection as well as punishment and would also serve as a moral tutor shaping the child's ethics.

To quote Ryken's commentary on Galatians since he words it much better then I, he says, “ in the plan of salvation, the law is the pedagogue that raised the Jews from childhood through adolescence. IT was not a schoolmaster to teach them how to get better and better until God finally accepted them, on the contrary, the law was for discipline. It told God's people what to do and then punished them for failing to do it.

In verse 24 and 25 Paul says “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come we are not longer under a tutor.”

Many argue that now that Christ has come, and we have the indwelling of the holy spirit we are made able to keep the law. But I question this line of thinking. It does not flow logically from what Paul has been saying this entire time here in Galatians. First off, the law was given to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. Those of us who are gentiles have never been bound under the mosaic law. I do not think it is proper to take the salvation and righteousness given to us by God through the promise and then turn right around and focus on the laws given to Moses. That is what the Judaizers were suggesting and that is what Paul is arguing against here.

This over focus of the law that we see here with the Jews, and today by Christians I think can be dangerous. It focus to much on man's outward action, and less on his inward state. AND discredits the holy spirits work of conviction in the life of a believer. As I have told people when talking to them about reformed covenant theology, it isn't as if we are living without a law. We have a law, written on our hearts, and we have the holy spirit as our guide and pedagogue. If you are a true heir to the promise, you have the gift of the holy spirit who actually can be harsher then any written law. For the holy spirit convicts, not only of that which we do, or do not do..but also that which we think and feel. We know when we have sinned, not because a law has told us so, but because we have a new heart which desires Christ, and we have the indwelling of the holy spirit convicting us.

That being said, I will close with a challenge. Paul says in Colossians. Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men. These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Is this you? Are you concerned with such things? Paul says if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why as though living in the world do you subject yourself to regulations?

Put aside the law of death and live in the promises. If you are Christs, the holy spirit will convict you and keep you. And here is the challenge... if you have not felt the conviction of the holy spirit in your life, you need to ask yourself...are you a true child of Abraham, heir to the promises? Have your sins been nailed on the cross with Christ? Or are you living a life of self imposed regulations and false

belief. If you find the later to be true, do not wait, run, run to Christ! Repent, and believe today! Put aside the outward appearance of religion, and put on the righteousness of Christ. And I will close, by reading Romans 8, turn with me if you want.

It says, "There is therefor now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. I ask you today, are you free in Christ....or are you still bound by the law of sin and death?"