

Preached on 1/22/23 at GBC - Ruston

"The Purpose Of THE LAW, Pt.1"

Gal.3:19,20

The Apostle Paul told believers by his epistle to those at Corinth – “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; **that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.** Which things also we speak, **not in the words** which man’s wisdom teacheth, **but which the Holy Ghost teacheth**; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: **neither can HE KNOW** [them], **because they are spiritually discerned.**” (I Cor.2:12-14) The word translated into the English words “**he KNOW**” means ‘to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of’. It is a Jewish idiom for a sexual relationship between a man and a woman – “*Adam **KNEW** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare him a son.*” So it refers to an intimate relationship or love! That being the case, Paul states dogmatically that “*the natural man*” can neither **RECEIVE** the things of the Spirit of God, nor can the natural man **LOVE** “*the things of the Spirit of God.*” In the context of Paul’s words, the “*things of the Spirit of God*” are a direct reference to “*the things that are freely given to us of God*”, namely justification and eternal life through God’s covenant promise to Abraham’s “**SEED**”, the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s exactly what Paul set forth in the verses we looked at last time – “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, [that] the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise.*” (Gal.3:16-18) The giving of the law **430 years after the PROMISE** was not an addition or a correction by which God made justification and eternal life conditioned on man’s obedience to the same law. Salvation is by grace alone, in Christ alone, by faith alone. The “*natural mind*” hearing such truth immediately begins to ask questions about the validity or the reason for God giving the law by Moses. That’s what we want to deal with in these next few messages.**

Realizing and knowing how the “*natural mind*” reasons on those things it can’t comprehend, Paul asks a question – “*Wherefore then [serveth] the law?*” Literally translated, this verse reads: “*Why then the law?*” If what Paul has stated dogmatically is true, that justification and eternal life is by **PROMISE** to “*Abraham and HIS SEED*”, the natural mind objects and thinks: Then why give it? What ends or purpose could the Law serve? Of what use is it? There might as well have been no law given at all if the inheritance can’t be obtained by obeying it, or justification can’t be obtained or maintained by continued obedience to it? That’s exactly what the Judaizers **THOUGHT** and were **TEACHING** concerning the law. They truly had the **LAW OF GOD**, and they **THOUGHT** that God had given it to them so they could attain justification or righteousness and maintain life based on their obedience to the Law of Moses. Paul answers this question clearly – “*it was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.*” In other words, the **LAW** was added or given to show “*the exceeding sinfulness of sin*” and the absolute holiness of God, proving beyond a shadow of a doubt the absolute necessity of redemption and justification by Christ alone. I think **Romans 7** illustrates this perfectly. In his unconverted state, Paul (**Saul of Tarsus**) had the law, and he **THOUGHT** he was keeping the law – “*For I was alive without the law once.*” Was Saul of Tarsus really alive? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** He, like every unregenerate sinner could not see or understand what the Law demands - **PERFECT OBEDIENCE** in thought, word, and deed, and any transgression demands the eternal death of

the sinner who disobeys – “*The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die.*” (Ezek.18:4); “*The wages of sin [are] DEATH.*” (Rom.6:23a) Paul said concerning his own state while unregenerate – “*Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” (Rom.7:7) I love what Mr.Hawker wrote on Paul’s words to these Galatians concerning this statement – “*it was added because of transgressions*” – “Nothing could so effectually manifest the desperately wicked state of man’s nature by the fall, **as when held forth in the glass of God’s holy law.** For, precepts to holiness, act as a bridle upon our corrupt affections, and we thereby discover our propensities the stronger to offend: just as pent up waters, swell, and grow more violent, **the more they are restrained.** And hence the law was added, to show poor fallen man, the awful state to which by sin he is reduced; **and the more powerfully to show, the necessity of Christ.** It would be always blessed, if men so viewed the holiness of God’s law, and their total inability to perform it. Jesus, and his complete salvation, would then be valued, as the one only ordinance of heaven, whereby we must be saved.” The law was added until “*the SEED to whom the promise was made.*” This “*seed*” was Christ. As Paul told those at Rome – “*For Christ [is] the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*” **Listen to our Lord** – “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*” (Matt.5:17,18)

Notice what Paul said next about this “*law*” that was added – “[and it was] *ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*” We know that the angels, as holy as they are, had absolutely nothing to do with ordaining, much less writing of the law which was given to Moses – “*And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.*” (Exo.31:18) Before Moses died, being forbidden from entering the land of promise, he pronounced this blessing on Israel – “*And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand [went] a fiery law for them.*” Moses received the law from the “*right hand*” of God, which I believe to be the Lord Jesus Christ. This verse tells us that when Moses received the law from the “*right hand*” of God, God’s “*right hand*” was surrounded by “*ten thousands of saints*”, which is a reference to the angels. The literal translation of our text is “*having been set in order through messengers in the hand of a mediator.*” The settings and circumstances of this ordination and giving of the law are so important. Everything surrounding it struck Israel’s heart with fear and dread, so much so that they wanted Moses to mediate between them and God – “*And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw [it], they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God [was].*” (Exo.20:18-21) After Israel sinned against God while Moses was in the mountain the first time, and when Moses went before the Lord the second time to receive the tables of the law it changed Moses physical appearance – “*And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments. And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw*

Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And [till] Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel [that] which he was commanded.”(Exo.34:28-34) Moses was the mediator of this law given and ordained by God to Israel, pleading with God on Israel’s behalf, and God only spoke to Israel as a nation through Moses.

To show the infinite superiority of the covenant of grace over the law, the Spirit moved Paul to write the next words – “*Now a mediator is not [a mediator] of one, but God is one.*” While on the surface this verse looks to be pretty easily interpreted, it is really a verse that is packed with rich truth when interpreted and understood in the context of the Apostle’s argument. Young’s Literal Translation translated the words in this way – “and the mediator is not of one, and God is one.” Paul’s argument is that the **LAW**, given 430 years after the **PROMISE** can not disannul or change the **PROMISE** God made to “*Abraham and his SEED*” concerning justification and salvation by God’s grace and mercy found in Christ **ALONE**. Think about the term “*mediator*”, and its meaning. The word translated “*mediator*” means ‘one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, **or for ratifying a covenant**’. This statement concerning a mediator is spoken in answer to the question of the last verse – “*Wherefore then [serveth] the law?*” If the inheritance was given by the law, it couldn’t be given by promise, but Paul made it clear that God gave the inheritance by **PROMISE** to “*Abraham and His seed.*” Therefore the **LAW** was given because of the sinfulness of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in order to keep them separate from all the other nations until Christ came, the **ONE** to whom the **PROMISE WAS MADE**. **I WANT TO STATE THIS AS CAREFULLY AND CLEARLY AS I CAN: THE LAW** was strictly subservient to the **PROMISE** and was ordained by angels in the hands of the “*mediator*”, which was Moses. Paul tells us that Moses was not and “*is not a mediator of one.*” In other words, Moses didn’t mediate between God who gave the law and **AN INDIVIDUAL**, but was the mediator between God and the nation of Israel. Listen to James Haldane’s words on the meaning of this phrase – “The giving of the law was a distinct transaction, which could not possibly interfere with the promise made to an individual so long before. This would have inevitably followed had it been a mere human transaction—a man’s covenant; how much more when received as the solemn engagement of **HIM** who is of one mind, and none can turn Him.” Paul then wrote: “*But God IS ONE.*” Now we all know, believe, and confess that there are **THREE PERSONS** in the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. But we also know, believe and confess that “*these THREE are ONE*”, meaning **ONE GOD**, the “*true and living God*”, the **ONE GOD** who Abraham believed “*justified the ungodly.*” This God, our God, **MY GOD**, is God of His elect from both the Jew and Gentile, Who is of one mind concerning them, and has taken them into one and the same covenant, making use of one and the same method in their justification – “*Seeing [it is] one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.*”(Rom.3:30) Moses as the Mediator of Israel could only tell Israel **what God’s LAW demanded and required**, but neither Moses or Israel’s obedience could satisfy the law’s demands. Thankfully the **MEDIATOR** of the covenant of grace is Christ, who doesn’t change the voice of the law, hide it with a vail like Moses, or take those He is Mediator for out from under the sight of the law. Christ set Himself against the wrath

of the law and satisfied it perfectly and completely in “*His own body on the tree*” – “*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; **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;** [And] having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*”(Col.2:13-15) Truly our Mediator exceeds Moses who could only place himself between the offended and the offenders, hoping God would be merciful to them all – “*Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*”(II Cor.5:17-21)

Let’s close with Paul’s words concerning **OUR MEDIATOR** – “*For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and **men**, the man Christ Jesus.*” That **MEDIATOR** isn’t **MOSES and THE LAW**, but Christ Jesus who is “*mighty to save.*” I hope that makes sense to you, and my hope and prayer is that I have been faithful to Christ, to His Word, and to His **HOLY LAW**.

We’ll come back and pick up with vs.21 next time.