

WHEREFORE THEN SERVETH THE LAW?

TEXT: GALATIANS 3:19-25

Introduction:

1. The theme of the book of Galatians is we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, and not by keeping the law.
2. According to Galatians 1:6-9, those who preach salvation by works are guilty of preaching "another gospel."
3. The book of Galatians teaches that the law of Moses did not annul or add any conditions to the promise God made to Abraham (cf. 3:14-18).
4. My message is entitled, "Wherefore Serveth the Law?" (3:19). In other words, "What is the purpose of the law?"

I. THE LAW WAS ONLY TEMPORARY (3:19, 20).

1. The law "was added because of transgressions" (3:19). If it "was added," it was not permanent.
2. The law "was added because of transgressions" (3:19). Obviously sin existed before the law. Romans 5:13 says, "For until the law sin was in the world."
3. There was sin in the Garden of Eden, but there was no law until God handed it down to Moses on Mount Sinai.
4. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."
5. While sin existed before the law, man did not recognize it as sin until the law came. Transgression is the violation of a known law.
6. Paul says in Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. 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."
7. This then is the purpose of the law -- to know the mind of God, and to recognize our helpless and hopeless estate.
8. The law was given to reveal sin, not to remove sin. The law was given to sinful people who did not have the power to obey it. This does not mean that the law failed; it means that man failed.
9. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."
10. The law was successful in that it accomplished what God had intended for it to do -- it showed men their lost condition, so that they would recognize their need for God's grace.

11. With the death and resurrection of Christ, the law was done away and we are now "dead to the law" (Romans 7:4).
12. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."
13. F.B. Meyer said, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death, just as the law of elasticity of the air makes the bird free from the predominating power of the pull of gravitation."
14. Galatians 3:19 says that the law "was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come..." This refers to the first advent of Christ (cf. 3:16b).
15. Therefore, the law was given as a temporary measure until the coming of Christ. The promise given to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ. "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (3:8b).
16. The law involved two contracting parties -- God and the nation Israel. In Deuteronomy 5:5, Moses said to the children of Israel, "I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD."
17. Therefore, Moses was the mediator.
18. The angels were God's messengers in delivering the law to Moses (Gal. 3:19).
19. Acts 7:53 says the Jews "received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."
20. In Galatians 3:20, Paul is not speaking of the law, but of the unconditional covenant God made with Abraham (cf. 3:18). God gave His promise to Abraham, and there was no need for a mediator.

II. THE LAW CANNOT GIVE LIFE (3:21).

1. In fact, the law is referred to as "the ministration of death" in II Corinthians 3:7.
2. The law is not "against the promises of God" (Gal. 3:21).
3. Paul says, "God forbid" (3:21), and then goes on to say that if it were possible to establish a law by which sinners could achieve the perfection required by God, then salvation would come by the law.
4. And if salvation could come by the law, why did Christ have to die on the cross for our sins? (cf. 2:21).
5. The law cannot save. The law cannot give life. The law only condemns sinners.
6. The law of Moses regulated the lives of the Jewish people, but it could not give them life; i.e., it could not provide spiritual life to them.
7. Galatians 3:22 says, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

8. "Might be given to them that believe." Not might be given to them that keep the law.
9. "But before faith came..." (3:23). Paul is referring to the Gospel era brought in by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, "The law shut sinful man up to faith as the only avenue of escape."
11. The expressions "kept under" and "shut up" (3:23) suggest restriction and confinement.
12. In Acts 15:10, Peter said, "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

III. THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST (3:24, 25).

1. In Galatians 3:19, Paul asks, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Here is the answer (3:24, 25).
2. Scofield says, "The true intent of the law is condemnation, and as a preparatory discipline."
3. Scofield quotes H.A.W. Meyer, who defines the schoolmaster: "Among the Greeks and Romans, persons, for the most part slaves, who had it in charge to educate and give constant attendance upon boys till they came of age."
4. The law was like this schoolmaster who taught the child valuable lessons concerning the sinfulness of man, the holiness of God, and the need for blood atonement.
5. The law brought us to the cross of Christ, "that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). Justification was promised on the basis of faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross, not on keeping the law.
6. The schoolmaster's services were no longer needed "after that faith is come" (3:25).
7. The law was a preparation for the nation Israel until the coming of the Messiah. Unfortunately the people of Israel did not recognize their Messiah. They preferred staying under the law, though they failed to keep it.
8. Therefore, God judged them. He destroyed their temple and scattered them all over the world. Today the Jew has no temple, no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifice, and no king.
9. They have a country but there is little peace and tranquility in their ancient homeland.
10. But when they repent and turn to Jesus, God will graciously restore them.

CONCLUSION:

On April 19, 1857, CH Spurgeon preached a message from this text, "Wherefore then serveth the law?" and his exposition had four divisions:

1. The first use of the law is *to manifest to man his guilt.*
2. The second, *The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life.*
3. *The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin.*
4. *It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour.*