

“Why Was the Law Given?”
(Galatians 3:19-29)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. This morning, we saw,
 - a. First, that covenants once made – whether between men, or by God with men – are binding.
 - (i) Once ratified, once agreed upon and set in motion, they remain intact.
 - (ii) They cannot be altered or have conditions added to them.
 - (iii) That was true of the covenants men made, such as Jacob and Laban.
 - (iv) And it was especially true of the covenant God made with His people.
 - b. Second, that the covenant God made with Abraham was not with Abraham alone.
 - (i) The promise of Canaan, children and being a blessing to all nations merely pointed to the reality another would bring.
 - (ii) The covenant also included promises to Abraham’s Seed – Christ:
 - (a) That He would inherit and rule over the earth.
 - (b) That He would give birth to a multitude of children like the stars in the heavens, like the sand by the seashore.
 - (c) That He would through His obedience and death be a blessing to all the nations by governing them and bringing salvation to them.
 - (iii) Abraham saw these things through the types God promised him.
 - (a) He saw Jesus Christ and trusted in Him.
 - (b) And through Him received the blessings.
 - c. Finally, we saw on this basis that the Mosaic Covenant did not abolish the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - (i) Paul said once made the covenant remains in force.
 - (ii) That’s especially true because the promises were made to Abraham’s Seed – to Christ.
2. What this means is that the way of salvation did not change when the Law was given.
 - a. If the Galatians were to be saved, they must trust in Christ, as Abraham, the believer, did, and not follow the way of the Judaizers.
 - b. If we would be saved and receive the blessings of the inheritance Christ has earned, we must do the same.

B. Preview.

1. Paul does not want to depreciate the Law, but to do this he needs to offer some explanation:

- a. If the Law wasn't given as an alternate or new way of salvation, why was it given?
 - b. Paul tells us it was added because of transgressions:
 - (i) God's people needed a clearer view of what sin was:
 - (a) To convict them of their sins.
 - (b) To restrain their sins.
 - (c) And so that by seeing their sins, they might also see their need of a Savior.
 - (ii) Paul also tells us that once Christ came, the Mosaic Covenant had fulfilled its purpose and was ended.
 - (a) Covenants do remain in force forever.
 - (b) But the Mosaic Covenant was like an auxiliary, a teacher, a complement to the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - (c) It was meant to be in force until Christ came, and then once it had done its work, to end.
2. Tonight, let's consider two things:
- a. Why the Law was given.
 - b. And when the Law – in the sense of the Mosaic Covenant – ended.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, why was the Law given? The Law was not given to save anyone, but was added to the Abrahamic covenant to convict the Jews of sin and their need of a Savior. "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made" (v. 19).
 1. First, notice it didn't subtract or subvert anything from the Abrahamic Covenant, but was added to it. "It was added because of transgressions."
 - a. Think of the Abrahamic Covenant as the foundation of the grace God gave.
 - (i) The real foundation was laid in eternity in the covenant made between the Father and the Son and the elect in God's Son.
 - (ii) We call that covenant, the Covenant of Grace.
 - b. The Mosaic Covenant was added to the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - (i) Think of it as a teaching institution set on this foundation of grace whose main purpose was to point to the foundation.
 - (ii) The Mosaic Covenant was added to point to the Abrahamic Covenant and the way of salvation found there: faith in Jesus Christ.
 2. Why was the Mosaic Covenant needed if there was already a covenant in place that provided a way of salvation? "It was added of transgressions."
 - a. Though the children of Abraham were God's chosen people, they were sinners.
 - b. They needed to see their sins:
 - (i) This must happen before anyone can see their need of a Savior.

- (ii) “Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20).
 - (iii) “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase” (5:20).
- c. Their sins also needed to be restrained: the Law provided this through warning.
 - d. But it also pointed to the way to be freed from the guilt of their sins – through the sacrifices, it pointed to the Savior.
 - e. And so the Lord made that covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai:
 - (i) He gave the Law through angels on Mount Sinai (Cf. Heb. 2:2).
 - (ii) Through a mediator: Moses.
 - (iii) And it would remain in force until the Seed came to whom the promise had been made: until Christ came.
 - (a) When Christ the reality came and fulfilled the types and shadows, the Old Covenant gave way to the New (Heb. viii. 7, 8).
 - (b) The Moral Law is still in force, it continues to convince men of sin and restrain it, but we are no longer under the Mosaic Covenant.
 - (c) It was not an alternative way of salvation, but something meant to point us to Christ.
 - f. Here we have Paul’s argument in a nutshell.
 - g. But he goes on now to explain it more fully:
3. The Law was given to show us that we needed Christ and the way of salvation provided by Him.
- a. First, by the fact that the Lord appointed a mediator in the Old Covenant.
 - (i) “Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only one*” (v. 20).
 - (ii) The fact that a mediator was necessary pointed to the fact that they were separated from God.
 - (iii) It showed they were at variance with Him, and that they needed a way to approach Him.
 - (iv) The Lord allowed them to do this through the Law, as its ceremonies pointed to Christ.
 - b. Clearly, the Law itself was not given as an alternate way of salvation.
 - (i) “Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law” (v. 21).
 - (ii) The Law wasn’t given to bring life, but to bring men to the One who could give them life.
 - (iii) The Law is not at odds with the promise, but it was meant to draw their attention to the promise.
 - c. It kept them shut up under the sense of their sins so that they might receive the promise in Christ. “But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so

that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (v. 22).

- d. And it kept them shut up until Christ came and the way of faith was more clearly revealed: “But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed” (v. 23).
 - (i) Of course, the OT saints were saved by the same faith that we are, even as Abraham.
 - (ii) But the way of faith in Christ was obviously not as clear.
 - (iii) Until that way was made clear by His appearing, the Law was there to point them to Christ: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to Christ*, so that we may be justified by faith” (v. 24).
 - (a) Through the standards of the Moral Law.
 - (b) Through the sacrifices and ceremonies that pointed them to the need of a Savior.

- e. The Law was clearly given not to save them, but to point them to the One who could: The Law was our teacher to lead us to Christ to be justified by faith.

B. Second, when did the Law end?

1. It ended when Christ came. “But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (v. 25).
 - a. Its job was completed:
 - (i) It was meant to point them to the Seed.
 - (ii) Now that the Seed has come and they have trusted in Him, they no longer needed the teaching of the Mosaic Law.

 - b. It’s as if Paul is here answering the argument of the Judaizers.
 - (i) Now that faith has come, we may still use the Law to teach us our need of Christ.
 - (ii) No. Paul says the tutor’s job is done: you don’t need Christ plus the Law.
 - (iii) This doesn’t mean that we don’t need the Moral Law to point out our sin:
 - (a) It still convicts us, restrains us, points us to Christ.
 - (b) But we don’t need the types and shadows of the ceremonial law to point us to Christ: the reality has come.
 - (c) We are no longer bound by the yoke that Peter said neither they nor their forefathers could bear (Acts 15:10).

2. We are now set free into the liberty of the children of God. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (v. 26).
 - a. We are children of God by faith, not servants, not kept at a distance, but brought near, with freer access to God, admitted into the number with the rights and privileges of God.
 - b. And all through faith in Christ.

3. In Christ, all the distinctions of the ceremonial law have broken down, and we are one in Him. “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (vv. 27-28).
 - a. If we have believed in Christ, we have been baptized into Him. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - b. In Christ, we are all on equal footing.
 - c. This doesn’t mean that the distinctions of roles has broken down.
 - (i) A slave must submit to his master, a wife to her husband, the members of the church to the elders, and all of us to Christ.
 - (ii) But it does mean that in Christ, there are no classes of members.

4. “And,” Paul says, “if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise” (v. 29).
 - a. The inheritance does not come through the Law, but through faith.
 - b. The Law/Mosaic Covenant was added as a teacher to drive us to the promise in Christ, not as another way of salvation.
 - c. If you belong to the Seed of Abraham, if you trust in Him, then you are the promised seed of Abraham, the heirs of the promises of God.
 - d. Christ is all you need, not Christ plus the Law.
 - e. Trust in Him alone, and you will be safe. Amen.