Shut Up to Faith

Galatians 3:23  But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Paul is addressing the Judeaizers and is making a statement about the power of faith even during the Old Testament period of Law.

- The phrase "shut up to" is very significant.
- It conveys a very strong truth.
- Paul is describing the Old Testament Law as serving the purpose of forcing men towards faith.
- The law demanded absolute obedience, it demanded carnal perfection, it demanded that every man live according the strict measure of God’s righteousness, without the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost.
- Ultimately men failed the Law.
- And when they recognized their failings and they recognized there shortcomings they were left with no other avenue to grace but faith!
- It was faith that drove them to obey the sacrificial law.
- It was faith that directed them to select a lamb, a perfect spotless lamb, and lay it upon an altar as a sacrifice for sins.
- It was faith that trusted that God's wrath would be turned away by the blood of a lamb.
- Paul would say, elsewhere, that the law served as a school marm, it revealed to us our inability to live right in our own power.
- However here Paul introduces a complementary concept.
- By so doing it drove us towards faith.
- It shut us up.
- It closed all the other doors, it shut off every other avenue of deliverance.
- When the weary, worn, hard pressed soul sought a means of deliverance, a way to flee to the refuge of the hope that has been set before us, the law left no other avenue for man to hope in except faith.

Let me draw some illustrations for you:

- Abraham was forced to wait, year after year, for his promised child, even after God assured him he would be born.
  - Over a painful decade passed as Abraham watched all natural likelihood of having a child pass from him.
  - His feeble attempt to produce an heir outside of god’s power had failed, and with every passing day the promise seemed more impossible.
  - But God had Abraham right where he wanted him – shut up unto the faith.
    - The language of the verse conveys the idea of being isolated to a stronghold, locked up unto faith.
• Every other avenue of fulfillment was cut off.
• Abraham had nowhere else to place his hope.
• He was shut up to faith!
• Either God would come through or the promise would be unfulfilled!

This is the position that Israel found itself in with its back to the Red Sea and an Egyptian Army bearing down on it.
  o Where could they go?
  o How could they escape?
  o They were shut up unto faith!
  o They had no other recourse except to trust in the only one that could cleave the waters in two and cause them to walk across on dry ground!

Let me share with you a little secret about living for God:
• Sometimes God is going to shut you up to faith!
  o Sometimes God is going to isolate you from every other avenue and leave you no other recourse except to trust Him!
  o We tend to want all of the answers now.
  o We tend to want a quick fix, an immediate solution.
  o But sometimes God is going to lead you down a path where every other door swings shut and every avenue seems to be cut off.
  o And it is in that place where you find yourself shut up into faith that your faith is going to grow.
  o In that place, where no other source can bring you satisfaction,
    ▪ where no other power can produce your answer,
    ▪ in that uncomfortable valley where it seems that all is lost and you have nothing left but your faith in God
    ▪ – that's where you are going to learn that He is the God that parts the Red Sea,
    ▪ He is the God that makes a way when there seems to be no way,
    ▪ He is the God that orders your footsteps and knows right where you are!
• Tonight, the thought is simple.
  o Don’t stress when it seems that you face the hopeless.
  o Don’t get dismayed when it seems that every door swings shut before you.
  o Don’t lose your faith when God begins to shut you up to faith!
    ▪ Remember, sometimes God is going to teach you just how trustworthy He is.
      • He will do that by removing every other thing that you trust in, then proving himself to be all that you need.
  o When you find yourself in the valley – trust him.
When you find yourself in the prison cell of faith, shut up in a stronghold with no other options, take faith
  - Only one hand can put you in that place, and only one hand can deliver you from that place.
  - It all operates on faith!

Tonight, I want to encourage you to trust Him!
  - Sometimes, he’s going to shut you up to faith!
    - But the record of scripture is clear, those are the times when he shows himself to be strong.
    - Those are the times when God shows up and shows out!
  - Perhaps that’s why Paul wrote, in another place, “When I am weak, He is strong.”
    - When my hope is almost gone,
    - When every other avenue has been shut off,
    - When my strength has failed me and my knowledge has been exhausted
      - That’s when God shows up and takes over!
  - We have a trust worthy God!
    - Let us put our trust in him!

According to Paul, God used the Law to shut men up to faith!
  - Tonight, chances are, he’s allowing some circumstances into your life for the same purpose – to shut you up to faith.
  - Don’t fight the process, turn your eyes towards Jesus and Put your faith in HIM who is able!