

LIFE-STUDY OF GALATIANS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

FAITH REPLACING LAW

I. LAW

A. God's Principle in Dealing with Man in the Old Testament Economy

Law was the principle according to which God dealt with His people in the Old Testament economy. In dealing with the children of Israel according to the law, God dealt with them through the tabernacle with the priesthood and the offerings. On the one hand, He dealt with them according to the law; on the other hand, He dealt with them through the tabernacle. After the giving of the law, God came to dwell in the tabernacle. At the end of the book of Exodus, the tabernacle was set up. Then at the very beginning of Leviticus, we see that God spoke from within the tent of meeting. God was hidden within the tabernacle and spoke in the tabernacle. Thus, God dealt with His people from within the tabernacle, through the tabernacle, and according to the law.

Suppose an Israelite committed a certain sin. According to the law, that one had to be condemned, perhaps even put to death. The law exposed his sin and condemned him. However, the sinner could present a trespass offering, which was then offered on the altar by the priest. In this way the one who had sinned could be forgiven. After the law exposed and condemned him, it brought him to the tabernacle through the altar. This indicates that the law first exposes us and then brings us unto Christ. If there had been no law to condemn the people, there would have been no need of redemption. We need redemption because we are under the condemnation of the law. By exposing and condemning us, the law brings us to Christ.

The law is a custodian which keeps sinners by condemning them. Apart from the law's condemnation, it could not function as a custodian. Without the law's exposure and condemnation, we cannot realize how many sins we have committed against God. Without the law, we would be without regulation or restriction. But because the law condemns us, we are kept by the law.

In keeping us by condemning us, the law brings us to Christ. In the Old Testament, an Israelite who had sinned was condemned by the law and required to bring a trespass offering. The law functioned as a custodian to bring the sinning Israelite to Christ, his Redeemer, typified by the trespass offering. In this way the law keeps us and brings us to Christ.

On the one hand, Paul put the law in the position of Hagar, Abraham's concubine. On the other hand, the law has a positive position, that of a custodian to keep us and that of a child-conductor to bring us to Christ. We should not return to the law. To do this is to go to Hagar. However, we should not despise the law either, for it serves as a warden to care for those who are weak or childish. In its role as a child-conductor, the law takes care of the child. It does this by convicting, judging,

condemning, and exposing the child. When the child is tempted to do something wrong, the law rebukes him and condemns him in order to keep him and to bring him to the proper place. Therefore, by exposing us and condemning us, the law serves as a child-conductor to bring us to Christ.

We have pointed out that the law was the basic principle according to which God dealt with His people in the Old Testament. If it were not for the law, not many of the children of Israel would have come to the altar with a trespass offering. Because the law exposed them and condemned them, they realized their need to come to the altar with the required offering. In this, the law is very useful to God. Although God dealt with His people according to the law, He did not deal with them through the law, but dealt with them through the tabernacle.

B. To Expose Man's Fallen Condition

In 3:19 Paul tells us that the law "was added because of transgressions." The law was not an original part of God's economy. It was added while God's economy was proceeding because of man's transgression, until the seed, Christ, should come, to whom God's promise was made. Since it was added because of man's transgressions, it should have been deducted when those transgressions were taken away. Because Christ, the seed, has come, the law must be terminated. Its function is to expose man's fallen condition.

C. To Keep Man in Its Custody for Christ

In 3:23 Paul says, "But before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed." To be guarded is to be kept in custody, kept in ward. To be guarded under law, by being shut up there, can be compared to sheep being enclosed in a fold (John 10:1, 16). In God's economy, the law was used as a fold to keep God's chosen people until Christ came. Because Christ has come, God's people should no longer be kept under the law.

The Greek word rendered "unto" in 3:23 can also be translated "with a view to." This indicates that the shutting up has an objective or goal in view. It should result in bringing the guarded people to the faith.

In caring for their children, Christian parents need to preach the law to them. We should not first preach grace to the children. If we give them regulations according to the law, the law will keep them in custody for Christ. Thus, we should first give them the law in a strong way. The law will expose them, guard them, and keep them, serving as a custodian to keep them for Christ.

D. To Conduct Man unto Christ

In 3:24 Paul continues, "So the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The Greek word for "child-conductor" can also be rendered escort, guardian, or custodian. It denotes one who cares for a child who is under age and conducts him to the schoolmaster. The law was used by God as a custodian, a guardian, a child-conductor, to watch

over His chosen people before Christ came, and to escort and conduct them to Christ at the proper time.

Galatians 3:25 says, “But faith having come, we are no longer under a child-conductor.” Since faith in Christ has come, we do not need to be under the guarding law any longer.

As a child-conductor, the law brings us unto Christ that we may be justified by faith. When an Israelite came to the altar with a trespass offering, he was justified by faith in that offering. Because of the trespass offering, God forgave him of his sin. The Israelite was justified not by works of law, but by his faith in the trespass offering. In typology, this is to be justified by faith. The principle in the New Testament is the same. The law still condemns all those who have sinned. Those condemned under the law should come to Christ and exercise faith in Him as their trespass offering. In this way, sinners are justified by faith.