

Wherever the Law Leads, We'll Go

(Galatians 3:19-29)

(preached 8/21/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

In 10th grade, I took high school geometry....

Angles and squares and circumference and pi and side
angle side and side side angle...

And hypotenuse and radius...

And angle bisectors and rays...

Strange terms and strange equations one after another...

I had a good friend who was a good math student but
who struggled at geometry, and one he simply asked our
teacher, Mr. Bradley...

What in the world is the point to geometry?

I will never use it in my life...

To which Mr. Bradley, at this point in your life, the
purpose of geometry is to make it difficult for 10th
graders to graduate...

And right now in your life, it is succeeding....

Don't worry about the purpose, you better worry about knowing how to do the work...

Now obviously, geometry has a great role in the world...

Ask an engineer or a carpenter or a even a doctor, and they will tell you that geometry is part of what they do every day...

Even so, in hundreds of high schools each year, this thought passes through many students minds...

Why do I need to learn geometry or calculus or chemistry or biology, and it is usually followed by this question...

When will I ever use it in life?

And it is good question that deserves an answer...

Today, we encounter a question in the Bible that deserves an answer even though it was asked by false teachers...

And the question is this?

What is the purpose of the OT law?

If you are familiar with the OT, you know the much of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy contain various laws that were given to Israel by God...

God gave Moses the 10 commandments, but he also delivered other laws to Israel...

So, what was the purpose of God giving his law to Israel...

Like we talked about last week, many Christians will mistakenly tell you that the law was given to Israel to follow in order to be saved...

In fact, there are many people who teach that people in the OT were saved by keeping the law, while people today are saved by grace...

Nothing could be further from the truth, yet many believe that because pastors have taught that...

Even though the Bible teaches no such thing...

Salvation in any age from Adam to 2016 is by faith...

You could not be saved in the OT unless you had faith, and you cannot be saved today unless you have faith...

Paul preached that all throughout his ministry...

Faith in Christ was the foundation of Paul's gospel and where did Paul get that?

He got it from Christ, who taught Paul the gospel...

But Jesus also preached that truth....

Think back to Mark 1, which describes the beginning of Jesus' ministry....

I have put this on the screen for us to look at....

14 Now after John had been [h]taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, [i]preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God [j]is at hand; repent and [k]believe in the gospel."

Jesus preached a message of faith to be saved....

Notice it doesn't say that Jesus was going around preaching....

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and start doing the works of the law...

Now, Jesus called people to faith in his preaching...

Now, what were people to believe?

We have talked about this already, but people were simply called to believe God's promise of a bringing a Savior into the world...

Way back in Genesis 3 at the very beginning of creation, Adam and Eve fell into sin, and so it became necessary for people to find a solution to their sin....

So, God said this when talking to the serpent after he deceived Adam and Eve...

Gen 3:15...

15

***And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall [d]bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."***

That is all Adam and Eve knew about Jesus Christ...

They didn't know his name, they simply knew that God would bring a Savior into the world to deal with their sin....

And if they simply believed that promise, God would save them on the basis of their faith and belief in that promise...

And anyone in the OT who went to heaven was saved on the basis of believing in God's promise to send a Deliverer....

No one was saved on the basis of keeping the law...

In fact, there were many people in the OT who lived before God even gave his law to Moses...

Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Job all lived before God gave his law to Israel in the time of Moses...

And all of them who were saved were saved by belief in God's promise as they looked forward to the day when na deliverer would come...

And the same would be true for those who lived after the law came as well...

Samuel, David, Jonah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and so on and so on...

And though they may have known more about Jesus because God gave more clues to the prophets, they were still saved by believing in who God had promised to bring into the world...

The OT gospel was a call to faith in God's promise of a Savior...

Now, once Jesus came, he told people to believe in Him and that would save them...

Jesus' gospel was a gospel of faith..

And today, we preach a gospel of faith in Christ...

Which is what Paul preached, but as we know the Galatian churches were beginning to move away from that gospel of faith in Christ and move toward a gospel of works done by their hands by keeping the law...

And Paul was aggravated by that...

So, for the first two chapters of this letter, he simply tried to prove the truthfulness of the gospel of faith that he preached....

By showing that he got in from God, and had been given the authority to preach it to them...

Then last week as we began chapter 3, he began to poke holes in the gospel of works by saying that the gospel of works was not what saved the Galatians...

In other words, their Christianity began with faith in Christ not by keeping the law...

He also poked holes in the gospel of works by saying that the OT never taught a gospel of works...

And the third way he poked a hole in the gospel of works was to say that God doesn't break a promise...

He hadn't promised to save Abraham by faith and then change his mind and tell Moses and everyone after him that they needed to be saved by keeping the law...

Now all that proof left the false teachers speechless....

They knew that Paul was right, but they had a few arguments in reserve....

And one of their arguments to refute Paul was this....

Ok, smarty pants, if the law doesn't save, then why in the world did God deliver it to us?

Are you saying that God was wrong in giving us the law if all we need is faith to be saved?

And so Paul is going to answer their question in verses 19-29 this morning by giving us 3 purposes of the law...

The first purpose of the law is found in verses 19-23....

I. The Law Condemns (19-23)

19 Why the Law then? It was added [ac]because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the [ad]agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not [ae]for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 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 [af]would indeed have been [ag]based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up [ah]everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The question that Paul poses here is the argument the false teachers were laying on him....

Ok, Paul saved by faith is fine, but you got a problem with that because God gave us the law...

So Paul sets out to answer the question..

And the first answer to why did God give us the law i the OT is this..

It was given because of transgressions...

Let me give you an example...

The first speed limit law in the US was passed in 1901 in Connecticut....

When the law was passed, the people were in an uproar...

Up until that point point, they had simply travelled at what they deemed was a safe speed...

One resident said, I know when I am going too fast, I don't need a sign to tell me...

Yet, the law was passed and speed limit laws are still around today...

And here is what speed limit laws do, they give you standard to violate...

And violation of that standard means that you have broken the laws of the state and will face punishment..

That is one purpose of the law of God.

To show people that they are in violation of God's standards...

Now, the question comes....

What about people like Abraham or Adam or Noah or even people today who don't have Bibles...

Are they in violation of the law?

Absolutely, and here is why...

God has given every man and woman a conscience...

The book of Romans says that the law is written on the hearts of everyone...

In other words, when Abraham sinned or when someone in a remote tribe without the Bible sins today, their conscience tells them it is wrong...

How did we know that?

What did Adam and Eve do after they sinned?

They tried to hide themselves from God...

Why would they try to hide?

Their God-given conscience was convicting them...

They didn't have a law, yet they knew what they did was wrong....

And so the conscience tells us we are wrong, but God gave the law to show that our wrong doing is not just bad, it is a violation of His law...

And a sin against Him...

The law helps us to see that we are criminals in God's sight because of our sin...

Verse 19 describes one purpose of the law...

It came to help people see their transgressions before God....

You aren't simply a bad person when you sin...

You have broken the highest law in the universe...

You have broken the law of God....

In other words, you are a criminal in the highest court that has ever existed...

That changes the game doesn't it...

Our little lie is not just something bad we do against someone else and giggle about....

Our little lie puts us guilty in God's courtroom...

"Thou shall not bear false witness" means that lie you told this morning has put you on trial in God's highest court, and you are completely guilty before God....

Not something to laugh about, is it?

Now, Paul goes on to say in these opening verses that the law came down to man through the agency of angels and through a mediator, who was Moses...

And the law would last until the seed came, and that seed of Abraham is Jesus Christ....

And all that time, the law is what revealed the sinfulness of man's transgressions against God....

I referred to the law as a mirror last week, and that is what it is...

When I was a teenager growing up with acne, I hated a mirror...

Especially one that was under bright lights...

It revealed every imperfection so clearly.

So, I would quickly walk by any mirror I saw...

Do you know why people avoid reading the Bible and coming to church and hanging around Christians?

Because all of those activities are mirrors on their life and all bring conviction and reveal their own sin and guilt before God...

Before ending this section, Paul asks another question in verse 21...

Is the law contrary to faith?

And Paul answers his own question with a loud and very strong, NO!

In other words, God giving the law was not aa mistake...

It was not a new way to be saved because the keeping the law doesn't save...

Paul makes it clear in verse 22 that the law makes faith in Jesus all the more sweeter and desirable...

The law was given to reveal man's sinfulness, and once a man truly sees his sinfulness, he will look for a rescue...

And that rescue is going to be found by putting faith in Christ...

It is like people who get on a huge yacht to go sailing...

Nobody gets own and inspects the life rafts because no one expects to have trouble on the cruise....

Yet, when they see that their ship is sinking, everyone is looking for a rescue or a rescuer...

The same is true for every man, woman and child...

Only when they see that their boat is full of water because of their sin will they ever consider how to be rescued....

The Law helps us to see that our boats are filling up with water real fast...

In other words, the law exist to condemn us in our sin....

But the beauty of the law is that condemns, but it also leads us....

II. The Law Leads (23-24)

Verse 23..

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

What does Paul mean “before faith came?”

It is a simply to say, before a person was saved....

Before you placed your faith in Christ...

And so what describes a person’s life before they are saved?

Look at verse 23...

That person is shut up in custody under the law...

They are confined....

It is interesting that the only other time this word is used in the NT is when Jesus told the disciples to cast their nets in the deep water in Luke 5,...

And when they did, the Bible says that they confined or put into custody a incredible amount of fish in their net....

That is the picture of an unsaved man or woman, they are confined in their guilt under the law of God...

Now, they don't look confined...

They look free and loving life and having just as much fun as the next guy...

Yet, guess what is going on inside that person?

Their conscience is screaming at them....

God is not pleased with your life...

You are constantly sinning against Him...

You are guilty in your sin...

Now people silence that in different ways...

They distract themselves with hobbies...

They try to make enough money to be happy...

They focus on their jobs and livelihood...

And some are very successful at doing that, but the truth is this...

They are confined in net designed by Satan...

They are only free to choose which sin they will commit next....

They are shut up under the law of God, which condemns day and night...

If you ever wonder why you can't get them to church,, it is because they want to get away from the guilt of their sin, and the word of God if it is preached accurately only reveals it more...

So, they have two choices...

Stay away or go to a church that never talks about sin and its consequences...

That is what the law does to man, but as much as the law is a beast, it is also very beautiful because of what we read in verse 24.....

The second purpose of the law is that it is a tutor that leads us to Christ...

The law is a tutor in that it teaches us we are condemned, but it doesn't teach us so that we can live in that misery...

It condemns us so that we can look for a way out...

Look, I am claustrophobic...

Don't like tight confined spaces...

When I go under a house, I like to stay near the door....

Because that is the way of escape if I need to get out in a hurry...

Look, when you see the demands of God's law and you see your violation of them, there are two options....

One is this, "I really don't believe al that. I'll take my chances"

Or two, "Man, I am ruined. Help me get out of this!"

That is the cry of man who needs to be rescued...

Save me Lord is more than a slogan, it is the cry of someone who knows they are shut up and condemned by the law of God, but need a rescue...

The law was given to condemn us, but it was also given to lead us to the Savior from the law, who was Jesus Christ...

That leads us to the third purpose of the law in verses 25-29....

III. The Law Is Fulfilled (25-29)

Let's read verses 25-29...

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a [ai]tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is [aj]neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you [ak]belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's [al]descendants, heirs according to promise.

Paul begins this final section with the phrase, but now that faith has come...

In other words, Galatians now that you are saved...

You are no longer under a tutor...

In other words, you are no longer shut up under the law...

You are not under condemnation; instead as those who have put their faith in Christ..

You are now sons of God...

Before faith, God was your judge, but now God is your Father..

And everyone in Christ is equal based upon their faith in Him...

There are no distinctions in Christ...

We all condemned the same by the law...

We were all equally led by the law to faith in Christ, and we all live today by the same faith in Christ...

The law simply existed to lead us to faith in Jesus and now it has fulfilled its purpose in our life...

The law condemned us...

The law shut us up in our sin..

The law led us to faith in Christ...

And so its purpose in our life is done...

And the point that Paul is trying to get across to the foolish Galatians in this section is this...

Why would pick the law back up?

Why would they want to go back to being under the law, which is what the false teachers and Judaizers were telling them to do...

It would be like a little boy who has used swimmies all summer to learn how to swim...

And now he is going all over the pool on his own...

Going back and picking up those swimmies even though he is great swimmer without them...

They would be a distraction and they would limit his freedom...

The same is true for anyone who tries to force people back to living under the law of God...

If the law has revealed your sin and has led you to salvation, its purpose is fulfilled and its mission is complete...

You are now in Christ who kept the law for you, so do you think you can improve what He did?

If so, you are a fool...

Now, these verse always lead to the same question...

Are you telling me Pastor that we don't have to obey OT law?

Are we free from the law to not kill and steal and commit adultery?

And the answer to that is a clear no...

There are many laws of the OT that carry forward to the NT...

And there are many that do not carry forward to the NT...

That is a sermon in itself, but let summarize our obedience to the law today...

For the ones that do carry forward, even our obedience to them is not a way to heaven...

However, that doesn't mean we shouldn't obey them because they protect us and provide for us and bring glory to God in our obedience...

Clearly, Christians can't go out as believer and kill, and lie and covet just because the law no longer condemns...

That would be taking these verses too far...

The Galatians needed to see that following the law couldn't save and it couldn't keep saved....

Only faith in Christ is able to save and keep saved...

Everything else, especially trying to follow the law, is a hopeless endeavor...

Conclusion

Now the question comes to you this morning..

What is the law of God doing to you right now...

One of my favorite sayings is this...

The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay..

And that is happening in here this morning as you have heard about the purposes of God's law...

The law of God is either hardening you right and filling you with guilt and making you more angry at God....

Or it is melting your heart, revealing your sin, and leading you to a Savior this morning...

One of the most dangerous places on earth is in a Bible teaching and Bible preaching church...

Because the proclamation of truth always has an effect on people...

To those who love their sin more than they love Christ, the truth drives them to resist all the more...

And they end up with the hardest of hearts and eventually reach a point in this life of no chance of salvation....

This morning, I beg you to not harden your heart...

You have heard the truth about the purpose of the law of God...

It has condemned you this morning, but the Bible has also offered a way of escape by turning from your sin and putting your faith in Christ...

Do not harden your heart to that truth today...

Let the word of God melt your heart today and start trusting alone in Christ to save you...

Let us pray.