



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Exodus 19-23

"The Age of Law, Part I – The Giving of the Law"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Now, we have been studying in our Bible studies, "God's Plan of the Ages." For the benefit of a few of you who were not here, we began in the beginning, said a few words about God and his nature, the trinity, and then have begun to study in the word the gradual unfolding of his plans and purposes. We have seen that the word of God is structured on the basis of ages or dispensations, and that these ages or dispensations are periods of time during which God tests men with respect to obedience concerning some specific revelation of his will. He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve sinned. They failed, and as a result, God executed judgment. And this pattern has been unfolding throughout the word, of test, response, failure on the part of man, divine judgment. But then throughout each one of the ages we have seen further revelation concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come and make it possible for God, in spite of man's sin, to receive man into fellowship with himself.

And so we have studied the ages of innocence, and conscience, and human rule, and promise. And I have tonight drawn these on the board to emphasize the fact that the

age of the Mosaic Law is an age which covered most of the Old Testament. Everything is preliminary for the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and then with the age of promise, which is actually inaccurately represented by this diagram, for the age of promise goes on, of course, into the future really. But at any rate, this represents in some way the amount of holy Scripture dedicated and devoted to each of the ages. As you can see the age of Mosaic Law begins with Mount Sinai, in Exodus chapter 19 and goes throughout the remainder of the Old Testament and actually includes most of the gospels, because it was not until the cross that the age of the Law came to an end. So actually the time which the Bible devotes to the age of Mosaic Law comprehends about thirty-eight books of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, with some question about the Book of Job, for we are not exactly certain when the Book of Job was written, and large measures of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I think it's evident from this that the age of Mosaic Law is undoubtedly one of the most important revelations that God has given us in written form in holy Scriptures.

Now, after the failure of man during the age of promise, men might have said something like this, "Well, it's true, God, that we constantly fail, but we had not divine principles by which we might regulate our lives." If we were just given a code, a set of commandments, if we just knew in written form, what your will is, then we would not sin. Because having this guide in written form, we would be able to keep it." And so in a sense the Mosaic Law is something of an answer to that doubt that man might have about his own nature. The Mosaic Law was also necessary because when God gave the promises to Abraham which we studied last time, remember we saw that they were unconditional promises and that they guaranteed to Israel a future, a land, and that through Abraham all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. A land and a redeemer and a glorious future, but in the revelation of God during the age of promise, specifically in the Abrahamic promises, no provision was made for the revelation of man's sin. And so there was need for God specifically to point out to man his sin, because this is one of

the most important things that man must learn about himself. In fact, I think that we can honestly say that is probably the first thing that a man ought to learn about himself if he is to come to know God.

The age of promise did not emphasize sin, and so it was necessary for God to teach man that he is a sinner. It would seem that we would look at ourselves and from experience we would know, without question, that we are sinners. But being the kinds of sinners that we are, our sin is such that when we face it, face to face, we are not willing to acknowledge it, and attempt to rationalize it away. So the Mosaic Law was designed by God to emphasize human sin. Also, during the age of promise, and specifically in the promises themselves, there was no instruction by God in detail of that which the Redeemer would do. We had the promise, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and this "in thee" was a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ who would be the seed of Abraham, God speaking to Abraham those words. But there was not great instruction concerning the Redeemer and what he would do, so it was necessary for God on the down through the ages of time represented by the Mount Sinai to Mount Golgotha, to emphasize in various ways the things that Lord Jesus Christ would do.

And so during this period of time, the age of the Mosaic Law, we will have such revelations as the tabernacle and its services. We will have the revelation of the offerings, the various kinds, and all that they signified concerning the Redeemer to come, the Lord Jesus, each one of them pointing out some specific facet of the Lord's work. For example, we have in the opening chapters of the Book of Leviticus five offerings that are mentioned. Other offerings are mentioned in the latter parts of that book, but we have, for example, the burnt offering, then we have the meal offering, then the peace offering, then the sin offering, then the trespass offering, each one of these offerings being designed by God to reveal some facet of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We might have thought that it was just simply necessary for God to give Israel one offering, but one offering is not sufficient to point out all of the facets of our Lord's work.

And so we have the various offerings, more than five actually, but each one pointing out certain facets of that which he would do; the burnt offering, for example, emphasizing his obedience; the meal offering emphasizing his perfect character; the peace offering emphasizing that which he would accomplish when he died upon the cross; the sin offering emphasizing human sin, and its heinousness in the sight of God and how Jesus Christ would pay the penalty for that. And the trespass offering, how that not only did he die for sins which were sins before God, but he died also for the sins which man committed against other men, so that our injuries toward others were also covered by the death of Christ.

I used to be in the insurance business, in the fire insurance business. In fact, my family had been in the insurance business for generations. And when I was in the insurance business I frequently had to go out and inspect a building to see if it was an adequate fire risk for our company. So I would go out, and the first thing that I was supposed to do was to take an overall look at the building. And so I would look at the building from the front and from the side and from the rear, perhaps make a diagram of the building, notice its exposures, and so on. Then after that, I would go in the building looking for possible evidences of fire hazard. Now, in this way we would get an overall picture of the building. Now, it is necessary for Jesus Christ's work to be presented in these various ways. There must not be just one offering, but all of the offerings, because each one has a little different emphasis with regard to the work of Jesus Christ.

Now, all of this took place during the age of the Mosaic Law. So that as the books of the Old Testament were written, as the revelation was given in the first place before Moses wrote it, God was teaching Israel precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little, the things that Jesus Christ would do. This was his object lesson. In the morning an offering was slain, in the evening another burnt offering was made. On the Passover a lamb was slain. On the Day of Atonement a goat was slain, and so on, so that each one of these things emphasized and taught Israel the things of grace. This is

why the age of Mosaic Law came into existence. God wanted to emphasize human sin and instruct men in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We call this the age of the Law, because this is the term that the Bible uses to refer to it. John chapter 1, verse 17 says something like this, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." And then in Galatians chapter 3, verse 17, Paul speaks of this age as the Law, so this is the age of the Mosaic Law. It begins in the 19th chapter of the Book of Genesis. The 20th chapter, you'll remember, God begins to unfold the Law beginning with the commandments and ends when Jesus Christ died upon the cross at Calvary. Do you remember what happened when the Lord Jesus died, when he expired, when he breathed out his last, when he said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit? Well that which happened was a signification of the fact that the Old Testament age of the Law had come to an end. For, if you'll remember, Matthew tells us in 27:51 of his book that the "veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom." It's interesting, isn't it, that the veil was rent from top to bottom, not from bottom to top. For God was the one who brought the age of the Law to an end, so from top to bottom signifying the divine agency in this. The veil of the temple was rent, signifying that the whole of the Old Testament economy was done away with, so that from that time on believers in Jesus Christ were not under Law, for the Law had been done away with, but under grace and given the Holy Spirit to be their guide and teacher in the things that concerned God.

Now tonight we want to take a look at this section, Exodus chapter 19, verse 1 through chapter 24, which has to do with the institution of the Law, the giving of the Law. Next time I want to emphasize the purposes of the Law, and finally we're going to devote three times to the Law. It seems strange, we've spent so much time, and we've just gotten up to this point, and then we're going to cover the whole rest of the to in three times, but I think we can do this logically, because this all is the age of the Law. And on the third

time I will give you a brief synopsis of the teaching contained in the tabernacle of Israel which is very important for an understanding of the age of the Mosaic Law.

But now tonight, let's turn to Exodus chapter 19. If you have a Scofield Edition of the King James Version, that's the second book of the Bible, page 93. But if you have any other edition that's fine, turn to Exodus 19, verse 1. Now, in these opening verses we have the preparation for the giving of the Law. Remember now the things that have happened, Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they sinned; God drove them out of the garden. Then you'll remember during the age of conscience, men began to multiply, but ultimately because of their sin God had to bring the flood. And he began over again with Noah and his three sons and their wives. And then at the confusion of tongues, when it became evident again that the human race had sinned, God began a new work, by choosing one man and his family and descendants, Abraham, and through Abraham he would speak to the human race.

Now, through Abraham's time along about Genesis chapter 12, we have in the remainder of Genesis the history of Abraham, of Isaac his son, of Jacob his grandson, and Joseph. And then in the opening chapters of Exodus, remember, the children of Israel are in Egypt in bondage. They have disobeyed God. They have not stayed in the land. They have gone down into Egypt, but God has promised in the Abrahamic promises, which were repeated in Genesis 15, that after four hundred years he would bring them out. And so Moses the deliverer, with the help of God, or I should say God the deliverer working through Moses delivers Israel from Pharaoh. Now, everyone knows the account of that, because we've seen the movie, The Ten Commandments. And we know what a great lover Moses was from that movie. [Laughter] I assure you that that is not in Scripture, but in general the outline the outline of it was. So then Israel comes out of the land of Egypt and they enter into the wilderness. Now, shortly after they enter into the wilderness, these events transpire here, which were recorded in Exodus chapter 19. So Israel is in the wilderness, they have been delivered from the land of Egypt and Pharaoh's power. They

were delivered, by the way, by the Passover, the shedding of blood and through the Red Sea experience. The deliverance being by blood and by power, and of course, this is illustrative in itself of that which Jesus Christ does for us. For Paul says he is our Passover. He shed his blood for us on the cross of Calvary, and by the power of God we are given a new nature when we believe in him. So we are delivered by blood and by power also.

I wish we had time to talk about some of these wonderful things in the Old Testament, but if we did we would be here until about 1975. That would be fine for me, but I don't know about you. The first verse, now, of Exodus 19.

"In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."

This is a wonderful figure, eagle's wings. The eagle carries its young in a very unusual manner. It carries its young upon its wings. Since it flies so high, the eagle knows that it is not in danger from above, but only from below. And so its young are carried upon its wings. This, of course, emphasizes the care and protection that the eagle affords its young. And so, the Lord here says, "I bare you on eagles' wings." He, of course, refers to the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire; the pillar of cloud whereby he guarded the children of Israel from Pharaoh and his hosts. "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself."

"Now therefore, if (now notice this carefully) ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. (Now, this is interesting, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. This is interesting, because in the New Testament times we read that believers are a kingdom of priests and an holy nation from such passages as 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 9 and 10. But in the Old Testament age of the Mosaic Law you will notice that this relationship depends upon a relationship of obedience. If you obey, then you shall be this. In the New Testament times, when we put our trust in Jesus Christ, simply believing in him, "For the just shall live by faith," then we become this by the power of God. That's interesting.) These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him."

Now, this is the preparation for the Mosaic Covenant. The thing that you should notice is the condition, "if" in verse 5. God takes the initiative. He reminds them of his wonderful grace exhibited toward them. He reminded them that he took them out of Egypt. He bore them on eagles' wings to themselves. He reminded them of what he had done for them in grace. They did not deserve it. They did not deserve to be delivered from Egypt. But in grace he delivered them through Moses the deliverer. So he takes the initiative, he reminds them of his grace. He also offers them further privileges. They will be a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.

Now, I think that it is important for me to stop right at this point and ask you to notice this; God did not impose the Law upon Israel. He reminded them of grace, and then he proposed the Law. He did not impose the Law first, but he proposed the Law first. Israel, if they had been wise in the ways of God, if they had been wise in the ways of man, they would have immediately said, I think that most of you in this room who

know anything about the grace of God in Jesus Christ, if God were to speak to you and say, "If you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar people." Most of us who know anything about ourselves would immediately say, "Oh God, we cannot obey Thy voice. We cannot keep your covenants." If there is one thing that we have learned as human beings, it is that we cannot obey the voice of God. Men cannot obey God by himself; it is only the self-righteous who think that they can. No man can obey God apart from divine enablement. It's very simple. Something happened in the Garden of Eden, which made it impossible from that time on for man to obey God. So God proposes.

In the Abrahamic covenant God bound himself to do something for Abraham regardless. It was an unconditional covenant, remember? Unconditional; no "If you will obey, then in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, but "Abraham, I'm going to make your name great. I'm going to give you a land. And in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." But when we come to the Mosaic Law, God says, "If then." The Mosaic covenant is a conditional covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is an unconditional covenant. The Abrahamic covenant does not depend upon man. We saw that, because in the sacrifice, God only walked between the animals which were divided, in token of the fact that he would accomplish the promises of Abraham. But in the Mosaic Law, we shall see that this is a covenant between two people, which depends upon both for its ultimate success. So here then is a proposition by God. What will Israel say? Surely they have learned enough to say, "Oh God, we cannot obey Thee."

But let's look at what they say, verse 8. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath," they didn't even say some of the things that the Lord has said we will do. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Now, there is never in all of Scripture a more brazen illustration of self-righteousness than that statement. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." They did not understand God. They did not understand themselves.

There is one character in the New Testament who is an Israelite indeed, aside from Nathaniel. Do you know who he is? Peter, Peter Johnson, he was the son of Jonas, John's son, you see. I happen to be in apostolic succession, as I have mentioned.

[Laughter] His name was Johnson, Peter son of Jonas. Do you remember in Luke chapter 22, it would be good, I think, for us to turn there. Let's turn to Luke chapter 22 and let's read the verses. That, by the way, is the only way in which I am in apostolic succession.

[Laughter] Luke 22, verses 33 and 34, page 1108, Matthew, Mark, Luke 22, verses 33 and 34. Let me read beginning in verse 31. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Now Judas was sifted as chaff, but Peter is sifted as wheat, because Peter is a believer in Jesus Christ. There is a lot of chaff in Peter, but essentially there is wheat there also. In Judas' case he was all chaff.

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," notice that the Lord had already prayed before Satan is allowed to even touch his servant. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted," that is, when thou are turned back again from this sin of disobedience, "strengthen thy brethren." And of course, Peter strengthens the brethren all through the Book of Acts, and then when he writes his epistles, these are epistles in which he fulfills this exhortation. "And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death." Peter had not learned Romans chapter 7. He had not learned that "In me," that is, in my flesh, "there dwelleth no good thing," as Paul says.

So he says, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." Peter, you don't even know your heart at all. So when Israel says, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," they reveal two things. Number one, they had little knowledge of the holiness of God. They have little knowledge of the holiness of the Law of God. What does Paul say about the Law in Romans chapter 7, and

verse 12? He says, "The Law is holy, just, and good." How is it possible for man to obey God when he is a sinner, sinful through and through. His nature is all sin.

An outstanding teacher of the word and theologian once said, "We not only have to repent of our sins, we have to repent even of our repentance, because even our repentance is self-righteous and full of pride frequently." So when Israel said, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," they don't understand the holiness of the Law of God. They don't understand the holiness of God. And secondly, they have no knowledge of themselves. Paul had to learn the hard way. He had to learn through his spiritual experience that he was carnal, so under sin, as he said. Through the experience of being a self-righteous Pharisee, and seeing that he could not fulfill the Law of God, seeing that he was constantly defeated, and finally he came to understand that it is only by the grace of God and the impartation of a new nature that men may please God.

This, of course, is the thing that Martin Luther had to learn. You remember that Martin Luther thought that God was an angry God sitting upon a rainbow ready to hurl thunderbolts of judgment at men. And then Luther, through an experience very much like Paul's came to understand his sin. And then when in the depths of despair he ran across the statement, probably in the Psalms, he ran across the statement as he lectured in the University of Wittenberg, he ran across the statement that "The just would live by faith." He considered the righteousness of God always to be God's righteousness in his judgment upon us. And then he discovered that Paul seemed to rejoice in the righteousness of God, and finally it was revealed to him by the Spirit of God that God's righteousness is not only his judgment upon us, but also that which he confers upon us when we believe in Jesus Christ, so that when we put our trust in him, we are given a righteousness that avails before God. So that Paul can write, "The just shall live by faith." He can say that in the gospel, the righteousness of God has been revealed from "faith to faith," so that when we have trust in Jesus Christ we have this righteousness that avails before God. But it's a gift.

Well, Israel had a lot of lessons to learn. Let's read on, I want to finish this chapter, and I'll just read through it rapidly. Here God charges the nation Israel with respect to the time when he would give the Law.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, (Now this is important, because you see, the reason that God says this to Moses is because now they are approaching God on legal grounds. So he reminds them, again in visual form, in object lesson, that man cannot approach God. And if we are going to approach God on the basis of works, we will never come to know God. So he says,) Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death."

This is, you see, the Lord teaching this lesson, "Thou art of pure eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity. God is so holy that no man could ever dwell in his presence apart from the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. So in picture lesson, in picture form, he's saying put bounds around the mountain, don't let anybody touch the mountain, for if they touch it they shall die. He is a holy God, you see.

"There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up

to the mount. And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives. And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

(This is the Law; this is what should be provoked in any man who attempts to approach God on the basis of good works, Law.) And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai: for thou chargest us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them. So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them."

So a charge is given to Israel, they are to stay away from the mount, only Moses may approach. Now then, with Exodus chapter 20 through Exodus chapter 23, God gives to Israel the Mosaic Law. I think it is important for us to realize several things about the Law. In the first place, the Law is made up of three parts, but it is a trinity of unity. There is, of course, the Ten Commandments. We are inclined to think when we say "Mosaic Law" of only the Ten Commandments, but the Ten Commandments were only

just the moral law. Also, there were given to Israel judgments. These judgments were civil and social laws; laws with regard to property, laws with regard to relationship between servant and master, and so on. The Ten Commandments are given to us in Exodus chapter 20. The judgments are given to us in Exodus chapter 21 through 23. But also, there was given the ceremonial law. Ceremonial Law is really given in much longer fashion. It is given from 25 through 40, roughly, of the Book of Exodus. But also, references are made to it in the Book of Leviticus. That book itself really forms part of that Law. So we have the Ten Commandments, the moral Law. We have the judgments which were the civil and social law, and then the ceremonial law in the tabernacle or the priesthood of the service. If we want to call it the service, we should. That would be the ceremonial part.

But I want you to notice that while there were these three parts to the Law, the Law, as such comprehended not only the Ten Commandments, it comprehended all of the judgments. It comprehended all of the service of God, or the ceremonial Law. So that when we talk about being under Law, we must remember that the Law involves much more than just the Ten Commandments. I have often heard men say today that we are still under Law as Christians. My first question to this type of person is, "Then why are you not offering the sacrifices?" And frequently they will say, "Oh, well the sacrifices were done away with." I will say, "Well, what right do you have to separate parts of the Law from other parts. Did not James say 'He that offendeth in one point of the Law offends in all?'" Usually they say, "Well, the Ten Commandments are good, and we ought to live by them." I say, "Do you keep the Sabbath?" "Well, yes I keep the Sabbath. I go to church every Sunday." "But the Sabbath is Saturday." "Well, the Sabbath has become Sunday," some say. But this is, of course, faulty thinking, and contrary to the plain teaching of the New Testament.

Now, the New Testament does say that the believer will keep the righteousness of the Law. We do not abandon the morality of the Law when we come into faith in Christ,

and then come under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. But we are not under the Law. We do not offer the offerings any more. We do not observe the service in the tabernacle. And we are not under the Ten Commandments as commandments, as a code. We are to walk by the Spirit. And as we walk by the Spirit, the Law, looking at our lives, will have no complaint, if we are walking by the Spirit. For the Spirit is able to fulfill the righteousness of the Law in the believer who is yielded to the Spirit, so, the Ten Commandments.

Now one other thing that we must get straight in our minds is this, the Ten Commandments were never given to Israel as a means of salvation. Israel was to know God in the same way that we today come to know God. Israel was to believe in the Redeemer to come. We believe in the Redeemer who has come. The Commandments were not given to be a means of salvation. Israel, the people, were typically a saved people. They had been brought out of Egypt. They had been brought through the Red Sea. They were God's people. They belonged to him. They were given the Law as a means of life, as a way of life before him.

Now, let me stress some of these things by turning to some passages in the New Testament which interpret these passages in the Old Testament. To show you that the Law was not given as a way of salvation, let's turn to two passages in the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Galatians chapter 2, verse 21. Paul says, page 1243, "I do not frustrate the grace of God by this exposition that I have been giving of how we are not under Law." He says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Do you see what that means? That means that if we could be righteous before God by what we do, by keeping the commandments, then there is no reason for Jesus Christ to die. Christ died in vain. Why is it necessary for him to come if we can be saved, if we can have righteousness apart from the cross work, by what we do? Jesus Christ is superfluous if we can be righteous before God by what we do.

Now, let's turn over to the 3rd chapter and verse 21. Paul says, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" You see, that's the natural question. Someone might say, "Well Dr. Johnson, if the Law is not means for salvation, then why the Law?" "Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." You see, according to Paul there is no Law, which could be given which could give life. So the Law of Moses was never given to Israel to be a means of salvation. It was a way of life.

Now notice the 24th verse of Galatians 3, "Wherefore the law was our salve guardian to bring us unto Christ." Paul uses the figure of a Roman slave guardian. Roman children in substantial homes were given slaves to instruct them, take them from home to school, to be, in a sense, a father to them, until they reached the age when they took off the toga of babyhood and put on the toga of manhood. And the slave guardian who took care of the child is likened by Paul to the Law. "The law is a slave guardian to bring us unto Christ." It was never meant to save. It was given only to Israel, too.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 9. Romans chapter 9, and verse 4, Paul says, while you're finding Romans chapter 9, page 1202, let me just read the first few verses.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (You see, he's talking about Israel, his kinsmen according to the flesh.) Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law (The giving of the Law, this pertained to Israel.), and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

So the Law of Moses then was given to Israel. It was given to Israel not as a means of salvation. It was given as a way of life, to be a slave guardian, to instruct them; instruct them in their sin, instruct them in the ways of divine grace. We'll talk about that some more next week in more detail. This dashes a lot of ideas about the Law. Now, I grew up in a church in which some of my Sunday School teachers stressed the Mosaic Law so much, I'm not going to blame them, I don't remember everything that they said to me. In fact, very little that they said to me, I suppose. But I do remember a great stress on the Ten Commandments, and I remember getting the impression from the stress on the Ten Commandments that the only possibly way I could ever get to know God was by keeping the Ten Commandments.

Now, it's obvious that if we really pay attention to teaching like this, then we would be completely frustrated and defeated and could never know God if we were honest with ourselves. The only hope is to be self-righteous like Paul. For you know, he said that he was blameless as touching the Law. What did he mean? He meant that he outwardly kept it, as it was interpreted by the Jews. That is, he brought the proper sacrifices. He outwardly kept it, but then he confessed, when the Holy Spirit showed him to be what he was, a sinner, he said, "I had not known sin until the Law said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' And I found that the Law, which was for life, slew me and killed me."

Now, I was taught by implication and by some teachers directly that the way to know God was by keeping the Ten Commandments. This is contrary to the teaching of the Old Testament. It is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. If there is one thing that is plain, it is that in the Old Testament Israel was not saved by the Law; they were saved by the Redeemer to come. And if there is one thing that is true in the New Testament, it is that we are not saved by good works, we are saved by the Redeemer who has come apart from works.

Remember there was a lawyer one time who came to the Lord Jesus and said to him something like this, "Lord, or Good Master, what must I do that I may have or get or

inherit eternal life?" Now, if you will look at that in the Greek text, the author uses the word poieo, which is the word that means "to do." What great thing must I do? What must I do to inherit eternal life, but he uses poieo in the aorist tense. Now, the aorist tense in Greek, this word means undefined, a aristos. Horizo means "to mark out," and alpha is the alpha privative of Greek. So that the aorist tense is the undefined tense, and it normally expresses an action as an event. So that what he was saying to the Lord Jesus was something like this, "Lord, what great thing must I do that I may obtain everlasting life? What heroic deed? What mighty performance may obtain it for me?" And the Lord Jesus said to this man who was a master of the Law, remember, he said to him, "well, what does the Law say?" And so the man said this, he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." And he said unto him, "Thou hast answered right. This do and thou shalt live." Isn't that a strange thing? After all I've been telling you here, the Lord Jesus said to this man, "This do and thou shalt live." If you could read that in the Greek text, you would see exactly what our Lord is saying. He uses poieo, but instead of saying what the young man said, "What great thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The Lord Jesus said, "This do, love thy neighbor as thyself, love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, mind, heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. This do." And he uses the same verb, but he uses time the present tense.

Now, the present tense in Greek is durative in significance. That is, it expresses action that continues. So the Lord says, "If you are looking for eternal life on the works principle, all right, there's only one way in which you can have eternal life on the works principle. And that is to be one hundred percent perfect." There is a man who once, one hundred percent perfectly, kept the Law. Who was that man? Jesus Christ. All right, there is only one way to obtain eternal life by doing, do it perfectly. Never fail in the past, never fail in the present, never fail in the future. And so, of course, if you are on the works basis, you can never know, even if you are dishonest and self-righteous, you can

never, because tomorrow may be the day that you sin. "This be doing and thou shall live."

What did the Lord intend to tell this man, to tell him to be saved by works? Of course not, the Lord Jesus says over and over, that man is not saved in that way. But if you want to try the way of works, it is one hundred percent, he said, and he said it to this self-righteous man in order to show him that he must fail, so that the men might say to him, "But Lord, I cannot keep the Law." And the Lord Jesus would say, "Well, I will die for your sin. Start out on another road, the road of grace, and ye may receive salvation as a free gift, if you will acknowledge your sinfulness. This be doing and thou shalt live."

Dr. H.A. Ironside was one of the great Bible teachers of a generation or so ago. He says in one of his books that at one time early in his life he went out to a country church. And he was to preach that morning, and since he came a little early he went into the adult Sunday School class to sit down, and to listen and wait for the time for the morning service to begin. He said he sat down, and the teacher was teaching from the Old Testament. And as he sat down he listened for a few moments, and then the teacher threw out a question. The question was this, "Class, how were people saved in the Old Testament period?" And someone raised their hand and said, "By keeping the Law." And Dr. Ironside said, "I fidgeted in my seat as they discussed." He said, "Finally, I couldn't resist. I said to them, 'Well if men were saved in the Old Testament by keeping the Law, how is it that Paul says in Galatians chapter 3, 'If there had been a law given which could have given righteousness, verily righteousness would have been by the Law.' And the teacher," he said, "said, 'Well class, I guess we were wrong. So I ask you the question again, how were people saved in the Old Covenant period?'" Somebody else held up a hand and said, "By bringing the sacrifices." Dr. Ironside said he heard them discuss this for a little while, and he couldn't resist putting in his word again, and he said, "But the New Testament says that 'the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin.' The teacher said, 'Class we're wrong again. Mr. Ironside, how were we saved in Old

Testament times?" And then he proceeded to tell them that it was by looking forward to the redeemer to come who would die for sins.

So you see the moral law was given as a way of life to a people already typically redeemed. It was never given to save them. And no law can ever save anyone, because we cannot keep a law. Of course, if we want to say that we are perfect, then in that case only if it is true, can we have life on that way. Paul says, "He that doeth them, shall live in them." But I don't want to approach God that way.

There was once a woman who came to G. Campbell Morgan and said to Dr. Morgan, "Dr. Morgan, you were talking about sin this morning, and I did not appreciate it too much." Dr. Morgan said, "What do you mean?" She said to him, "Well, Dr. Morgan, I have never sinned in all my life." And Dr. Morgan said, "Well, my. That's quite a record. You must be awfully proud of it." She said, "I certainly am." [Laughter] Dr. Morgan said, "With that went all of her years of perfection." [Laughter] Well, the Ten Commandments were designed to be a rule of life, not a way of salvation. God revealed his holiness in the commandments, his righteousness, how impossible it is, really, to come to know him. We'll talk more about that next time.

But then there were the civil and social laws. These were given in Exodus 21, 22, and 23. I hope you've read them. If you haven't read them, you should read them. These are the judgments, and in them, too, you will notice that penalties are given for the breaking of the Law. I have often heard people, as I talk to them about this matter, say to me, that they believe that they should keep the Ten Commandments, and if they do, they shall be saved. And then sometimes in the discussion I ask them, "Well, what are you going to do when you break one?" "Oh well, I just ask God's forgiveness." "But in the Old Testament," I said, "not only is the Law given but the penalty is prescribed. And for many things it is stoning to death, what about that?" Webster says that a law without penalty is simply good advice, and it's amazing how people can take the Ten

Commandments, isolate them from the judgments that come from breaking the Ten Commandments. And we cannot separate the Law.

And then the ceremonial law, this the tabernacle, the service, the priesthood, all of the offerings, these were means of instructing Israel. So the age of Mosaic Law begins here, concludes at the time of the cross. Israel is now placed under this great body of moral, civil, social, ceremonial teaching in order to instruct them, the age of Mosaic Law. We will talk more about this next week, when we talk more definitely about the purposes of the giving of the Mosaic Law in detail looking at some New Testament passages. Well, let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we are so grateful to Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee, Lord, for the clarity of its teaching. We thank Thee most of all for Jesus Christ who came to fulfill the Law for us who have broken the Law. And we thank Thee that through his death, the shedding of his blood, he has paid the penalty for all who broke the Law, and through him we may come to Thee in simple faith, and know, Lord, that Thou didst receive us not on the basis of what we have done, but on the basis of what he has done for us. And we thank Thee for the peace and the happiness and the joy that comes from the knowledge of sins forgiven, of righteousness bestowed, of eternal life as a present possession. We commit each one to Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Johnson] Now it is possible for us to have a question or so. Was the Law designed to show Israel its sinfulness and to lead them to Christ? And the answer to that is yes. And then also to show his holiness? And that, of course, is true, too. That is involved in the other, for we really only know our sin when we really see his holiness. In the light of his holiness "all of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags, Jeremiah said."

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No, now the answer to that question, that's a good question too, the answer to that question is Galatians chapter 3, verse 17, will you turn over to that and read that? Read it out loud. Does the disobedience of the Mosaic Law, that is Israel's disobedience to the Mosaic Law, does that cancel the Abrahamic promises? Now, read out loud for us Galatians chapter 3, verse 17. Because this is a question, it is interesting how often the questions that we ask today, two thousand years later, are the exact questions that Paul answered, because he knows that we are going to ask them. Go ahead.

[Scripture reading from audience] "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ.

[Johnson] All right, that is the Abrahamic promises. Go ahead.

[Scripture reading from audience] "The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."

[Johnson] Right, the Law which was four hundred years after cannot disannul the promises, you see. Well, then the answer is, "Why then the Law?" as he says. Well, the Law was added because of transgressions, to show Israel their sin in the mean time, and to show them how much they needed these promises, and specifically the redeemer. So there is the answer to the question right in the verse, Galatians 3:17. The Law cannot disannul. This is, by the way, why the Law is a temporary thing. The promise goes on to the end, but the Law comes in as a temporary time in which Israel is instructed, a period of a slave guardian, you see.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Right. The age of the Law is a temporary slave guardian period. And that's why it was done away with, too, at the cross. And we go back to the time of promise, the Abrahamic.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes, Habakkuk 2:4. Actually this is the truth that he found in Romans, but he probably found it when he was studying Psalms, because in the Psalms, about the 95th Psalm there is a reference to righteousness. And we know that about the time that Luther came into an understanding of salvation by faith, he was lecturing in the university on the Psalms. That's why I said that in the Psalms; he found the truth in the Psalms, but that is the verse. But he later expounded so much Habakkuk 2:4. "The just shall live by faith." Which, by the way, was Paul's and other New Testament writers, too, great verse.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] It includes the Mosaic Law, but it most likely refers to his whole work, the whole program involved in his coming, and of course, the cancellation of the Law was one of the important things. But his redemptive work is included there, and all of the aspects of it. The same word is used of the prophecies just above, and so in that sense, too, it was accomplished. Any other questions?

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes, oh yes, definitely.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Any one, because we have in the Old Testament times, remember, those who were outside of Israel who came to know the genuine and true God, Rahab for example, was an outsider, but Rahab is included in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus. Ruth.

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] No, no, because no one obtained righteousness on the one hundred percent basis. That is purely hypothetical. No one; Ruth, Rahab, Moses, David, Abraham, all who came to know God, came to know God on the basis of faith. They saw that they could not keep the Law, and they turned in faith and believed the promises concerning the redemption that God would provide. So everybody, in Old Testament times and New Testament times, if we come to know God at all, we come to know him on the basis of faith. "The just shall live by faith," and only by faith. But Israel was given this Law during this time. Israelites did not find life through the Law. It was a way of life, not to obtain salvation, but a way of life to remain in fellowship with God. Do you understand that point? That's a good question.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] As far as the record goes, of course, it's like many things; we must remember those Laws of plausible inference. It's dangerous to infer on the basis of inadequate knowledge, but as far we know, this was a general response on the part of the

people. And it's repeated again, of course, later on, so that there seems to be some unanimity about it.

[Comment from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes. They said it before they even heard it, and in chapter 24, verse 23, after they heard it, "Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all of the judgments, and all of the people answered with one voice and said, all the words which the Lord has said will we do." So there was a fairly unanimous acceptance of the Mosaic Law. But now, we shouldn't be so surprised at this, because you know, today, when we hear men preach, "Do good and God will accept you," what do we do? We accept that in principle apart from divine revelation.

I was reading this morning a column written by a religious leader. And he went on to set forth a basis for salvation which was by works. And then he added, "Don't accuse me of preaching salvation by works. It is the grace of God that revealed this way to us." [Laughter] Now, think of that. It is the grace of God that revealed to us this way of works. [Laughter] Unless I'm not preaching salvation by... **[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**