

THE TWENTY-FIRST SERMON

WHICH IS THE SEVENTH UPON THE THIRD CHAPTER

19 Whereto then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed came to whom the promise was made: and it was ordained by Angeles in the hand of a Mediator.

20 Now a Mediator is not of one, but God is one. —
<480319> GALATIANS 3:19-20

WE HAVE SEEN heretofore, that before the giving of the Law, God had already showed his goodness, yea even his free goodness in the lineage of Abraham, to the end that the Jews should not have any other leaningstock for their salvation, than the said promise that God would have pity upon them and show them mercy, in sending them a Redeemer, by whom they should obtain forgiveness of their sins. Hereupon Saint Paul inferreth, that the law which came after the promise, must not disannul that which God had already ordained and concluded: howbeit that in the meanwhile it might seem that the law was added to help the promise, as though the promise had been weak of itself. For after the same manner doth the Apostle reason in the Epistle to the Hebrews: (<580807> Hebrews 8:7) and because it is said by the Prophet Jeremy, that God will give a new law, that is to wit the Gospel: the Apostle inferreth, that then it must needs follow that the law which was given by Moyses was weak and had no such perfection in it as a man might trust unto. It may well seem at the first blush, that a man might say as much on the contrary part: namely that forasmuch as the law was given after the promise, it was done for some accomplishment because the promise was not sufficient of itself, unless it borrowed perfection elsewhere, for otherwise the law might seem to be needless. But it were against all reason that God should have given a needless doctrine. Therefore it standeth us on hand to know to what purpose the law serveth, and to what end it was given, or else we shall always be of opinion that the promise was insufficient, and could not save us but in part. Hereupon Saint Paul declareth, that God in giving of his law

had a far other meaning and intent, than they imagine which seek their righteousness in it, and make it the means of their salvation. For it was given (saith he) because of transgression: not for that there needed a bridle because the world was wicked and forward: for we know there were laws and statutes made among men, according to the vices that had need to be redressed. If all men were Angels, so as there were nothing out of square, but every man behaved himself well of his own accord, so as there needed no amendment: then were Laws to no purpose at all. What is the cause then that we have need of so many laws and statutes? The naughtiness of men, because they cease not to rush out into all evil, and therefore remedy is fain [*obliged*] to be provided for it: like as if there were no diseases, there should need no physic: but men's unruliness causeth diseases, and therefore remedies must needs be provided. So then seeing that men have need to be bridled and as it were retrained, it is a sure record that they are bent to all evil, and utterly forward of their own nature. But Saint Paul meant not after that sort in his forementioned saying: He intended to pass further: namely that God purposed to bewray [*expose*] men's wickedness by means of the Law. And this reason is peremptory, to show that we be not able to purchase righteousness: for heat and cold come not both out of one spring. If a fountain be sweet, there is no seeking of bitterness in it: but clean contrariwise, if a fountain be bitter or brackish, sweet water must be sought for in another spring. Even so is it with the Law. And wherefore was it given? To prove men double guilty before God, that their hypocrisy might not stand them in anymore stead, nor they have occasion to flatter themselves anymore, or to shroud themselves under their vain excuses as they have been wont to do. And that is the cause why Saint Paul in ^{<450415>}Romans 4:15, reasoneth that a man cannot be justified by the Law. For (saith he) the Law bringeth nothing but wrath. And by the word wrath he meaneth God's vengeance. Life and death cannot come both of the Law, but in sundry respects. Now the Law is deathful unto all of us, so that it condemneth us and showeth us that we be all cursed and abominable before God: and therefore what a fondness is it to seek righteousness by it, as who should say that God ought to take us into his favor for the keeping of it? But he declareth this matter more familiarly in ^{<450708>}Romans 7:8 when he saith that by the Laws sin becometh out of measure sinful. For there is enough to condemn us though there were no law at all, according as it is said, that they which sin without law, shall perish without law,

(^{<450212>}Romans 2:12), that is to wit, although the heathen folk had no instruction whereby to be rebuked: yet had they a record engraved in their consciences, which did find them guilty. Ye see then that men are sufficiently worthy to be condemned though God go not up into his judgment seat, nor cite them, nor examine them, howbeit that such as sin and offend against God, charge not themselves with their faults. For we be so given to self-soothing, that every of us weltereth and sleepeth in his own filth, insomuch that till the law touch us to the quick, our consciences are as it were benumbed, and to be short, every man dispenseth with himself, and taketh leave to do evil. But when the Law steppeth forth, then is sin known, and every man spite of his teeth, must be fain [*obliged*] to stoop before God, or else gnash his teeth at him as a rebel. Nevertheless God gathereth us to him by the law, by bringing us to the knowledge of our cursedness. To be short, it is all one as if a man had his face all bewrayed [*exposed*]: every man might mock at him, but he himself should not see it. But if one bring him a glass, he is ashamed of himself, and hides his face, and goes his way to wash his face when he sees it so disfigured with filthiness. Or if a man be so ill favored that he maketh folk afraid with his look: he thinketh not that that fault cometh of his own person, till he have a looking glass set before him. Even so it is with us. For though all of us be saped [*steeped*] in wickedness and sin, insomuch that heaven and earth are ashamed of us, and God prepareth horrible condemnation for us: yet cease we not to keep on our race and to be retchless still. And why so? For our sinfulness is unknown to us, and hypocrisy doth so blindfold our eyes, that we perceive not our own cursedness. But the Law showeth us what we be, and therewithal setteth God's judgment before us. For on the one side it saith, ye shall do all these things under pain of cursing. And what manner of things are they? it is not enough for us to abstain only in respect of our feet, hands, eyes, and ears: but we must be pure and clear from all lusting: there must be such an uncorruptness in us that all our senses, thoughts, and affections must aim at God, so as no enticements of this world may hold us back. And where is this to be found? Besides this, behold, God being set as a Judge in his seat, hath already given sentence of cursedness upon us as soon as we be found to be transgressors as we be. Ye see then that mankind is in miserable taking [*plight*]. And that is it that Saint Paul meant in this Text, when he said that the Law was added for transgression. It is true that the Law serveth to other purposes also:

namely, first of all, to show us the way to serve God. But we know that he will be honored with obedience, and not have every of us to behave himself after his own liking. The Law therefore giveth us the difference between good and evil. For what is the reasonable service which we owe unto God? It is to submit ourselves to his will, (^{<451201>}Romans 12:1) saith Saint Paul. Seeing it is so, ye perceive that the Law serveth to excellent good purpose: namely that whereas we labor in vain to serve God after our own imagination, it showeth us the way in such wise as we cannot miss, and giveth us the rule which we ought to keep by. Furthermore, when Saint Paul said that the Law was given because of transgression, it came not in his mind to rehearse all the fruit and profit which the Law bringeth with it: for (as I have said already) it serveth also for our instruction, that we might learn to discern between good and evil: and again it quickeneth us up, as though God should give us strokes with the spur, to make us apply ourselves the more diligently unto him. But he spake according to this present matter, and according to the ground of the text that he treateth of. Now then he showeth that the Law is not superfluous, and yet that it serveth not to bring us to righteousness, but instead thereof carrieth us to such confusion, that we must needs be found to be double sinners, and are more condemned, and less excusable than before, so as there is nothing before us, but a bottomless gulf. Lo to what end the Law was given us. But he saith that it was added to the promise, whereby we be done to understand, that the adding of it was not for that the promise was weak of itself, and unable to bring men to salvation, so as there should need some other income: it was nothing so, saith Saint Paul: but it was added to make men know that God had rightfully condemned them all, and that they could not have any relief, but should be continually tormented with such inquietness that they should be always in despair, till they rested themselves upon the said promise. Now if it be alleged that the promise might have served that turn afore: the answer and solution is very easy. For although God in offering himself to be our Savior, do thereby show that we be all damned in ourselves until he have pity upon us: yet can we not be helped as were requisite, until such time as he scare us. By his promise he calleth us gently, and after a fatherly manner: and no doubt that the same ought to make us perceive our miseries, and to be sorry for them: but we be too fast asleep in our sins, that we never think on them, except we be compelled. Although then that upon God's making of the

promise, men had cause to lament their sins, to the end they might rest themselves wholly upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: yet did they it not, till God had stricken them as it had been with many blows of a Beetle upon the head, which thing he did by the Law. Moreover Saint Paul showeth, that we abuse the gentleness of our God through our unthankfulness, because that the more courteous he showeth himself towards us, the more occasion do we take thereby to flatter ourselves. Therefore he must be fain [*constrained*] to rouse us up, and to make us feel what we be, thereby to scare us and drive us to seek his favor in good earnest. Thus ye see what the word Addeth importeth. It is all one if Saint Paul should blame us for that we make not our profit of God's goodness, seeing he allureth us so gently unto him, and showeth himself as mild as may be: but grieve him, and after a sort enforce him to use rigor against us, to beat us down by that means, and so to prepare us to the seeking of his grace, the which we shall find in our Lord Jesus Christ whensoever we list [*wish*]. And herewithal Saint Paul addeth, that the Law served but till the seed came to whom the promise was made.

This concerneth properly the Ceremonies, or else we must take it to be spoken of the Law, with all his appurtenances [*incidental rights*], circumstances and appendants as men term them. If we take the Law for no more than the ten commandments, the thing that Saint Paul speaketh will not stand. For the law must even at this day have such force with us, as to be our rule of good life, and to show us God's will that we may not live like vagabonds, and gad [*go wandering*] abroad at all adventure, but have our way plain before us. The law then is not transitory in respect of showing us what is good, for it must continue to the world's end. But we must mark Saint Paul's discourse: for he taketh the law, as containing the promises and threatenings, and also the Ceremonies. Then on the one side there is [this promise,] he that doth these things shall live in them, (^{<031805>}Leviticus 18:5) as we have seen heretofore. And on the other side there is this threat, cursed is he that fulfilleth not all that is contained here. (^{<052726>}Deuteronomy 27:26) Now the law (as we see) promiseth salvation to none but such as live purely and incorruptly: but all of us come short of that, and therefore the promise of the law is to no purpose. Mark that for one point. If it be alleged, what Sir? Meant God to mock men? I say, no: but they have always beguiled themselves with vainglory and

presumption, bearing themselves in hand that they could purchase their own salvation: and therefore God is fain [*willing*] to say unto them, Go to, if ye be so able men as ye think, show it: as for me, I give you my Law, and because you shall not think yourselves ill dealt with for your serving of me, your wages is ready for you if you perform it. Behold, I assure you of everlasting life out of hand: now let me see a little what you can do, buskle [*hurry about*] yourselves to your work. But when men have tried the uttermost that is in them, surely they shall perceive their own weakness which was hidden afore. Thus ye see that the promise of the Law can have none effect towards us, and yet it is not guileful, for it serveth us to another end. As touching the threats of it, it is infallible, for we be all damned by this threatening, Cursed is he that performeth not all. But we come so far short of performing all, that there is not one point but we fail of it. If we think to serve God by halves, it is nothing: for he hath not separated one piece from another, but will that he which walketh in chastity, shall also abstain from theft, robbery, craft, extortion, and all other sins. Seeing it is so, let us mark that the threat holdeth all shut up under it, and that is the thing that Saint Paul had an eye unto. As touching the Ceremonies, they were a confirmation that all of us are accursed, as I have told you, how Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, (^{<510214>} Colossians 2:14) likeneth them to obligations and authentical evidence, that serve to hold a man most straightly bound. If a man have borrowed a piece of money, he is a debtor, and giveth a bill of his hand for it. But if he bind his goods or body for it by recognizance [or Statute,] so as his deed is enrolled of common Record: then is he bound more straightly than he was before. Even so it is with the Ceremonies. The law of itself was enough to condemn men because they are all offenders: howbeit forasmuch as God saw the pride that is rooted in our nature, he added the Ceremonies for an overplus, to the end they should be as a solemn bond against us. But now Saint Paul saith, that all this geer [*whimsical mockery*] served but till but the promised seed were come: that is to wit, that the law served not to hold those in slavery and bondage which put their trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, but to bring them to him, that there they might find the thing which they wanted in the law. So then we see that God's using of rigor in condemning of us, procureth our welfare, and his thundering upon us after that fashion is a witness of his singular goodness towards us. And why so? I have told you already, and experience showeth

it too much, that we cease not to abuse his gentleness, and to draw it clean contrary to his meaning. Therefore he is fain [*constrained*] to rouse us up, and to show himself to be our judge, and to make us hear this dreadful sentence, able to cast us into despair, that there is nothing for us to look for but everlasting death: and finally to confirm and ratify the same sentence still. Yea but all this is but to make us stoop, that being at our wits end, we should flee to our Lord Jesus Christ with a true and unfeigned [*genuinely*] zeal, and learn to rest upon him when we be troubled with unquietness and torment of conscience. Thus we see why Saint Paul hath said expressly, that the law was given to continue no longer, than till the promised seed was come. Now if a man demand, how then did the fathers obtain salvation? I answer, that the law reigned and had his full scope as in respect of outward order before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: but yet for all that the fathers missed not to resort to the grace that was promised them, although they saw it not, as we shall see more plainly hereafter. Then is it a thing utterly out of all doubt, that the Law did nothing prejudice the promise, nor was added for any help of it, as though the promise had not been sufficient of itself to salvation: but that it served to correct men's pride and presumptuousness, to the end they might with all lowliness seek the mercy that is proffered them in Jesus Christ, and by his means be able to receive it and enjoy it. And hereupon Saint Paul addeth, that the Law was ordained or delivered by the hand of Angels, and in the hand of a Mediator. Here he authorizeth the Law, to show that it ought to be received with all reverence, but yet not to be applied to any other end than God hath appointed. For proof hereof he speaketh of the Angels, as if he had said that God had witnesses ynow [*enough*] to give authority to his Law, and therewithal showed how it ought to be taken and heard. But the chiefest matter is in his setting down of the Mediator: that is to wit, our Lord Jesus Christ. True it is that many men have taken this saying to be meant of Moyses, as though he had been called the Mediator between God and men, as in respect of doctrine: but that can by no means stand. For Paul doth first set down the Angels, and afterward addeth the Mediator as chief, and he is here in higher degree than they, which cannot be verified of the person of Moyses. Moreover we see what Saint Paul discourseth. He showeth that there was no diversity between the Law and the Gospel in the free promise of salvation. For the confirming thereof, he bringeth in our Lord Jesus Christ, and saith, that

when the Law was given, it was done by his hand and direction. Truly this word Hand in the holy Scripture doth oftentimes import, force, power, or strength: but here we see how Saint Paul maketh comparison between Jesus Christ and the Angels. He setteth down the Angels that were assembled there to make his Law to be heard among men, and to be received of them without gainsaying. Therefore they were as witnesses of God's Majesty: but he setteth down the Mediator as the greater. The hand therefore importeth direction, as if he had said, that he had highest place, and was chief Commissioner in setting out the Law. And we must not think this strange: for when the Angel appeared unto Moyses, he said, I am the Everlasting. (<030306> Exodus 3:6) There he is named an Angel. Therefore is he God's messenger as the word betokeneth: and yet notwithstanding he saith, I am the Everlasting, that have my being of myself: which saying could not be verified of any creature: and as for the Angels they were made of nothing as well as we. Then had it been high treason for an Angel to have taken upon him the title that agreeth to none but God alone. Therefore must we conclude, that that Angel was Jesus Christ, who executed the office of Mediator aforehand, accordingly as Saint Paul treateth thereof in the first to the Corinthians, (<461009> 1 Corinthians 10:9) where he speaketh of the Jews' rebelliousness, and of their provoking of God to displeasure by their murmuring and wicked lusts. He saith that they tempted Jesus Christ which led them and guided them through the wilderness. No doubt therefore but that our Lord Jesus Christ was even then the Mediator, yea even to reconcile men to God his father after diverse manners. And here ye see why the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews (<581308> Hebrews 13:8) saith that the same Jesus Christ which is today, was yesterday, and shall be still tomorrow even to the world's end to the intent that men should hold themselves to him, and not wander anymore in strange doctrines. But now he addeth, Jesus Christ then hath been a mean betwixt God and men, to the intent that poor sinners might find some relief, and that although they had some heartbitings by being troubled with God's judgments, yet nevertheless they might also be comforted, seeing that God offered them a Mediator by whom they might obtain grace to come unto him. Howbeit Jesus Christ is our Mediator after another fashion also, which is that by him God hath always communicated himself to men. For there is such a distance betwixt God and us, so long as be we estranged from him by sin: that we cannot

come at him. And he will not come down to us for his part, except it be by the Mediator, according also as it is showed in Jacob's vision in Genesis. (⁰¹²⁸¹² Genesis 28:12) For there it is said, that Jacob saw a Ladder upon the top whereof sat God in his Majesty, and the Angels went up and down upon that ladder. And no doubt but that in that figure or Image, our Lord Jesus Christ was represented unto Jacob, to show that men are banished from God's kingdom, till there be a mean that reacheth up from beneath, as our Lord Jesus Christ doth, who being on the one side God manifested, doth surmount all the heavens, and on the other side, being joined unto us in that he is clothed with our nature, and is become a man, (yea even a frail and mortal man, sin excepted,) hath taken upon him and borne our infirmities, though he himself were without spot. So then, ye see how the law was given long ago by the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whereupon it followeth that there is no contrariety between the Law and the Gospel. For Jesus Christ is always one without any variableness. Now let us see what Saint Paul addeth, namely that the Mediator is not of one, but that God is one. In saying that the Mediator is not of one, he meaneth that our Lord Jesus Christ came to gather together again all things that were scattered both in heaven and earth, accordingly also as he speaketh of it in the first to the Colossians. (⁵¹⁰¹²⁰ Colossians 1:20) Truly some have taken the meaning of this text to be, that Jesus Christ was of more natures than one, or that although he were the Mediator between God and men, yet did it not follow that there was a diversity between the Law and the Gospel. But doubtless, Saint Paul's meaning here, is to gather again the Jews, and the Gentiles: as if he had said, Jesus Christ was the Mediator in giving of the Law, as the party by whose means god meant to humble men, that they might be partakers of his grace. Howbeit let us mark that our Lord Jesus Christ who was the continual Mediator in giving the Law to the Jews, had therewithal a Commission that stretched yet further: that is to wit, to gather and knit together again the Gentiles, which were estranged from God. For although God did for a time prefer the lineage of Abraham before all the rest of the world: yet notwithstanding in the end our Lord made us partakers of the salvation whereunto we were strangers, and it behooved us that were far off, to be gathered together again, as those that had been mere neighbors afore. And therefore Saint Paul in another text calling Jesus Christ our peace, saith that he hath joined and knit us unto God, even us that had been near him before, as well as the Jews which had

the Law, as those that had been utterly divided from them.

(^{<490217>}Ephesians 2:17) They that erst [*formerly*] had none acquaintance with God, were in the end gathered together again into the body of the Church at the coming of the anointed, and so were they also which had heretofore been separated a great way off, not only from God, but also from one another. Now we see Saint Paul's meaning. Howbeit, that we may profit the better by this text, let us mark that as God hath given us his Law by the Angels: so shall they bear witness against us if the Law bear no sway with us, and that we make none account of it, but do as it were tread it under our feet. Then shall the Angels be armed to ask vengeance at God's hand against our wickedness and rebellion. For it was no babes play when God willed his Angels to be present and assisting at the publishing of his Law. Therefore it was to the end it should be received with all reverence. Now it is true that we cannot perform all that the Law commandeth, and if we should stand upon that point, we should be plunged into everlasting death, and utterly overwhelmed in despair. But first of all, seeing that God is so gracious to us as to teach us his will, to the end we should discern between good and evil: let us bow down our necks, and receive the yoke that God layeth upon us, to make us subject unto him. Let that serve for one point. And forasmuch as the Law doth quicken us, and cheer us up when we be heartfrozen, and when there is such sloth and slowness in us as we cannot come unto God: Let every of us look well to himself, and early and late call to mind God's commandments, to reprove ourselves withal. Then let us bethink ourselves better, seeing that the Angels keep watch and ward about us, and will not (now after that God hath given them in charge to authorize his Law) suffer us to despise it, and misuse it as if it were a thing of nothing. Furthermore, as touching that the Law curseth us: let us assure ourselves that although men commend us, and clap their hands at us for joy, yet shall we be put to shame before the Angels of heaven. Then if the whole world favor us, it is nothing. For to what end was it God's will that all his Angels should appear to together at the publishing of his law, but to teach us to be ashamed of our sins, and thereby to humble us in good earnest, that we might seek all our welfare in our Lord Jesus Christ. And moreover whereas it is said that our Lord Jesus Christ was the mediator of the Law: let us assure ourselves that if we resort wholly to his grace, we shall not need to fear that the law shall have anymore power to condemn us, yea or to reign

over our sin. For we must bear in mind how Saint Paul in the first to the Corinthians saith, (^{<461556>} 1 Corinthians 15:56) that the law is the strength of sin, and doth so sharpen sin as it woundeth us deadly. Seeing it is so then: surely if we had not the thing that is showed us here for our comfort, we should be stricken with such fear, as we could not be sure of our salvation, though the promises were offered us in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we would always match the contrary things against them, and lay the Law in balance with them, saying: What? was not the Law given of God? But God condemneth us by it. Therefore although our Lord Jesus Christ step in to help the matter, yet doth it not seem that we be escaped. So shall we always be in trouble. But if we consider how our Lord Jesus Christ was the mediator in the publishing of the law: it showeth unto us, that if he be our advocate at this day, it will be a good and sufficient discharge for us: insomuch that although God have pronounced his sentence of cursing against us, yet we must not be dismayed at it, nor so overpressed with heartgrief and anguish of mind, as though the mischief were incurable: but assure ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ will very well agree to both twain, that is to wit, both make us ashamed that we may learn humility, and therewithal also make us sure of our salvation. And therefore let us learn, that whensoever we be beaten down, there is none other means to raise us up again, but to know that the selfsame person which was ordained to be the mediator for the publishing of the law, is now manifested unto us at this day with the same commission, and will make us to perceive it by experience. Further let us mark that he is not a mediator for any one nation alone, but for all the whole world, inasmuch as all of us are the creatures of God. True it is that we were after a sort cut off from him by the sin of Adam. But our Lord Jesus Christ is come to make up the breach again that was both in heaven and in earth, as I have alleged already out of ^{<510120>} Colossians 1:20. Seeing it is so then, let us not doubt but that God accepteth us as heirs of his promise, inasmuch as he acknowledgeth us for the spiritual children of Abraham. And although there be great diversity [between our days and] the time of the ceremonies which served to separate the one from the other: yet let that not hinder us from coming unto God. For why? God is one. Although then that there be both Jews and Gentiles, although there be many divers Nations among men, although their languages be divers, their manners and trades of living contrary, and every of us hath so much variety and unconstancy in

himself, that we have no hold of ourselves: yet let us rest upon God, for he is [always] one. He hath given us his law, he hath given us his Gospel: and let us not think that there is any contrariety in that case, but that all agreeth very well. Only let us suffer ourselves to be ruled by him, that we may come to our Lord Jesus Christ. And how may that be done? By being clean rid from all pride, by being abashed and ashamed, by misliking of ourselves, and by perceiving that there is nothing in us but death. Then shall we come to our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that God the father accepteth us, if we hold that way. Why for? For he is always one: and his giving of the law was not to disannul or impeach the promise that he had made afore. Likewise his revealing of his grace more fully unto us in his Gospel, was not for that he wist [*knew*] not how to make his law of force towards us, and to put it to the right use and purpose of it, that we might have a rule whereby to live well: but that whereas we were accursed by it, we might know how there is none other remedy for us, but by being blessed again in the seed that was promised from time to time, in whose hand our welfare was established, that is to wit by coming to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fountain and wellspring of all blessedness.

Now let us fall down before the Majesty of our good God with acknowledgment of our faults, praying him to make us perceive them more and more, so as we may mislike of them, and not only confess them with our mouth, but also lay open our hearts before him, and submit ourselves wholly to his holy word, and that in such wise we may be comforted by his free goodness, as it is showed us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and he reform us also by his holy spirit, to the end that whereas we of ourselves be full of rebelliousness, we may by his governing become teachable and ready to follow his holy will, and to give ourselves over all wholly unto him. And let us pray unto him for all these things, saying: Almighty God heavenly father, etc.