

What the Law Could Not Do *Romans 8:1-4*

Topic: Authority, New Testament

Aim: To show that we are not under the Law but under the New Covenant.

1. In the late 1700's into the 1800's a religious movement swept across the American frontier that we know as the Restoration Movement. It was characterized by a desire to return to the primitive faith of the New Testament, or as they styled it: the ancient order of things.
2. The history of that effort is filled with wonderful and exciting accounts of watershed moments that affected the religious community of the day, and even continue to affect us today.

I. One of those took place on September 1, 1816.

A. It was at that time that Alexander Campbell first preached his "Sermon on the Law."

1. That sermon rocked his religious world, for it showed that Christians are not under the Law and therefore are not obliged to keep the Law of Moses in any way.
2. That sermon was preached for specific reasons that relate more to that day than to ours.
3. As a result of that sermon, Campbell, then associated with the Baptist church (though he never considered himself a Baptist, just a Christian), was censured by the Baptists and he soon severed all associations with them.

B. He took as his text, Romans 8:3; "What the law could not do." He then quoted John 1:17.

1. He first established that the phrase "the law" included all the Old Testament.
2. He then asked what the Law cannot do. It cannot:
 - a. Give righteousness and life, Galatians 3:21, 2:21.
 - b. Show the demerits (or ugliness) of sin.
 - c. Be a suitable rule of life to all mankind, since it was given to the Jewish nation and it could make no man perfect, Hebrews 7:19.
3. How then did God remedy the defects in the Law? He sent His son, Romans 8:3.
 - a. Eternal life is in His Son, Romans 8:4.
 - b. Death of His son shows the ugliness of sin, for only that sacrifice can forgive sins, Hebrews 10:4.
 - c. The rule of life for the Christian is Jesus and His word, Matthew 17:5. Only Jesus lived a perfect life and so fulfilled the Law.

II. Alexander Campbell had his reasons for preaching that sermon, in spite of the consequences he knew would come. But why do I bring it up?

A. There are still those that say we as Christians are amenable to the Law of Moses.

1. Particularly the Ten Commandments.
2. But are we as Christians to keep the Law of Moses? Or any part of it?

B. No. "Not even the Ten Commandments?" No.

1. That often causes problems when we talk to our religious neighbors. "What? You don't keep the Ten Commandments?"
2. Saying that we are not bound by the Old Law, including the Ten Commandments, is not the equivalent of giving license to steal, lie, or commit adultery.
3. What God wants the Christian to be is given in the New Testament. That is our authority. The New Testament forbids stealing, lying, adultery, etc. For that reason the Christian does or does not do certain things.

III. Why do we believe that Christians are not under the law?

A. In addition to what Mr. Campbell stated consider:

1. Galatians 3:22-29. Galatians 5:1-7. Also Galatians 3:10-14. Consider entire context of Galatians and why it was written.
2. Similarly the book of Hebrews. Specifically, Hebrews 8-10. Read Hebrews 7:18-19, 8:7-13.
3. And we stress that the Old Law was given, not to Christians, but to the Jews only.

B. So here is the whole point.

1. We as Christians do not keep the Law. No part of it. For if we keep any of it, we are obligated to keep it all, Galatians 5:3.
2. Our authority is the New Testament. That we are obliged to obey in its entirety.
3. Saying such does not mean we repudiate or neglect the Old Testament or the Ten Commandments. They were written for our learning and are profitable, Romans 15:4.
4. But we look only to the New Testament for guidance in all matters of faith and practice.

1. Remember there are some things the Law cannot do.
2. One very important thing the Law cannot do is tell us how to be saved by faith in Christ.

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