

The Law Our Schoolmaster

*"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." –
Galatians 3:24*

Summary:

The laws given to Israel—judicial, ceremonial, and moral—all led to Christ. The judicial law foreshadowed redemption and refuge; the ceremonial law pictured Christ through its worship, sacrifices, and sacred objects; and the moral law reveals God's enduring requirement of perfect love. By exposing sin, declaring the sinner's danger, and destroying confidence in personal obedience, the moral law drives us to seek a Deliverer. The law is therefore good when used lawfully. Its purpose is not to leave people in terror but to bring them to Christ, where every sinner who comes finds certain welcome and salvation.

Outline:

1. **God gave Israel three kinds of law**
 - The judicial, ceremonial, and moral laws each served a distinct purpose, yet all directed people toward Christ.
2. **The judicial and ceremonial laws foreshadow Christ**
 - Redemption, refuge, sacrifices, the tabernacle, and its sacred objects pictured his saving work.
3. **The moral law declares God's enduring requirement**
 - It requires supreme love for God and love for our neighbour, reaching the heart, motives, omissions, and actions.
4. **The moral law exposes sin and danger**
 - It removes self-confidence, reveals the curse attached to transgression, and makes the sinner despair of life through personal obedience.
5. **The law brings the sinner to Christ**
 - Its lawful ministry is fulfilled when people seek the Deliverer, rest in his salvation, and receive his promised welcome.

Text

Three kinds of law were given to the Jews:

- **Judicial, or civil, law** governed their nation, regulated their conduct, and defined civil crimes and penalties. It also pointed to Christ through the right of redemption, assigned to the nearest relative, and the cities of refuge. Blessed are those who flee to him for the shelter and relief these provisions prefigured.
- **The ceremonial law** prescribed worship, services, and sacrifices—shadows of things to come, whose substance was Christ. The tabernacle, mercy seat, altar, table of showbread, and Passover lamb all pointed to him and drew their significance from him. Those who deny their typological purpose have therefore diminished them. The Jews were the Church in its infancy, and these ceremonies were pictures accompanying a child's lessons. The entire system may also be viewed as a star guiding those seeking the Consolation of Israel, leading them until it stood over the young child, then disappearing.
- The moral law was universally and perpetually binding. It arose not merely from command or authority, but from humanity's nature and our relationships with God and one another. It requires supreme love for God and love for our neighbour as ourselves. Is this unreasonable? Could God himself require less?

First, This law leads us to Christ by revealing our sin, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." People think highly of themselves because they do not understand the law. If they knew it regards every neglected duty as sin, reaches the heart and outward life, and judges motives and principles as well as actions, they would be humbled and despair of themselves. They would cry, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

Second, the law leads us to Christ by revealing our danger. This danger comes from transgression, since every sin brings the curse: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." A dead lion would not frighten you, but if it suddenly revived, rose, glared, and roared, you would be terrified. So it was with Paul: "I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Third, the law leads us to Christ by causing despair of life through the law. The Apostle says his death to the law also came through the law: "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." The danger's extremity calls for a deliverer. Famine led the prodigal back to his father, while disease drives patients to seek physicians and accept remedies they would otherwise reject. Thus, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ."

The law is good when used lawfully, and ministers should preach it. Some experience its work more deeply than others, but no one should doubt the genuineness of relief found in Christ for lacking intense terror or distress. These feelings are only means, fulfilled when they lead us to Christ and his salvation. Everyone who hears and learns from the Father comes to him, finding encouragement nowhere else: "Him that cometh to me," says the Saviour, "I will in no wise cast out."

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 17, Morning), first published in 1854.