

Objection 15

Why preach the law when no one can be saved by obeying it? Furthermore, man is morally unable to keep the commandments.

This objection is really only a variant of objections already answered. But because the no-law argument is made to appear so plausible under different guises, let us examine this objection.

We agree with the objector that no one can be saved by keeping the law, and that man is morally unable to keep it. But we do not agree with the conclusion he would have us draw from these facts; namely, that the law was abolished at the cross. What would we say to the man who should argue that mirrors ought to be abolished as worthless because no one can obtain beauty by looking into them? Why, we would say that it is not the business of a mirror to make people beautiful, that no one ever made any such claims for mirrors. The function of the mirror is to provide us with a means of knowing whether we look as we ought. And when we have discovered how we look, we can take appropriate means for remedying the imperfections.

Even so with the law. The law was never intended to make man holy or pure or beautiful. Its task is not that of saving man from his sins and imperfections, but of providing him with a means of discovering just what his condition is. When he gazes at the law, with mind quickened by the convicting Spirit of God, he sees immediately where this moral defect or that mars the beauty of his soul, even as he discovers from gazing into a mirror just where this physical defect or that mars the beauty of his body.

And when men thus see their spiritual defects, and become conscious of their uncleanness, they are in a frame of mind to listen to a message that offers cleansing from their defilement. In other words, only when a man realizes that he is a sinner is he ready to listen to the gospel, which is the good news of salvation from sin.

It is by the law that we have the knowledge of sin. (See Rom. 3:20.) Therefore it is evident that only as the law is made known to men can they be brought into a frame of mind that will cause them to wish to hear and accept what the gospel offers them.

We would ask: If sinful man is unable to keep the law, and when he becomes a Christian he need not keep it, pray tell why was the law of God ever given? Shall we make a farce of God's law, and charge Heaven with proclaiming a code that was for thousands of years impossible of being kept, and that for the last two thousand years need not be kept?

We are puzzled to understand why the objection before us should be used to prove that the law was abolished at the cross. Men were no more morally able to keep God's holy law in the centuries before Christ than they have been in the centuries following. Nor could they in those years before Christ hope to obtain salvation through the law, for, as we have found, God has had only one way of saving men from the days of Adam down, and that is through the sacrifice of Christ. (See objection 14) So, then, if the objection before us really proves anything against the law today, it proves it against the law in all past days, back to the beginning of man's sinful history. In other words, there would be no useful place for God's law at all in the whole history of the world.

The fact is, that instead of the law's being abolished for the Christian, there is really no true keeping of the law except by Christians. The divine code would be a dead letter in this world were it not for the Christians who obey it. By faith Christ comes into our hearts, and lives out in us the precepts of heaven. (See Eph. 3:20; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 1:23, 24) Thus, instead of God's law being wholly ignored and flouted in this rebellious world, there are found men and women upholding and establishing it in the only way a law can be upheld-by living in obedience to its claims. That is why Paul says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom. 3:31. Our faith in Christ has not abolished but established the law.