

Why The Law?

Galatians 3:15-29 (ESV) ¹⁵ To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. ¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

When you and I understand what God is saying in his word, our lives take on a new vitality. I put it this way. **1. When the Bible makes sense, life makes sense.** The Bible gives to us a specific world view, a specific point of view that comes from the Person who created life, namely God. God can only speak truth. Jesus says of himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” “No one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Inside of you is something that yearns for God’s truth. God cannot lie. His truth will set you free. Inside of me is a bundle of thoughts and emotions. I have a strong point of view on a lot of subjects. Having said that my experience in God’s word is giving me much needed correction. I feel His word is going deeper into my life. To put it bluntly, when our understanding of Scripture deepens, the Holy Spirit takes God’s word and changes us from the inside out. **2. Even our emotions are impacted in a way that we are able to feel God’s**

Presence that brings healing to our conflicted souls and damaged emotions. Again, the more the Bible makes sense, your life will make sense for God's word has exactly what you need. God's grace comes to you through His Word. The Word of God is a means of grace.

Yes, Holy Communion is also a means of God's grace coming into us. There is a person in this church that every time I give him Holy Communion, he grabs my hand and squeezes it tightly. I am deeply moved by that handshake. I honestly feel loved and accepted by God at that very moment. God's grace comes to me personally and that is what happens when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ, God's grace comes to you personally and you are loved and accepted by God and completely forgiven all of your sins. Where there is forgiveness of sins there is new life, abundant life. So many of our inner conflicts, where we are at war with ourselves and God, can be calmed and transformed into new thoughts and behaviors that ministers to people instead of ripping them apart with one's critical spirit and comments. God's grace that comes to us in the Word does just that.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, please give us ears to hear your word of truth. May your truth sink into every one of our cells from head to toe. Lord, we are all conflicted in different ways. In our study today in Galatians, please give us exactly what we need, your truth. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

3. Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension changed how we view the Old Testament Law. In total there are 613 laws found in the Old Testament. Those laws set Israel apart from every other nation. So many of those laws no longer apply to us. In the New Testament all foods were declared clean. To put it bluntly, the food laws were thrown out. **Mark 7:19 (NIV)** ¹⁹ "For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") **Acts 10:15 (NIV)** ¹⁵ *The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."* In other words, the food laws no longer apply to us. God had good reason for the food laws. If you do not cook pork

rightly, it can kill you. There were laws that covered a lot of areas including clothing, the buying and selling of slaves, property rights, and more. Slaves were to be set free after 7 years if they desired to be set free. Many of the laws referred to the sacrifices that were to be made at the Tent of Tabernacle and then the Temple. All the sacrificial and ceremonial laws were thrown out because Jesus was the final and perfect sacrifice for all time. None of the Old Testament sacrifices brought about the forgiveness of sins. They were all a foreshadowing of the greatest sacrifice of all time, Jesus on the cross.

So, what laws still apply to us today. Jesus summarizes the entire Old Testament law this way. **Mark 12:28-31 (NLT2)** *“²⁸ One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. ³⁰ And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”* Jesus takes the entire Old Testament Law, all 613 of them and boils them down to two. The Ten Commandments are laws that still apply. Let me explain, obeying the 10 commandments does not save you and make God love you more. None of us can follow them. James tells if we disobey one of them, we have disobeyed the entire law. **4. They are guides for our lives, like a map showing us where to go and where not to go.** **5. They reveal what pleases God.** We all fail from following them. We sin. The Law has no power to keep us from sinning. The Good News is Jesus obeyed the entire law. Jesus never sinned. Today, the 10 commandment plus the two give us guidance. The Law also shows us how much we need Jesus and His forgiveness. The Law acted as a guardian for the people of God in the Old Testament until the time of Christ to restrain evil. Jesus obeyed the law completely and we have received His perfect record of obedience, His perfect

righteousness, and we stand justified before God because of Jesus' perfect life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

What applies to us today is the moral law. The moral law has not changed. And we find the moral law in the 10 commandments. Again, following them does not save us. It is simply wise to show our love for God by obeying His commands. Jesus says, **John 14:15 (NLT2)** ¹⁵ "If you love me, obey my commandments. **John 15:17 (NLT2)** ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

6. The Law is a direct reflection of God's holiness and righteousness. 7. It is a mirror that shows us our sinfulness. They are God's standards that if we obey keep us safe from the fallout of sinful ways. On a dairy farm when the cows step outside of the fence line, their lives are in danger. God has given us specific boundaries to guide us and to keep us safe.

In our passage today Paul is making the case that salvation has always been a matter of putting one's faith in God. Salvation is based on a promise given to Abraham that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed. This is the promise of salvation in and only through Jesus Christ. This promise was given 430 years before God gave to Moses the Law on Sinai. The promise of salvation through the promise of the Messiah precedes the law. The law cannot bring new life. The Law cannot make you righteous. Its only power is to expose sin. The Law can never be followed perfectly. The law cannot create in us the righteousness which God requires. Only Jesus, the sinless man fulfilled the law. And it is His righteousness given to us by grace that saves us forever by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons and daughters of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

At the end of our passage Paul states ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

8. The Scripture has given to you a re-birth certificate giving to you your new identity in Christ. God is named as your Father. Jesus is named as your Brother. We have a huge family tree going back to Abraham, who is called the father of the faith. Since we have but one Father, namely God, it means as Christians we are one family. God sees us all as equals. Men and women are equals. Slave and free are seen as equals. The Jewish believers who accepted the Lord Jesus as the Messiah are equal with us Gentile believers. God sees one body, one church made up of sons and daughters of God. We all have the same Spirit in us, the Holy Spirit.

I want to close this sermon with an application or two. The Law brings death. The promised Messiah brings new life. The Law exposes our sin and our need of a Savior. New life in Jesus helps us to love God and to show that love by obeying God. Please do not clobber yourself for falling short. We all fall short. Jesus' death on the cross covers all our shortcomings, all our offenses. As this sinks deeper into us, our loads of guilt and shame begin to melt away and are replaced with peace.

9. Jesus fulfilled the entire law of the Old Testament. He is the only one who ever did. That one thought ought to help us all breathe easier. God has given you the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus never failed and we have been given his record. **10. Sin no longer has to dominate our lives.** As believers in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit inside of us. We are no longer dependent on our flesh, our sinful nature to follow the Law. God has placed inside of us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives to glorify Jesus in and through you and me. We have the Spirit's power so we can walk in daily obedience unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. We are part of a huge family, worldwide and all the saints above in heaven. I

stand amazed at the stories I hear of Christians travelling abroad. They will meet a fellow Christian somewhere in Macedonia, South Africa, Poland, Romania, the Ukraine, or places like Uzbekistan. The fellowship they have in Christ is supernatural because they are literally meeting their brothers and sisters in Christ having the same Father, namely God. And we have the same relatives that go back to Abraham. The promise given to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ, makes us all one in Christ regardless of gender, ethnicity, class, education, whatever. We are all equals in God's sight. God loves us all equally. God has no favorites. He loves you the same amount He loves our brother Jesus. And we will share in His inheritance.

I know it is easy for brothers and sisters of the same family to be at odds with each other. Often we are hurt the most by members of our own family. We have family members in Christ who act as porcupines. No matter what they needle us, or we needle them. They tend to be law oriented and not grace oriented. Harsh criticism comes all too easily and it hurts the Body of Christ. I am asking all of us to be in prayer for that brother or sister who drives you up a wall. Some conflict in that person's life or your life motivates you to pick, pick, pick. Please quit your pickin' and start forgivin'. Amen and Amen.