

Galatians: Freedom In Christ

Week 6: The Purpose of The Law (Gal 3:15 – 25)

Look Around

Rules, policies, and procedures are an unavoidable part of life. What rules, policies, and procedures are you required to follow in your life (i.e., in school, employment, sports, etc.)? Why do you think these rules have been put in place?

Rules and guidelines are a necessary part of life. While they do not define who we are or our moral character, they do set a standard for how we are to conduct ourselves in certain situations. The same holds true for the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. Though it cannot save, the law did serve a purpose. It revealed sinful behavior that kept God's people from remaining obedient to God's commandments. While the law was necessary for a time, its usefulness was limited. With only the ability to reveal sin, and no power to free us from the bondage of sin, the law was only capable of condemnation. A curse indeed! But in his grace, Christ came to abolish the condemnation of The Law. Through Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin and The Law. The Holy Spirit that dwells within is now our trusted guide to live righteously before God.

Look at the Text – Key Concepts

- **Justified** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God, the judge, grants you freedom instead of condemnation. Justification is God's declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn't make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.

- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God’s commands.

- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.

- **The Spirit** – God sent his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to transform the character of God’s people and to empower them to carry out God’s will and purpose.

Look at the Text – Context

Starting with Abraham, God set a plan in motion for the salvation of humanity, and that plan never included the law as a pathway to salvation. In this section of the letter, Paul sets out to prove that faith, not The Law, has always been the criteria by which God accepts God's people as his own. Does that mean that the law is had no purpose, absolutely not. The Law did indeed serve a purpose, to reveal the nature of sinful behavior and to keep God's people from it so that they remained in right standing before God. While The Law served its purpose for a time, its time ended once Christ came to fulfill The Law.

Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation

Galatians 3:19 – 25

Observation

- If The Law cannot save, why was it given to the people of God in the first place?

- How long was the law intended to be our "guardian"?

Interpretation

- What did Paul mean when he said, "we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed" (Gal 3:23)?
- Why do you suppose Paul describes The Law as a guardian for God's people before Christ came?

Look At God

- In his wisdom, God gave the law to show the holy people of God how to protect themselves from the damaging, corrosive effects sin that separated them from God. Imagine God protecting you from sinful behavior that keeps you from him. What images, thoughts, or feelings come to mind?
- Think back over your life, how has God lovingly warned you against the damage sin threatens to cause in your life?
- Write a prayer to express your gratitude for God's desire to keep you close by guiding you away from sin.

Look At Me

- Many believe Christianity has 'rules' that must be followed before they can be accepted by God, which can feel restrictive or 'legalistic'. In your faith journey, how have you viewed the need to follow God's commands? Why do you hold these views?

- How might viewing The Law as revelation of human sin for your protection influence your understanding of God's commands?

- Even though we are freed from the condemnation of sin highlighted by The Law, what value might the law still have today?

- How can you honor the intention God placed in The Law without becoming legalistic when applying its principles to your life?