

# The Purpose of the Law

**Lesson Text:** Galatians 3:19-29; 4:4-7. **Devotional Reading:** Romans 3:27-31.

**Background Scripture:** Galatians 2:15-3:5.

**Time:** probably A.D. 48 **Place:** from Syrian Antioch

## Galatians 3:19-29

*<sup>19</sup> Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. <sup>20</sup> A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.*

*<sup>21</sup> Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. <sup>22</sup> But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

*<sup>23</sup> Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

*<sup>26</sup> So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

## Galatians 4:4-7

*<sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

## Lesson Aims

- Explain the words law and grace that Paul chose to use in this passage.
- Identify blessings and responsibilities that come with God's adoption of each of us.
- Express to God a sense of joy in knowing that they have been adopted by Him.

## Introduction

We are all lawbreakers, whether we are talking about man's law or God's law. Laws are necessary. Man's law is needed to produce a well-ordered society and provide a system of punishments for those who break the law (Rom. 13:3-4). Otherwise, we would live in chaos. God's law is also necessary but maybe not for the reason most people think. To be sure, the law given to Israel was needed to provide social stability, moral accountability, and ceremonial purity. From the New Testament perspective, however, the law had another purpose, namely, to awaken people to their need for the Savior.

## Lesson Background

Paul continues his efforts to instruct the Galatian Christians about the correct relationship between law and grace. Because of Paul's preaching of the gospel of grace, some opponents accused Paul of having no use for the Old Testament law at all. While Paul presented the new message of grace without apology, he also readily

acknowledged that there was a purpose for the old law of Moses. He strenuously maintained that the new is superior, but that the old had a purpose in God's plan.

### **The Failures of the Law (Galatians 3:19-22)**

The law was given to identify the true nature of sin, not to show the way of salvation. Other purposes of the law include: to show how what God required (Exod. 20:1-17); to show how humanity has deviated from righteousness (Rom. 7:7); to declare the penalty of sin (6:23); and to point to the Messiah. The Law covered every possible area of the life of Israel. Please take note that the moral principles embodied in the Mosaic law given at Sinai were merely the codified expression of the eternal moral law of God as it was given to Israel to govern her life as a nation in order to experience God's blessing under the Abrahamic covenant.

#### ***1. What were some of the purposes of the Mosaic law (Galatians 3:19)?***

In the latter part of verse 19, "seed" is written in the singular form which means reference is being made to one individual and that is our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest of Abraham's descendants, who was sent forth by God, the Father, to fulfill the law (Matt 5:17), meaning He is the fulfillment of the law in all aspects. He fulfilled the moral law by keeping it perfectly, He fulfilled the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything the law's types and symbols pointed to, and He fulfilled the judicial law by personifying God's perfect justice.

#### ***2. What does the "seed" refer to?***

A mediator implies that there are two parties. In this case, the two parties were God and Israel with Moses as the mediator. That "God is one" (v. 20) is to "put the emphasis on the one-sided character of the promise.... In the giving of the promise, however, no mediator intervened. God was at work alone: for He is not only the author of the promise; He fulfills it also" (Ridderbos, Galatians, Edermans).

#### ***3. What point was Paul making about a mediator in verse 20?***

Here Paul affirms that "the law" must never be considered an enemy to the promises of God. Paul does not want his teaching to be misunderstood to say that. Elsewhere Paul maintains that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). Both the law and the promises are from God, but each serves a distinct purpose. When we learn that we have broken the law and that the law provides no remedy for our inability to keep it, then it leads us to Christ and to the ability of His grace to provide what the law cannot. In God's plan, law and grace are meant to complement, not contradict, one another. The law diagnoses our illness, and Jesus, the Great Physician, provides the cure.

Since no one can keep the law perfectly, all we can do is to throw ourselves on the mercy of the court. And there is mercy! We must believe in and accept the promise of God given through Jesus Christ (v. 22).

#### ***4. Since the law is unable to save mankind, should we consider the law an opponent to the promises of God (vs. 21,22)?***

### **The Function of the Law (Galatians 3:23-26)**

Schoolmaster in this passage or, the Greek word "tutor" denotes a slave whose duty it was to take care of a child until adulthood. The "tutor" escorted the children to and from school and watched over their behavior at home. Tutors were often strict disciplinarians, causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from their tutor's custody. The law was a schoolmaster in this sense, by showing man his sins and escorting him to Christ.

If we look at (v. 23), we can recall the Jews were under the ordinance of the Mosaic law which obligated them to adhere to many rules and regulations which were used to govern and guide their moral, social and religious life. (Ref. the following books in the Bible: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy for more insight).

### ***5. How was the law a schoolmaster (vs. 23,24)?***

We know that God is the Father of all people because he created them but only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are God's true spiritual children, those who have been born again (that is to be born of water and spirit- John 3:5) by being cleansed from sin by a spiritual washing or purification of the soul, accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

### ***6. How do we become children of God?***

#### **The Fulfillment of the Law (Galatians 3:27-29; 4:4-7)**

Paul was stressing that we have entered into a union with Christ through salvation. Positionally before God, we have put on Christ, His death, resurrection and righteousness (see Phil. 3:8-10).

### ***7. What truth was Paul stressing when he spoke of being "baptized into Christ" (v. 27)?***

To be "equal" in Christ means there is no spiritual inequality before God. There are no racial barriers as those that existed with the Jews and the Greeks, there are no social barriers as existed between the slaves and their masters; and no gender barriers as existed between male and female. We (believers) are all equal in Christ by coming to him by no other way other than through faith. We all have been given the same plan for salvation and because we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), no one has a lesser or greater need than anyone else. Therefore, pardon is offered to all on equal terms.

### ***8. In what ways are we equal in Christ (v. 28)?***

The Promise- "In thee shall all nations be blessed", this would be the news of salvation for all the nations.

### ***9. What promise was made to Abraham?***

All believers are heirs of the spiritual blessing that accompanied the Abrahamic Covenant- justification by faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3-11).

### ***10. How does this apply to believers today?***

The expression "fulness of the time" refers to something that is complete or has come to fruition. The Greek word comes from the same root word translated "fulfilled" in Mark 1:15, where Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand."

The time had arrived for sending the Christ ("his Son") into the world. A look at the conditions of the world at that time indicates that it was the right time for God's plan to unfold and be revealed (cf. Eph. 3:5-6).

### ***11. What does "fulness of the time" (Galatians 4:4) mean?***

Because we are God's children, we have received the Holy Spirit, who lives within us. As such, we can address God as "Abba," a term of endearment used in Jewish homes for one's father (Rom. 8:15). Slaves could not address their master in this way, but sons could.

As a result of becoming God's children by faith, we are no longer slaves but entitled to the full privileges of sons, which include receiving "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4).

### ***12. Why was it much better to be a son than a servant (vs. 5-7)?***

## **Conclusion**

### **My FATHER'S Inheritance and my father's inheritance**

My father's inheritance is that of earthly things that will eventually fade away or decay. But MY FATHER'S INHERITANCE has no decaying elements. We as Christians have been given full rights as sons of God and are now heirs of the great spiritual blessings that our Father wants to give. We are destined to receive "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. It is the rightful heritage of every believer, even the newest in the family of faith, to be absolutely certain that eternal life is his present possession.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, Maker and Creator of all things, the Author and Finisher of my faith, I thank you for your mercy and your grace. I thank you for sending your Son to redeem my lost soul. Father I also must thank you for your law. For without it, I would not have been able to see myself as a sinner who was in need of a Savior. I rejoice and am exceedingly glad for the gift of grace you have given to your people. Through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Thought to Remember**

The law diagnoses our illness, and Jesus provides the cure.