

Purpose Served

Study #8 Galatians 3:10-18

by Bob Burrridge ©2024

For awhile after an election, campaign signs are often left on lawns and street corners.

The *issues* they represented **didn't go away** after election day,
but the signs had **served their purpose**, and need to be **taken down**.

In a *limited* sense, the laws God gave to Israel by Moses are like those signs.

There were detailed **laws** that required **ritual sacrifices** to *represent* what the Savior would do.

He would come to die as a *substitute* for his people's sins.

There were also **purity laws** that governed Israel's diet and clothing.

They **taught the uniqueness of God's People**, separated out from the world by God's grace.

With the *coming of Christ*, these **special rules for Israel** had *served their purpose*.

But there was a *problem* that was confusing the churches in Galatia.

The *Judaizers* were teaching that the **new Gentile believers** had to **submit to those ceremonial laws**.

But they were given **only to Israel** to *prefigure* what Christ would do.

When the things the signs represented were *fulfilled*, they were **no longer required**.

Paul made it clear that the Judaizers were wrong.

They loved the signs, but didn't appreciate what the signs meant.

The signs were **now fulfilled**. The rituals had served their **original purpose**.

But God's law has a specific purpose for all people in all ages.

It **teaches us** about **our guilt before God**, and about **his promised solution** to the problem.

It demonstrates what's **right and wrong**, and what's **true and false**.

It **instruct** and **condemns**, but it **can't** make a fallen sinner **right with God**.

In **Galatians 3:10-12** Paul tried to explain this to the Christians at Galatia:

10. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written,

"Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

11. Now it is evident that **no one is justified before God by the law**, for **"The righteous shall live by faith."**

12. But **the law is not of faith**, rather **"The one who does them shall live by them."**

First, he makes it clear that the law condemns all of us.

Since **no one can keep** all the law perfectly, **everyone deserves** the **penalty**, it's **curse**.

The quote is from **Deuteronomy 27:26** where it says,

"Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them."

Honoring God's ways happens **now and then** in some of us by God's grace.

But **conforming** to **all the words** of his law **all the time**, and observing them with the **right attitude**,
is **absolutely impossible** for us fallen creatures, even the best of us.

Therefore, since **nobody always perfectly obeys**, everybody's **guilty** and deserves God's curse.

Law isn't just a way to remove guilt. There's **no formula** that takes guilt away by **just doing something**.

Good deeds and outward obedience can't erase guilt from past failures.

Obeying sometimes, or even often, **doesn't remove anything** from your record.

If a **convicted murderer** is **polite**, or does some **nice things**, we **don't** just **set him free**.

He's **still a convicted felon**. He has to **pay the price** for his crime.

You can do all the **community and charitable works** you can fit into your schedule,
though that's a good thing, **it doesn't erase anything** you've done wrong in the past.

Next, Paul says it very clearly; there's no redemption or justification by the law.

That's **not why God revealed his law** to us. Paul quotes here from **Habakkuk 2:4**,

"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

Habakkuk was **asking God to explain** why he let Israel suffer so much.

God basically told him that **he didn't need to know why** things happen.

His job was to **trust God**, and to **live by what God tells him**.

Since **no one**, even Habakkuk's Israel, is **innocent**, **hope and deliverance** need to be **provided** for us by **God**.

We come **by faith** in **God's promise and plan**. **If you really trust** it to be true, you will **act on it**, and **live by it**.

The third thing Paul says here is that **what the Judaizers were teaching them is impossible.**

Paul used **Leviticus 18:5** to explain what he meant;

"You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules;

if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD."

To have life in fellowship with God and his people,

they needed to **properly keep all** of God's law *perfectly, personally and perpetually.*

But **no body can do that.**

The Bible teaches in both Testaments that **our fall in Adam made us guilty, depraved, and lost.**

Paul explained in **Romans 3:10-12** how our **sin condition** effects our lives.

10. as it is written: "**None is righteous, no, not one;**

11. **no one understands; no one seeks for God.**

12. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; **no one does good, not even one."**

That **whole section** of the Romans letter was written to help us **understand our real need.**

He quoted directly from the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Judaizers **misunderstood the law** and **what it can do.**

They also **misunderstood themselves**, and what **they were able to do.**

There's no promise of salvation based on **rituals, rules, or by being good.**

So then, **what hope** is there for these **poor Galatians?** or for **us today?**

There's only one sure hope: Jesus took up the condemnation we deserve.

13. **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--**

for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"

Paul was **quoting** from **another part** of the writings of **Moses.**

In **Deuteronomy 21:23** it says that **anyone hanged** for punishment is **cursed** because he is **defiled.**

Jesus was hung on a Roman cross and **became cursed as defiled in our place.**

It was **part of God's plan** from the **beginning.**

Even the **hanging of Jesus on a cross** fit in with the teachings of God's word.

Nothing could be made **more clear;**

Jesus took our penalty on himself, and credits us with his innocence.

That's what all the **ceremonial laws** were about. They were *signs* that *pointed ahead to Christ.*

The sacrifices, the circumcision, the special washings and diets,

all **showed** how God the Father would one day **redeem those he loved.**

The **Judaizers' mistake** was to **insist that the ceremonies had to continue.**

It was a **denial** that what **Christ did** actually **fulfilled** the ancient **covenant promises.**

The **ceremonies pointed to Christ.** Once he came, their **purpose was served.**

To continue them would be to **deny** that **Christ's work was enough.**

It was a **rejection** of the **promise** God was *teaching* in the *ceremonial laws.*

God **wasn't teaching** that *circumcision* actually removed guilt

or that the **death of a goat or lamb** could **take away a human's sins.**

But he **was showing** in those rituals that **he would provide** for **sin to be removed,**

and that a **worthy substitute would come** to **pay the eternal debt** they owed for their sins.

It's interesting that Paul **used God's law** to support his reasoning in these verses.

The **Judaizers** who thought they lived by God's law,

They needed to see that **the law they said they loved didn't say** what **they thought** it did.

They loved the signs, but never really understood what was **depicted in the signs.**

They were **missing** the **main promises** in God's covenant.

God's blessing to Abraham included the people some wanted to exclude.

14. so that in Christ Jesus **the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles,**

so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

The **Jews shouldn't have been confused** about the **Gentiles** coming into the church.

From the very beginning God promised he would **eventually include them too.**

The **Jewish nation** was one of those **signs pointing ahead** to the **completed form of the church**.

It **served God's purpose** for a **short part** of history, but then **the job was done**.

The **Messiah came**, completed what the law represented, and a **new form of the spiritual nation** was born.

In **Romans 9-11** Paul explained that the **church of Christ** today is now **God's true and continuing Israel**.

There is **no more**, and **never will be again**, any **privilege** to the **physical descendants** of Abraham.

As we saw in the first part of this study, the **true sons of Abraham**, the inheritors of his promise, are **all** those who **have the faith of Abraham**. They were **trusting in God's promises**.

As the church was assembled (Jews and Gentiles alike) the **old rituals and symbols** were **ended**.

Now **the reality was there** for God's people:

They are **redeemed together** into a **spiritual family** called the **church** - **sinner saved by grace alone**.

Then Paul gave them a human example based on contract law.

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.

Covenants were **special forms of contracts** in ancient times.

The old **Suzerain treaty covenants** were providentially the closest to the way God deals with us.

Breaking the conditions of the contract usually meant **death**.

If anyone **tampered with it** to try to modify it or change the conditions, they were **executed**.

Even today in less severe times, **breaking a contract** means some kind of **penalty**.

Paul's point is this:

If **human contracts and covenants** are **binding and reliable**, certainly **God's promises and mandates** are **even more certain**.

God's promise to Abraham included the work of Jesus Christ.

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**.

Paul uses the words of **Genesis 22:18** to show **how carefully God's word needs to be read**.

There it says that the **promise** to Abraham is this:

"and in your offspring shall **all the nations of the earth be blessed**"

God **didn't say** that **all the physical descendants of Israel** would be a **blessing to the world**.

Paul pointed out that the word "**seed**" is **singular** there - **one seed**, not all the seeds.

It was **by one person** that this **blessing would come**, that person is identified here as **Jesus Christ**.

There he is! Christ in the Old Testament.

I like the humor in some old AT&T commercials

The host would be in some **amazing places**, and was **amazed to get on the internet** there.

In one he was by the **fountain of youth**. **Elderly people** shuffled and **run off as rejuvenated children**.

He announces that **he's found something extraordinary there**. We **assume** he meant to **fountain of youth**.

But then he tells us that there with his AT&T connection -- he found **the internet** there.

In **similar commercials** he was by other wonders of history and legend

but he's **most astounded to find the internet there!**

We can **go to the Old Testament, anywhere** if we come to understand it well, and **find something extraordinary there** too ... **Jesus Christ!**

Even though **many are distracted** by the **history** recorded there, the lives of **amazing people**, and the detailed **regulations** that defined the lives of the Jewish nation.

But they **miss the most astounding thing there** -- the **whole point of it all**.

Christ is all through the promises that pave the **history** of God's people from Eden to Glory.

He's in the **Songs of praise** and **prayers for mercy**.

He's there in the **law of God**, in the **washings**, the **sacrifices**, and in all the **rituals and temple trappings**.

You can **open your Bible to any of its books** and **find something extraordinary** there ... **Jesus Christ**.

It may take some thought or guidance by someone who knows the territory well. But **he's there** throughout it all.

So **the signs** that pointed to the fulfillment of the ancient covenant, **can't overlook the promise** they represented.

The ceremonial laws of Israel couldn't replace the original promise. Paul said in Galatians 3:17-18,

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.

The promise of the coming Christ, and the **way of salvation by grace through faith**, was **made long before the ceremonial laws** were given by Moses.

So the **temporary rituals**, the *signs* telling about God's plan, **can't replace the covenant promises themselves** which were given to Abraham **430 years before the rituals** given through Moses..

Obviously the **law had a different purpose** than **what the Judaizers thought**.

It **pointed to the coming Christ ... to prepare us** for understanding and trusting in him.

When he came, the lessons were **completed**, and were **no longer binding** on God's people.

God preserves his law for us today -- but as completed promises, not as signs of things to come.

Jesus explained in Matthew 5:17-18 about what he came to accomplish concerning God's law.

17. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;

I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfill** them.

18. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Here Jesus **isn't just** talking about the **ritual laws** the **Judaizers** were mixed up about.

There is a *sense* in which **Jesus fulfills all of God's law, yet also doesn't end the law**.

It still **has an enduring and important purpose**.

It's easy to see how Jesus **fulfilled the Ceremonial Laws**.

He **did what they symbolized and predicted**.

Fulfilled doesn't mean **eliminated** or **destroyed**. They're **still important**.

He completed what they taught. They were and are **teachers** for us about **redemption**.

In them we see the **promise of Christ** that gave hope even to the ancient believers before his birth.

In one sense Jesus also fulfilled the Moral Law for us.

In Matthew 5, he **didn't** mean he **ended or destroyed it**.

Ever since creation, the **same moral things** are **good** and violating them is evil.

That **can't change** because they reflect the **moral nature of God** himself as our Creator.

But **Jesus fulfilled** the moral law's **legal demands** when he died **paying the penalty** for all the times we violate it.

And he **kept the moral law of God perfectly in our place**. By grace he **credits** believers **with his righteousness**.

By his regenerating grace in our hearts he **enables us to do what our fallen souls would never, could never, do**.

He gives us **life**, and a **love for God** that makes us **want to obey him**.

we're **made able by grace** to actually **obey God** and to do it **for his glory, not just for our own benefit**.

Paul started this chapter with the words, "O foolish Galatians."

They were **being taken in by teachers** that sounded good, but were **distorting God's truth**.

It's **tempting in troubled times**, to believe **that you need to take matters in your own hands**.

But the believer needs to **remember** that while he ought to **be responsible and diligent**,

he **ultimately relies upon God's power and grace alone** for success.

When you manage your **home**, your **finances**, your relationships with **friends**,

you learn to **do it within the boundaries** of what God teaches in his word,

and you **pray** relying on the **power of the Holy Spirit** in you to do things well.

When it comes to **your salvation from sin**, there's **only one thing you can do**.

You **come repentantly**, **depending not on yourself** or on any superstitions or rituals.

You depend **solely upon the promise of God** -- fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ.

He lives, and is **here to help** you, to **strengthen** and **comfort** you.

He promises to **forgive the repentant** who rest their hope in him alone.

The **old signs** pointed to the **one who rose, ascended** and now **ministers** to us always.

Jesus isn't just a promise we expect to come again one day in glory.

He's our **living Shepherd, Friend and Master** -- our **Creator and God**.

ESV

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Greek

Galatians 3:10-18

10. "Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσὶ· γέγραπται γὰρ· ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά.
11. ὅτι δὲ ἐν νόμῳ οὐδεὶς δικαιοῦται παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ, δῆλον· ὅτι ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται·
12. ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως, ἀλλ' ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.
13. Χριστὸς ἡμᾶς ἐξηγόρασεν ἐκ τῆς κατάρας τοῦ νόμου γενόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κατάρα· γέγραπται γὰρ· ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὁ κρεμᾶμενος ἐπὶ ξύλου.
14. ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ γένηται ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ Πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.
15. Ἀδελφοί, κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω· ὅμως ἀνθρώπου κεκυρωμένην διαθήκην οὐδεὶς ἀθετεῖ ἢ ἐπιδιατάσσεται.
16. τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ. οὐ λέγει, καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός, καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὅς ἐστι Χριστός.
17. τοῦτο δὲ λέγω· διαθήκην προκεκυρωμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς Χριστὸν ὁ μετὰ ἔτη τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα γεγρονῶς νόμος οὐκ ἀκυροῖ, εἰς τὸ καταργῆσαι τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν.
18. εἰ γὰρ ἐκ νόμου ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός.