

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 9
Galatians 3: 19 - 29

Why Then The Law?"

When the 8 hour TV special "George Washington" was aired, a people's struggle for freedom was reenacted in the living rooms of millions of American homes. There were various responses to this great historical epic. Some said, "I just couldn't watch, it was too bloody." Or "I thought it was so dull, I turned it off." Yet, there were those who watched it and their hearts were filled with gratitude to the men and women who suffered loss of their personal comfort, property, and lives. It makes us wonder how some can be so thankless that they chose not to watch something that is a memorial to the ones who fought and died to win our freedom. How can this be? Why?

We know there is a price tag on everything in this life. If loving parents give their children more than they can afford, there is sacrifice attached to the giving. It is a sad fact that the gift is often not appreciated and the giver is not always loved the more for the giving. We also know that if a person sins there is a cost to it. Those who love the sinner are hurt. We wonder why there are such wrongs in every generation. Why? Why? Why?

It is hard to understand that when we commit a sin it can never be erased by our own efforts. There is no excuse for sin before a Holy God. If we try to "clean up our act" or "turn over a new leaf" we only add to our sin by self-righteousness, self-effort, and offense to God when we think we are good enough to handle it on our own. We are not taking God at His word. He says to confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness. What a blessing that we do not have to do it ourselves and that we have the freedom to choose to do it His way. Why then is it so hard to make that choice? This seems to be a question that stymies us. It has to be really thought through because there is such difficulty in comprehending even the simplest of truths, especially those from God. Why is it that salvation is given to all people, without strings or cost, no earning or working for it? It is a free gift! Since God has provided a Savior in Jesus Christ, then why is He rejected? Since God has promised to be the Christian's strength in time of great weakness, then why do so many Christians fail when the going gets rough? Since the strength to endure is there, a gift to be taken, then why do so many fail to use it? Since God gives each of us the means by which we can serve Him so as to bless others, why do so many of us live as though the means are not available? Why do we try to carry the load when He has already provided for it?

Paul asks the question, "Why then the law?" (V. 19). Then he goes on to answer his question. "The law was added because of transgression" (iniquity or sin). Paul told the Roman Christians, "...for by the law is the knowledge of sin." With this knowledge there would be a restraint upon sin, for if there was not an awareness of sin there would be no guilt or any desire to curb it. The law was given to be in effect only until the Promised One came to fulfill all the promises made to Abraham, for through his descendant salvation would come. Stephen, in his confrontation with the religious authorities, told them they had not obeyed the law, even though it had been given to them by angels through a mediator. A mediator is one who acts as a go-between for two other parties. God was a party of One. He dealt with Abraham directly so that the promise was made to Abraham and his spiritual seed. God spoke to Israel by an angel who gave the message to Moses for His people. We can see why the law could never supplant the promise made to Abraham. He had received the promise first. Paul asked the question, "Are God's laws and God's promises against each other?" No, of course not. The law was brought into being to make men aware of their terrible sin and be their guide, or director, to teach the children of Israel what sin was. If it had been

the means by which men were to be saved, there would have been no need for Christ, the Promised Seed, to come and die for man's sin. There was only one Man who was able to keep all the law. The Man was Christ Jesus. The law was given to the Jews, but all men need a Savior, for all are under the death penalty brought on by one man's sin. The Scriptures are expressly emphatic about sin, for "all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The Jewish nation continued to sin, year after year. They made their sacrifices for sin and they kept their religious feast but God said their iniquity was ever before Him, that He abhorred their sacrifices and feasts (Amos 5:21 - 27). With those words God added, "I will cause you to go into captivity..." God punished the children of Israel, and they learned not to make gods to worship. However they became self-willed and stiff-necked. They resisted the Holy Spirit. They persecuted the prophets whom God sent to show the coming of the Promised Seed, Whom they ultimately betrayed and killed.

In verses 23 - 27 Paul enlarges upon the personal aspect of why the law was given He points out it was to be the disciplinarian by which the children of Israel would be under tutorage until the coming of the Righteous One. Before He came they were guarded by the law, kept in protective custody until there was no longer a need for it. The Jews were familiar with what Paul was saying because they knew that many men kept slaves who were highly educated who acted as schoolmasters over their sons. The slave was a tutor and very strict. When the child was young he was guarded, corrected and even punished if he was not obedient. As the child grew older he became accustomed to the rigid discipline and he could walk alone. The law was meant to reveal sin to guide people in the ways of God and His commandments, but it did not work that way. The law became something the religious leaders misused by adding unjust rules and regulations upon the poor, the widows and orphans who suffered greatly. God was offended. In the midst of this, Christ the Holy One appeared. He came in an unexpected way. He taught that salvation given by God's grace was for all, Jew and Gentile alike, male and female, all were covered by simply believing in Him. Jesus taught people that He loved them and that God, His Father, loved them. His message of salvation for all men spread like wild-fire, yet hatred mounted in the hearts of the religious rulers. They plotted to destroy Him. When He said all could enter into God's kingdom by faith in Him, they put Him to death.

Paul's letter to the Galatians gives each of us hope beyond anything we deserve. He said we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. We are baptized into union with Him! We are one with Christ, which makes us the descendants of Abraham. ALL that was promised to Abraham is our inheritance. If this is true, and it is, WHY DO WE NOT CLAIM ALL OF OUR INHERITANCE? WHY, WHY, WHY?

The careless, selfish, wicked acts you sow each day in haste,
Will turn again and bring you grief, they cannot be erased!

Anonymous

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SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...” (Psalm 19:7b KJV).

Jesus in His perfection fulfilled the law. Think about this for a moment and use the thoughts below to meditate upon:

- 1) God gave the law, but it wasn't an afterthought. Ephesians 1:4 shows us that before He made the world God chose us to be His very own, through what Christ would do for us to make us holy.
- 2) The law was broken in people's hearts long before it was broken by Moses' hands. God's law was broken in the Garden of Eden when sin first entered into man's heart
- 3) The law works as a mirror; it reveals, but it cannot clean. The converted soul has had his heart cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7).
- 4) The converted person is under the sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus. Sanctification comes with the study of His Word (John 15:3).
- 5) The converted soul is under the conquering power of the blood of Jesus. “They overcome by the blood of the Lamb...” (Rev.12:11). Rest quietly and allow the Holy Spirit of Jesus within you to respond to His Father and your Father God. Allow Jesus to guide your thoughts, to heal your wounds, to deal with your old nature and to give you comfort. It is His Spirit that teaches you, Who will wrap you in His love. Let Him do so as you rest in Him. Be at peace with Jesus, for He has all law and power under His command. He is in YOU!

QUESTIONS: Suggestion: Read Acts 7:30 - 38. Write your answers in the first person wherever possible.

1. Tell what Paul's answer was to his own question, “Why then the law?”
2. How long was it to be in effect?
3. What do we call the law given to Moses? See Ex. 2:1 - 17.
4. What does Gen. 2:15 - 17 say that shows God had a law that preceded those given Moses?
5. Tell how Deut. 5:5 illustrates a mediator.
6.
 - a. Who does 1 Tim. 2:5 say is the mediator between God and man?
 - b. Tell what 1 Tim. 2:6 says about Jesus.
 - c. Tell how this verse helps you understand the suffering of the Man Who is your Mediator and how this blesses you.
7.
 - a. What reason did Paul give for the failure of the law?
 - b. What would it have been able to impart had it not been a failure?

8.
 - a. What does Rom. 11:32 say that relates to Gal. 3:22?
 - b. What personal response do you have to the word all in Rom. 11:22 and Gal. 3:22?
9.
 - a. Explain how the law held law held God's people captive until faith was revealed.
 - b. What does Mark 11:22 record that Jesus said what does John 10:38 tell you that is very important to you?
10. If you trust the law (trying to be righteous by keeping it) what does this show about your faith in Christ?
11.
 - a. What does it mean to be justified by faith? Give some scripture to substantiate your answer.
 - b. Tell how important your faith is to you.
12.
 - a. How do we become children of God? v.
 - b. If you have never made a choice, will you do so now? Will you receive Christ's cleansing blood and forgiveness and thank Him for eternal life? Be sure to tell someone you have done this. (See Romans 10:9 and write your name and the date beside the verse.)
13.
 - a. What happened (according to John 1:12,13) when you received Christ?
 - b. Also, "What happened when you were baptized into Christ?"
 - c. Try to relate your answer to 13. a. with Eph. 1:3 - 8 and tell what this does for your assurance of salvation.
14.
 - a. Paul uses the term "in Christ" often. How does 2 Cor. 5:19 help us to understand the process of mediation, the go-between process?
 - b. What is the great exchange plan of God described in 2 Cor. 5:21?
 - c. How could you use 2 Cor. 5:17 to reassure or explain to a new Christian his position "in Christ?"
15. Explain what v. 28 means by "all one in Christ" and tell how John 3:16 illustrates your answer.
16. Read Rom. 4:11 with v. 29. How does one become a true descendant of Abraham? Why was Paul pointing out again how righteousness is gained?
17. Which part of this lesson blessed you most?