

Galatians

Lesson Four

Chapter 2: 11-17

The Law

So far, in our study of Galatians we have seen that the book was written by Paul to the churches in Galatia to warn them about the legalistic Judaizers who had come into their midst to try to get them bound up in a system of law to which they as Gentiles had never been subject.

This seems to have been a continual problem with which Paul had to contend throughout his ministry.

Wherever he went, his greatest opposition was not from the paganistic Romans or the hedonistic Greeks, but from the legalistic Jews, his own people.

Even though they were supposedly born again, they still could not free themselves (and would not free others) from what they perceived to be the “righteous demands of the law.”

As I have said many times before, all the persecution in Paul’s life, whether from preaching the Gospel or withstanding the legalistic Jews was what the word refers to as, “Paul’s thorn in the flesh.”

We have said a lot so far about the law, but what exactly is it?

There are five basic aspects of the law that we will consider before continuing our study of the second chapter of Galatians.

1. The content of the Mosaic law is found in the first five books of the Bible.

The entire content of what was referred to by the Hebrews as “the Law” was contained in the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

However, the Ten Commandments is not all the Jewish Law.

But neither is the whole of the Old Testament, part of the Law.

When the Lord commanded Joshua in ***Joshua 1: 8 that this “book of the law” was not to depart out of his mouth***, He was referring only to the first five books of the Old Testament.

That was all the Bible that they possessed to that point in time

In **Matthew 5: 17**, when Jesus said that He had not come **to destroy the law, or the prophets but to fulfill them**, He was referring to the whole Old Testament because He purposely referred the Law and the Prophets, because Jesus fulfilled every law and prophesy written in the Old Testament pertaining to Him.

The Law itself, is divided into three categories.

A. The moral law.

The moral law is comprised of the Ten Commandments.

These commandments were never intended to be a means of salvation or spirituality for God's people.

Then why were given them in the first place?

Look at **Romans 3: 19-22** *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*

20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—

22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction:

The whole purpose of the law was to show man that he is a sinner and in need of a savior.

It shows us that we need the help of a savior to live lives pleasing to God.

By striving for perfection through self-effort, it attempts to circumvent the plan of salvation which God Himself established from the beginning, which was salvation by grace and not by works.

B. Shadow Christology

This second part of the Law included the sacrifices, temple furniture, feast days, and ritual of Jewish ceremonial worship.

Its purpose was to symbolize the fulfillment of the moral law.



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The actual fulfillment was Christ.

First, Jewish law presented the problem, no one could be saved by the Law because no one could keep it.

It was like a chain with ten links in it.

To break any one of those ten links was to break the entire chain.

That's why the people had to constantly bring sacrifices to the temple, to atone for their sin in breaking the law.

So, life under the old system was a vicious cycle of breaking the Law and making sacrifice for being a lawbreaker.

Hebrews 10: 1-4 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

As the writer of Hebrews points out, this continual process didn't permanently remove sin, or the sin nature, or sin consciousness.

Quite the contrary, it only served to remind people of their sinfulness.

That's what the Law was designed to do, teach us that we were sinners in need of a savior.

Secondly, the Law presented the solution to that problem: there would one day be a Savior who would fulfill the righteousness requirements of the Law for all those who would put their faith in Him.

Hebrews 9: 11-12 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)

12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

So, under the old system, every time the people made sacrifice for their sin, it pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus.



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He would one day put away the Law forever by fulfilling it on our behalf, not by destroying it.

Whether the worship ritual involved a grain offering, an offering of wine or oil, the bringing of the first-fruits to the altar, or the blood sacrifice of a dove, lamb or oxen, it always represented one thing; the atonement, the sacrifice of the life of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, the whole ceremonial system revolved around and centered on blood.

Why?

To continually remind the people of the blood of the Anointed One which would be shed for the remission of our sin.

C. The social law.

The third part of the Law had to do with dietary regulations, rules of sanitation and instruction on the proper care of land and crops.

Like the first part, this was also fulfilled by part two, the coming of the Messiah.

He fulfilled the moral law and the social law by living His perfect life.

But He fulfilled the shadow Christology by His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father.

2. The law was given to Israel (as well as the unsaved).

Romans 3: 19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

Romans 9: 4 They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.

If it was to the house of Jacob, the children of Israel, to whom Moses gave the statutes and judgements and laws, then it stands to reason that these were not given to Gentiles.

However, pay close attention to the fact that though the law was not given to the Gentiles, see what the word has to say about why it still affects them, or should I say us.

Romans 2: 12-14 For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

Whether Jew or Gentile, it appears that human nature leans towards a propensity for trying to earn our salvation.

3. Christians are not under the Mosaic law.

Romans 6: 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the law for us a couple of thousand years before our birth.

The law tried to produce life from the outside in, but the weakness of the law was in the flesh.

The reason the law could never succeed is that our unchanged nature could never please God.

Some people listening to me teach this lesson are thinking, "You are teaching that we Christians are not supposed to keep the Law.

Well, the answer to that is yes and no.

No, we don't have to go back to the Old Testament ways and try to keep the Law.

But yes, we do keep it.

As a Christian, I don't break the Law.

Do you know why not?



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I walk after the Spirit, and according to Paul, those who walk after the Spirit fulfill the Law.

Look at ***Romans 8: 1- 4 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,

4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Some people say, if God put the Ten Commandments in the Bible, I think we ought to keep them.

Maybe I'm just a little too sarcastic at times, but I like to ask those same people if they could quote the Ten Commandments to me.

They might get a few correct, but very seldom all of them, and almost never in the correct order.

Now, I like to think that I follow the Ten Commandments although being honest about it, I don't think that I could quote them in perfect order either.

I'm not really worried about that because I live my life based on the principle of walking after the Spirit.

If we live this way, you will find yourself doing those things which please the Spirit.

So, although we Christians are not under the Law, we do keep it.

Jesus didn't waste any time wondering about whether He had broken the Law, He just walked in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit produces life from the inside out.

According to ***Galatians 5: 23 the fruit of the Spirit; is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.***



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4. Today, the Law applies only to the unbeliever.

1 Timothy 1: 9-10 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

So, ask yourself, does the Law have any significance today?

Only to the unbeliever.

They are the only ones who are affected by it.

However, once again, the Law exist for them for the same reason it has always existed, to reveal their need for a Savior.

5. The Law has limitations.

In the book of Galatians, Paul points out four limitations of the Law.

A. It cannot justify.

Galatians 2: 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

B. It cannot give life.

Galatians 3: 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.

C. It cannot provide the Holy Spirit.



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Galatians 3: 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

D. It cannot produce miracles.

Galatians 3: 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith

This last point is very important: The Law cannot produce miracles.

Think about that for a moment.

If you have been in Pentecostal circles for very many years, you can recall when meetings were marked by numerous and tremendous miracles.

Then something happened that seemed to stifle God's power in the church.

What happened was that in Pentecostal circles, legalism began to creep into the church.

I remember when my first spiritual mentor informed me that when he first got saved, he was told he had to burn his baseball glove because baseball was worldly entertainment and should have no place in his life.

Of course, I am referring to a move of God that started back in the early 1900's.

At first, ministers were preaching only from God's Word, and God responded by pouring out His Spirit and by confirming His Word preached with signs following.

But somewhere along the line, Classical Pentecostals began to turn away from the preaching the Word to the preaching of rules, regulations, and codes of dress, etc.

Today, there is a new revival of miracles and healings.

Do you know why?

We have started preaching the Word of God again.

Holy living is still as important as it ever was, but what we do and why we do it has changed.

It's holy living in the grace of God.

This standard is set for us by the Word of God.

This is precisely why God wants the Gospel of the Good News preached.



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Preach the Gospel and people will receive the Spirit.

Receive the Spirit and you will know how God wants you to live your life.

With our updated understanding of the Law, let's look at two incidents in chapter two that Paul describes in the letter to the Galatians.

The Antioch Incident (Spirituality by Grace)

Galatians 2: 11-17 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

Before we get into this in detail, let's back up a little and set the stage for what is happening in these verses.

It seems that some time after the birth of the church at Jerusalem, after the Day of Pentecost, the church had begun to go downhill.

This is what happens when churches began to be buried in legalism.

It seemed as if the Spirit of God had moved down the road to the church at Antioch.

He, the Spirit of God, had found a place where the do's and don'ts of Judaism were not being preached and He was moving more freely in the church at Antioch in these days as compared to the church in Jerusalem.

Most of the members of the church at Antioch were Gentile Christians who knew nothing at all about Judaism.

All they knew was the Word of the Lord as brought to them by Paul on one of his missionary journeys.

Since all they had to go by was the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace, this church was able to flourish, and missionaries went out everywhere to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In time, the church at Jerusalem, which considered itself the headquarters of Christianity for the world heard about what was happening in Antioch and immediately became jealous of its success.

Because the church in Antioch was made up mostly of Gentiles, and because many in the church at Jerusalem still did not know Paul very well, naturally the Jerusalem church was suspicious about what was happening in this young upstart church plant.

Since Peter was one of the founders of the Jerusalem church and a devout Jew of good standing, they chose him as their envoy to Antioch.

So, he made his way there where he soon became involved in the affairs of the local church.

In fact, he remained there longer than was necessary.

So, the church in Jerusalem became concerned enough to send others to find out exactly what was going on.



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After all, the church at Antioch had never received the seal of approval from the church at Jerusalem.

This time they sent a team of legalist Jews.

It was the arrival of this group of Jewish believers from Jerusalem which sparked the incident in Antioch that Paul describes in this passage.

Verse 11a But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face,

The word *opposed*, translates from a Greek word meaning “*to resist.*”

This Paul, whom the home church in Jerusalem knew so little about and generally mistrusted, had the nerve to speak out publicly against the great Apostle Peter.

But why did Paul oppose Peter?

Verse 11b because he stood condemned.

The KJV says, ***because he was to be blamed.***

If you put it in modern terms, it would mean, *because he was wrong.*

Verse 12a For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself

In the beginning of Peter’s visit to Antioch, he ate and drank with the Gentile Christians.

This action was expressly forbidden to devout Jews under the Law.

What do you think Peter ate with those Gentile Christians in Antioch?

Surely the menu included many foods expressly forbidden for a Jew under the Law.

But Peter was no longer under the Law.



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He knew it because the Lord had revealed it to him through a vision He gave him when He sent him to preach to Cornelius and his family who were Gentiles.

Acts 10: 28 And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

So, Peter knew better than to separate himself from non-Jews.
Then why did he do it?

Galatians 2: 12b fearing the circumcision party.

Peter withdrew from his freedom as a Christian and subjected himself to the dictates of the Jewish Law for one reason only, fear.

As long as he was alone with the Gentiles, he ate and drank and fellowshiped with them freely.

But as soon as the group sent by James from the Jerusalem church arrived on the scene, Peter became concerned about what they would think of him and his new friends.

This is disconcerting considering that when Peter had faced this same type of attack on his Christian character on behalf of his ministry to the Gentile Cornelius' family, Peter was very defensive.

Acts 11: 1-4 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying,

3 “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”

4 But Peter began and explained it to them in order:

Acts 11: 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”



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Acts 11: 2 tells us that those who had a problem with Peter's action were, ***"of the circumcision party."***

Notice who it was who just arrived in Antioch to investigate matters there, the ones Paul says Peter is afraid of: ***Galatians 2: 12b fearing the circumcision party.***

The fact that Peter knew better than to react the way he was reacting is why Paul got so upset with him.

Paul also knew that Peter was leading others astray by his wrong attitude and actions.

Verse 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

This one act of legalism split the church at Antioch right down the middle.

One bit of leaven will leaven the whole lump.

None of this would have happened if Peter had maintained the same stance he had taken in defense of his ministry to Cornelius' household.

Instead, Peter set an example of hypocrisy that affected even Barnabas.

This especially disconcerting because currently, Barnabas was the Pastor of the church at Antioch.

How are we ever going to reach the world with our message of God's love and acceptance if we don't love each other?

Unity in Christ is part of the message of grace.

Verse 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

The phrase, ***them all***, refers to the members of the church in Antioch.

Whereas Paul had met privately with the church leaders in Jerusalem before presenting his case before church there, he showed no such restraint in this case.



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On the contrary, he stood up in front of the whole body to denounce Peter for his wrongdoing.

This not the way that I would recommend handling every problem in the church, but obviously Paul thought this case called for drastic measures.

Let's look closely at Paul's logic in his argument for justification by grace without regard to the law.

He is saying to Peter, "You are a Jew, yet you have been living like a Gentile, just as though the Jewish law had no jurisdiction over you"

"If you, a Jew, are not subject to Jewish law, then why are you trying to force the Gentiles to live by it?"

Verse 15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

Here Paul includes himself in this argument.

This will not really become clear until Chapter 3, but suffice it to say that Paul is driving home the fact that that being born a Jew does not make a person the seed of Abraham and heir of the promises of God.

Verse 16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

What did we say was the purpose of the Law?

To show man that he was a sinner and incapable of obtaining righteousness and salvation by his own efforts.

Verse 17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

What Paul is saying to Peter here is this: "Peter, if you and I are trying to live a spiritual life before God by keeping the law, then we are saying that it is the Law which makes us spiritual after we are saved by grace.

By your actions you are saying that a person is saved by grace but in order to be SPIRITUAL he must go back and keep the Law.



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Logic dictates that I need the law to teach me that I need the grace of God to be saved, how then later can I return to it to become spiritual.

It doesn't make sense.

If you can't save yourself by your own efforts, then you can't sanctify yourself by your own efforts either.

It's all by faith.



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