

15. The Book of Galatians 3:19 (Topical)

Liberty From Law-Part 14

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(4-21-24)

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In our study in Paul's epistle to the Galatians we find ourselves in Chapter 3 in a section we've labeled: "**Liberty from Law.**" Liberty from law is really liberty from *religion and legalism* as a way of being made righteous in God's eyes.

Last time we finished looking at verses 15-18 where we studied the '**Covenant of Promise**'—

Galatians 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Paul is saying that 430 years after God made a covenant with Abraham—He gave the Law to Israel through Moses (the Mosaic Covenant). The covenant that God made with Moses 430 years after His covenant with Abraham—can't change or annul the first covenant making that promise of no effect.

Galatians 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The New Covenant God made with us thru Jesus—is the *fulfillment* of the Abrahamic Covenant—and is therefore, unilateral and unconditional just like the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised us eternal life if we put our faith in Jesus—but that promise isn't dependent on our faithfulness in keeping the Law (God's commandments).

In other words, we don't *earn* eternal life through our obedience to what God has commanded (Jesus did say if we love Him keep His commandments)—but obedience to God is always the *result* of salvation never the condition for *earning* salvation.

G. The Purpose of the Law—verses 19-25

Earlier in this epistle Paul proved that the law cannot save us—we are saved by faith just like Abraham (Genesis 15:6). At this point he anticipates what his Jewish readers would be thinking: "**What purpose then does the law serve**" (verse 19a)

I mean if the Law didn't change or annul the promise God made to Abraham based on faith—what *was* the purpose of the law? Paul goes on to tell us—

Galatians 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? **It was added because of transgressions...**

Transgression means '*the willful violation of a known law.*'

Romans 4:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ ...the law brings about wrath [judgment]; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Paul isn't saying that where there is no law, there is no sin—he will go on to say in Romans 5:13, “*For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*” You see God's righteous laws were in place from the very beginning of creation—and even when people violated those standards unknowingly, they were still considered guilty before God even though they didn't *know* they were breaking His unwritten laws.

Up until then they were guilty of ‘*sins of ignorance*’ (“Ignorance of the law is no excuse”) but after the law was ‘posted’ by God through Moses—anyone who broke it was now considered a ‘*transgressor*’—someone who knowingly and willfully violates God's holy law.

Let me illustrate it this way—say you're driving down a country road going 50 mph when the speed limit is actually 35 mph—but you don't know that because there are no speed limit signs posted. You're still guilty of breaking the law but you're not breaking it willfully or intentionally.

That's what ‘*sin*’ is—the violation of God's laws but not necessarily on purpose.

However, if you're driving down that country road and the speed limit is posted, and you *know* it's 35mph, but you go 50 mph anyway—that's a transgression!

A transgression, biblically speaking, is where you know what God has said—but you go ahead and break His laws (commandments) anyway—it's a deliberate act of rebellion and lawlessness.

Before God gave His written law through Moses—He was still God who had His standards of right and wrong—standards that were violated by people many times before Moses came on the scene. Even though He held people accountable for breaking His righteous standards *before* He gave His written law—He didn't punish them to full extent of the law and often *overlooked* those violations altogether because of their ignorance. (Acts 17:29-31)

But eventually, God gave the written law so that sin might be seen clearly as sin (a clear violation of His righteous standards)—and therefore anyone who breaks God's laws now does so intentionally and deliberately and therefore can't plead *ignorance* of the law. So, part of the reason God gave the law was to *restrain* the actions of people in violating His commandments by clearly revealing His holy standard of right and wrong—along with the *consequences* for breaking His laws:

1 Timothy 1:8–11 (NLT)

⁸ We know that the law is good when used correctly. ⁹ For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. ¹⁰ The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching ¹¹ that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.

So, Paul tells us that the law was ‘**added because of transgressions**’—on the one hand to *restrain* evil in society—but on the other to *stimulate* sin in the fallen heart of man:

Romans 7:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

You see, the law *stimulates* man's innate rebellion (rooted in our fallen nature)—because when we are told not to do something our flesh wants to do it all the more— If you don't believe that, try putting a “**Don't walk on the grass**” sign on your lawn and see what happens!

Romans 7:8 (NKJV)

⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. [laid dormant]

God gave the law in part to stimulate our rebellious nature so that our flesh would rise up and do the opposite of what God's laws commanded.

- **Why would God want to stimulate our flesh to thwart our attempts to keep God's commandments?** To show us we were not 'good' people on our way to heaven but guilty fallen sinners on our way to hell.

You see He knew we could never keep His laws perfectly to get into heaven and He didn't want us to be fooled by the devil into thinking we were good enough to get to heaven by keeping God's laws.

Romans 7:12–13, 21-25 (NLT)

¹² But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good. ¹³ But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God's good commands for its own evil purposes...

²¹ I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵ Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.

Many people today, if they were to read these verses in Romans wouldn't be able to relate to where Paul was coming from? They wouldn't understand his struggles with sin because in their minds—sin doesn't exist.

The Bible defines sin as breaking God's laws.

- **What are God's laws you ask?** They are His absolute standards of right and wrong based on His absolute truth.

However, many people don't believe in God's absolute truth—they claim truth isn't *absolute* it's relative. Or in other words, truth is whatever you want it to be—it's relative to any given situation (like if you were born a male or a female and you simply decide your truth is that you are really the opposite gender)!

But without objective, absolute truth—people can't live, societies breakdown, and life would be impossible.

Because, without objective, absolute truth there can be no righteous standard of morality and therefore no righteous laws governing a society—both of which are based on the objective, absolute standard of right and wrong that we call *truth*.

In our culture today many have abandoned the idea of moral *absolutes* in favor of moral *relativism*—“*My truth is my truth and your truth is your truth—if it works for you and feels good it's okay.*” Because so many want to do whatever seems right in their own eyes without anyone opposing or judging them—they naturally don't want to oppose or judge the way anyone else is living either.

Therefore, their mindset is—“*You accept me (my truth) and I’ll accept you (your truth)*”—which is now the general attitude of our age. So, we hear a lot today in our society about *tolerance, inclusiveness and love*—which the world defines as basically *accepting* whatever people want to do and how they want to live.

If we do speak out against immorality and sin—they label us, ‘*judgmental and bigoted*’, ‘*self-righteous and narrow minded!*’—all based on their belief that “*there is no such thing as absolute truth and therefore no such thing as sin.*”

Again, in our culture today many have abandoned the idea of moral *absolutes* in favor of moral *relativism*—the belief that there are no moral absolutes (no absolute standards of right and wrong) and that ‘*truth*’ is whatever they say it is.

When someone says, “*There is no absolute truth*” just say to them, “*Are you absolutely sure?*”

You see, they can’t deny absolute truth without invoking it!

Of course, moral absolutes come from God—the Supreme Lawgiver and Righteous Judge of all the earth. So those who want to get rid of God’s laws—have to get rid of God Himself (hence the rise of neo-atheism especially among young people).

Now, once they get rid of God, once they embrace the belief that He doesn’t exist—then neither do His commandments exist which causes them to say, “*I have not sinned, because sin doesn’t exist!*” You see, if there is no absolute standard of right and wrong—then sin is impossible because sin is a violation of God’s laws—which don’t exist if He doesn’t exist!

Again, these people don’t believe there is such a thing as *sin* and they would tell you—

“I don’t sin, that’s your truth not my truth! When I have sex outside of marriage or lie to get that promotion or engage in homosexual activity or kill babies in the womb or steal from stores as a form of ‘reparations’ or cut off the body parts of children because I believe they need to transition from one sex to another—it’s not sin because my truth says it’s perfectly right for me to do it!”

Well then—by that standard, Hitler wasn’t an evil murderer—he was simply acting according to *his* ‘truth’!
**Listen for explanation here*

This is why I say that without moral absolutes people can’t live, societies breakdown, and life would be impossible. That is because—if everyone is doing whatever seems right in their own eyes (because moral relativism has replaced absolute truth as the driving ideology of a society)—chaos, confusion and every evil thing will be the result (ultimately the breakdown of that society).

That is why God has given us His Word to build our lives upon—which is the *antidote* to man’s relativistic moral insanity—

Psalm 19:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ The...judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

So, to finish making this point—is there such a thing as absolute truth, and why does it matter?

First of all, there is such a thing as absolute truth—it’s called the Word of God, the Bible:

John 17:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ ...[Father] Your word is truth.

But understand that God's Word cannot be separated from God Himself—God is truth, and truth is God who has expressed Himself in the pages of the Bible, His Holy Word! In other words, what God calls truth is an expression and extension of Himself—as something that emanates from Him as part of His nature.

Even as Jesus (Who is God) said of Himself in John 14:6 "*I am the way, the truth, and the life...*"

Trying to understand *truth* without God is like trying to understand *sunlight* without the sun! Just as trying to understand *sunlight* would be impossible without focusing on the sun as its source—so to understanding *truth* is impossible without starting with and focusing on God as its Source!

As Christians we read the Word of God to know the God of the Word!

➤ **So absolute truth exists—but why does it matter?** It matters because God's absolute truth allows us to live in a world of lies and not be deceived and destroyed by them—

John 8:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said..."If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." [from Satan's lies]

God's truth becomes a sure foundation that we can build our lives upon—as opposed to shifting sand of man's relativistic 'truth' which is nothing more than Satan's lies. God's absolute truth is essential for life—as Jesus said, "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" (John 6:63)

The devil has come to '*steal, kill and destroy*' and as such he has filled this world with disinformation and flat out lies that if embraced—will steal a person's life now and destroy their soul in hell forever. The sad reality is that many people are frantically looking for truth and yet they don't or won't come to the Bible for the answers on how to live their lives.

Again, God's Word is the only *light* in a world of darkness—the only *truth* in a world full of Satan's lies! Believe it and you'll be saved and live a blessed life—reject it and you'll live a life of chaos and confusion resulting in the ultimate consequence—eternal separation from God in hell.

So, we have the 2 ends of the spectrum—first of all, those who condemn the Law of God saying it's evil or non-existent—and then you have those who *venerate* the Law and elevate it to a place of worship. It's the latter that Paul is dealing with in Galatians with regard to the teaching of the Judaizers.

They were back then like so many today who believe that God exists, His laws exist (His absolute truth), and they then hold up God's laws to the point they believe God gave them to mankind in perpetuity for us to keep and use to earn a place in heaven someday.

Romans 3:20 (NLT)

²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

Galatians 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ **What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made...**

I want you to notice 2 key words Paul uses with regard to the Law—1) **'added'**; and 2) **'till'**

First, the Law *was added* meaning—it was an addition to the Abrahamic Covenant not the replacement of the Abrahamic Covenant—it was added because of *transgressions*. The giving of the law had the specific purpose of showing us our sin and not for cleansing us of our sin (think of a bathroom mirror).

Second, the Law was never intended by God to be permanent— **"It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made..."**

J. Vernon McGee—

"Till the seed should come"—that little word till is an important time word. It means the Law was temporary. The Law was given for the interval between the time of Moses until the time of Christ. *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17). It is very important to see that the Law was temporary *"until the seed should come"*—and that Seed is Christ."

Now next time I'd like to look at and answer the question—*"What is the relationship of the believer to the Law in the New Covenant?"*

Paul told Timothy—*"We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully."* (NKJV) Or in other words, the law is good but only if it's used properly—for the purpose for which God designed it or intended it to be used.

I say this because there are Christians who believe we are still under the law—maybe not for salvation but definitely for sanctification.

- *But is that true—and if so, what does that look like for us today?*
- *How does that impact and effect the practice of our Christian lives if we're still under the Law?*

I'd like to look at this next week as we continue looking at: **"The Purpose of the Law" Part 2**

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