

16. The Book of Galatians 3:19-25 (Topical)

Liberty From Law-Part 15

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(5-5-24)

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We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings—but instead of going through the book verse-by-verse we decided to study it topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ. So, as I said when we began this study—we were going to focus our attention on 3 main areas (topics) of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

I. **Liberty from Lies**—verses 1:6-10

II. **Liberty from Law**—verses 1:11-4:31

III. **Liberty for Life**—verses 5:1-6:15

In our study this morning, we find ourselves in the second main division of the book—“**Liberty from Law.**” Or in other words, “**Liberty from the Law**” as a way of being made righteous in God’s eyes.

After God led the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt under Moses, He led them to the base of Mt. Sinai where He proposed a covenant with them—a covenant that came to be known as the Mosaic Covenant. It was a covenant based on them keeping His laws—which if they did, He promised to bless them abundantly but if they did not, He promised to punish them severely (Deuteronomy 27 & 28).

The Law that God gave to Israel through Moses when he was on top of Mt. Sinai contained 613 commandments.

- 248 were positive—things that God said His people must do like: “*loving Him with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength*”; and “*honoring their fathers and mothers*” etc.
- 365 were negative—things that God said His people were forbidden from doing like: “*worshipping false gods*”, “*stealing*”, “*lying*”, and committing “*adultery*” etc.

These laws were further divided into 3 categories: The civil (aka. judicial); the ceremonial; and the moral.

- The *civil* law governed their relationship with one another in society.
- The *ceremonial* law governed their relationship with God in worship.
- The *moral* law (think of the Ten Commandments) governed their personal lives—affecting both their relationship with God and their fellowman.

The question we ended our last study with (and I promised we'd begin to look at today) was—**"What is the relationship of the believer to the Law under the New Covenant?"**

Well, that depends on who you talk to—but let me say this at the outset—getting the answer to that question wrong opens the door to some serious heresy not to mention giving the devil a foothold in your life—which he will use to severely damage your walk with God. That's why I want to take the next couple of weeks or so to look at this issue.

Remember what Paul told Timothy—*"We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8)*—or in other words, the law is good but only if it's used for the purpose for which God intended it to be used.

Earlier in Galatians Paul proved that the Law cannot save us, he taught that we are saved by faith just like Abraham (Genesis 15:6)—and not by the works of the Law:

Galatians 2:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Galatians 3:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* ⁶ just as Abraham *"believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

Galatians 3:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, *"Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."* ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for *"the just shall live by faith."*

At this point he anticipates what his Jewish readers would be thinking: **"What purpose then does the law serve?" (verse 19a)**

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—**'added'**; and **'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—

Romans 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

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

At this point we need to consider something Paul said in Romans 7:1-6 on the subject of Christians and their relationship to the Law of Moses. In these verses, Paul presents an *axiom*, followed by an *analogy*, culminating with an *application* on this very important subject:

The Axiom—verse 1

An axiom is a self-evident truth—something that doesn't need to be proved because it's obvious.

Romans 7:1 (NKJV)

¹ Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

It's obvious that the law only has authority over people while they're alive.

If a man robs a bank and while he's making his getaway, he gets into a car accident and dies—the authorities don't arrest him anyhow and haul his corpse into court to stand trial. At that point he is released from the authority of the law—it no longer has power over him.

The Analogy—verses 2-3

Romans 7:2-3 (NKJV)

² For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Paul's point is obvious—according to the Law of God with regard to marriage a person cannot be married to two people at the same time—such a person would be an adulterer and a bigamist.

But if a person's spouse dies, they are free to marry another without violating the law of God—in fact, most marriage ceremonies include in the vows the phrase, "*until death do us part.*"

The Application—verses 4-6

Romans 7:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 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. ⁶ But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

One pastor put it this way—

"By way of analogy, it says that you are married to the law. And you better stay married because if you leave this husband and go marry another you are going to be called an adulteress.

But if your husband dies, then you can go and remarry.

And then Paul draws the analogy out—a little complex the way he does it—saying that you died to the law—you aren't married anymore, you can have another husband, namely Jesus Christ Who was raised from the dead."

The Bible clearly teaches that the believer died to the Law when they received Jesus into their heart by faith—identifying with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. (Romans 6)

So, let me answer the question:

➤ “*Is a Christian still under the Law?*”—and the answer is No!

Yet having said that we see a growing movement in the Church where many professing Christians are embracing the Law for various reasons. Some, in an effort to use it for *salvation*, others for *sanctification* or both—and in particular I’m thinking of those who have embraced the ‘*Hebrew Roots Movement*’ (HRM).

One author had this to say about the HRM that has come into the Church—

“The Hebrew Roots Movement (HRM) is, in general, an attempt by its adherents to draw closer to God by gleaning things from Judaism that are perceived to be biblically significant and valuable. Though the movement includes Jews who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah, for the most part, it comprises non-Jewish professing and true Christians (Gentiles). The HRM technically is not a movement as we would normally define one. There is no national organization or hierarchy of leadership among this group, yet there are leaders and writers from diverse ad hoc organizations, churches, and ministries who favor the trend.

Within the subculture, churches may be called ‘*synagogues*’, pastors may be called ‘*rabbis*’, Jesus may be referred to as ‘*Yeshua*’, depending on the whim of the leader or leaders. That make-it-up-as-you-go-along concept was demonstrated when one “Christian Rabbi” wrapped a prosperity teacher in a Torah scroll, called the teacher ‘king’, seated him in a chair, and had ushers parade him around on their shoulders.

The attraction for many to the HRM is often motivated by a love for the nation of Israel and its culture and traditions. However, those feelings have taken multitudes *beyond* a biblically acceptable attitude toward things Jewish and into beliefs and practices that are contrary to the teachings of Scripture. For some, the HRM has led them into a gospel of works, which the Apostle Paul warned against and condemned in his Epistle to the Galatians:

‘Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ’s death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross. ² Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ. ³ How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?’ (Galatians 3:1–3 NLT)

Those who have studied this movement have said it appears to be made up of 3 different levels:

- 1) *Those who see Jewish laws and practices as a means of salvation.*
- 2) *Those who see some kind of a Jewish lifestyle as a means of sanctification and a more godly spiritual life.*
- 3) *Those who immerse themselves in Judaism as a way to understand the customs and manners of biblical times.*

Those who embrace the first level try to use the Law for salvation which will absolutely never happen and will wind up condemning them to hell for all eternity.

Those who embrace the beliefs in the level two group tend to become ‘*Pharisees*’ who believe there are levels of Christians (they themselves being at the top)—which gives rise to division and elitism in the Body of Christ.

I believe only those in the level 3 camp have embraced a legitimate pursuit of knowledge into Jewish Old Testament culture and customs as those seeking better illumination and insight into the Word. I think we've adequately covered the heretical belief that the Law saves—it does not, it cannot—it will only condemn to hell.

So, group 1 is obviously heretical (and all true Christians agree with that); group 3 is a legitimate pursuit of knowledge and not a problem. The problem for Christians and the Christian Church is the level 2 beliefs of the HRM—and those who see the keeping of some of the O.T. Jewish laws as a means of sanctification and a more godly spiritual life.

In other words, without observing the ceremonial aspects of the Law (the Feasts Moses, the Sabbaths, ritual vows, and dietary restrictions)—many have come to believe they could never be as good in God's eyes as He desires them to be.

In other words, they believe they will never be as sanctified, fruitful or blessed by God without practicing some of the Jewish customs and laws rooted in 'Judaism.'

But also, they believe that we as Christians are still under a whole branch of the Law of Moses—the moral law (Ten Commandments).

Let me just review quickly what we've already covered—that the Law was divided into 3 categories or branches: The civil; the ceremonial; and the moral.

- The *civil* law was intended for Israel to govern their national or civil life and was set aside when God set the nation aside after she rejected her Messiah, and the Romans dispersed them after their rebellion in 70 A.D.—at which time the Jews were scattered, and the nation ceased.
- The *ceremonial* law was given to Israel to govern their worship of God and was contained in ordinances, ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings (mediated through a priesthood)—all of which ended with the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
- The *moral* law governed their personal lives—affecting their relationship with both God and their fellowman.

Alright, so two-thirds of the law is over—the civil and ceremonial laws have passed away—even when it comes to the modern state of Israel which is secular and has no temple worship (as of yet—they're working on the rebuilding of a new temple)

But what about the moral law?

Well, this brings up an interesting debate among certain groups within the Christian church. Once again, when we talk about the moral law we're talking about the Ten Commandments—and the debate is, "*As Christians are we still under the moral law?*"

There are many Christians who believe we are still bound to keep the moral law—which, they say, includes the Sabbath—what about this?

I think author William MacDonald brings clarity to this issue when he said,
"A common question in a discussion of the believer's relation to the law is, "Should I obey the Ten Commandments?" The answer is that certain principles contained in the law are of lasting relevance. It is always wrong to steal, to covet, or to murder.

Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the NT, with an important distinction—they are not given as law (with penalty attached), but as training in righteousness for the people of God (2 Timothy 3:16b). The one commandment not repeated is the Sabbath law: Christians are never taught to keep the Sabbath (i.e., the seventh day of the week, Saturday).

The ministry of the law to unsaved people has not ended: “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully” (1 Timothy 1:8). Its lawful use is to produce the knowledge of sin and thus lead to repentance. But the law is not for those who are already saved: “The law is not made for a righteous person” (1 Timothy 1:9).

The righteousness demanded by the law is fulfilled in those “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).

Therefore, the person who trusts in Jesus is no longer under the law; he is under grace (Romans 6:14). He is dead to the law through the work of Christ. The penalty of the law must be paid only once; since Christ paid the penalty, the believer does not have to. It is in this sense that the law has faded away for the Christian (2 Corinthians 3:7–11). The law was a tutor until Christ came, but after salvation, this tutor is no longer needed (Galatians 3:24, 25).

Yet, while the Christian is not under the law, that doesn’t mean he is lawless. He is bound by a stronger chain than law because he is under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). His behavior is molded, not by fear of punishment, but by a loving desire to please his Savior. Christ has become his rule of life (John 13:15; 15:12; Ephesians 5:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; John 3:16).”

Galatians 4:4-6 (NLT)

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Once you’ve been adopted as a son or daughter by God—God is no longer your Judge, now He’s your Father.

Granted, a Father that has rules that his children must abide by—rules which if broken will bring chastening (discipline); but no longer a Judge who upholds laws that if broken will bring punishment and condemnation in hell.

1 John 4:17-18 (HCSB)

¹⁷ In this, love is perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment...¹⁸ There is no fear in love; instead, perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. So the one who fears has not reached perfection in love.

➤ So then what purpose does the law have in my life after I get saved? — it has no purpose!

The law was fulfilled by Jesus when He went to the cross and just before He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit He said, “*It is finished.*”

Jesus did not destroy the Law by *fighting* it—He destroyed the Law (for Christians) by fulfilling it!

Matthew 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Romans 10:4 (NKJV)

⁴ For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Once again Galatians 3 tells us that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

The purpose of the law was to *‘take us by the hand, like a tutor’*, and bring us to Jesus by teaching us that we could never be righteous through the law—all it could do was condemn me for breaking it. Once the law does its job and shows us our sin, our inability to keep the law for righteousness, and drives us to Christ for His righteousness—the purpose of the law in our lives has been fulfilled.

As Christians we are now in Christ and as such, we are partakers of everything Jesus accomplished—He fulfilled the law and since we are in Him the law has been fulfilled in us as well (including the Sabbath—which we’ll have more to say about next time).

➤ *“So, then I can live anyway I want because I’m free from the law?”*

—I didn’t say that, and more importantly the Bible doesn’t say that.

The law has done its job once we got saved—but now that the Holy Spirit has come to live in us, He has given us a new heart and we now desire to obey God’s commandments—not out of law but out of love!

William MacDonald—

“The Christian has died to the law; he has nothing more to do with it. Does this mean that the believer is at liberty to break the Ten Commandments all he wants? No, he lives a holy life, not through fear of the law, but out of love to the One who died for him”.

Remember what God said in the O.T. about the New Covenant and obedience to God’s laws (commandments)?

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NKJV)

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.

So just because we are no longer under the law of Moses doesn’t mean we can live lawless lives. In fact, James tells us that the Law of Moses has been replaced in life of a Christian with a greater law—what he calls the “Royal Law.”

The Royal Law is the law of the Kingdom of God and is what many have called, ‘the law of love.’ James said the Royal Law is defined by the command—*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (James 2:8)

The Law of Moses is inferior to the “law of love” as a standard to live by.

You see, the law (of Moses) can force me not to steal what belongs to you, but it can’t force me to share with you what belongs to me—love does both.

Paul is not teaching that *most* of the law is done except for the Ten Commandments—it’s all done—it has all been fulfilled in Jesus. Now that doesn’t mean that the law has been abolished or done away with—it’s still in operation and doing its job in the lives of unbelievers (Romans 3:20).

But praise to God—it has no further purpose in the life of a believer in Christ!

Martin Luther put it this way—

“We are not to think that the Law is wiped out. It stays. It continues to operate in the wicked. But a Christian is dead to the Law. For example, Christ by His resurrection became free from the grave, and yet the grave remains.”

Peter was delivered from prison, yet the prison remains. The Law is abolished as far as I am concerned, when it is has driven me into the arms of Christ. Yet the Law continues to exist and to function [in the lives of unbelievers]. But it no longer exists for me.”

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