

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

Liberty From Law-Part 16

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(5-12-24)

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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.

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.

‘The Law’ is a reference to the 613 commandments that God gave to Israel through Moses which formed the basis for the Mosaic Covenant. Last week, we sought to answer the question - “*Is a Christian still under the Law?*” The conclusion we came to, based on what Paul has presented in both Galatians and Romans is—**No!**

Galatians 3:19, 24-25 (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...**

²⁴ **Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** ²⁵ **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.**

>>> Yet having said that we see a growing movement in the Church where many professing Christians are embracing the Law for various reasons.

Many Christians have been persuaded into believing that without observing the ceremonial aspects of the Law (the Feasts Moses, the Sabbaths, ritual vows, and dietary restrictions) they will never be as sanctified, fruitful, or as blessed by God as He desires them to be.

Last week, we started to look at a growing movement in the Church called the **‘Hebrew Roots Movement’ (HRM)**.

>>> The Hebrew Roots Movement is, in general, an attempt by its adherents to draw closer to God by gleaning things from Judaism that they perceive as being biblically significant and valuable to a Christian’s walk today.

One author said with regard to those in the HRM:

“For many, there is a false sense that “Jewishness is next to godliness.” Therefore, they see spiritual efficaciousness (‘having the power to produce a desired effect’) in Jewish rituals, dietary laws, paraphernalia, and the like. For a number of followers of the HRM, their affinity for such things may be unintentional when it comes to falling back under the Law to achieve righteousness. Nevertheless, it’s a leaven that rises and leads in that direction...”

The idea behind the HRM is that to be all God wants us to be for His glory we must embrace our “Hebrew roots” as set forth in some of the Jewish customs and laws rooted in ‘Judaism.’

Yet as one scholar stated—

“There is one incontrovertible fact that is ignored by nearly all in the HRM groups. That inescapable fact is that first-century Judaism is not the same Judaism that exists today. In fact, to be correct we would have to refer to Judaisms. There are a dozen or more subcultures and divisions within Judaism today. Orthodox, Conservative, Ashkenazic, and Sephardic Judaisms are only the tip of a very large iceberg. The huge question that the HRM has yet to answer is, ‘which Judaism?’ An arbitrary “take your pick” philosophy simply adds to the confusion and chaos.”

REFLECTION: Have you heard of or studied the Hebrew Roots Movement? Jot down your thoughts:

At this point we need to review briefly from Jewish history how modern Judaism evolved from its biblical roots to what we see being practiced in Jewish circles today - as well as in groups that embrace Judaism as a way to draw closer to God such as those in the HRM.

In AD 70, the Temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Romans—at which time Judaism ended as it had been known and practiced for roughly 1600 years since the time of Moses.

When Jesus cried, “It is finished” from the cross just before He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit—He was saying that, not only had the work of redemption been completed—but also that biblical Judaism had completed the purpose for which God intended it.

And God wanting to emphasize this reality, put an ‘exclamation point’ on the end of the O.T. Mosaic Covenant period by tearing the veil of the Temple from top to bottom—as one author put it:

“Christ’s death both fulfilled and ended the function of the biblical practices of Judaism with its temple, sacrifices, and priesthood. The way into the Holy of Holies and the very presence of God was now open and available to all through the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.”

However, history tells us that the Jews who were unwilling to abandon the Old Testament sacrificial system under Moses to embrace the New Covenant under Christ—**sewed the veil of the Temple back together and continued to practice Judaism.**

So, in 70 AD God put an end to the Mosaic sacrificial system once and for all by using the Romans to destroy the Temple thus ending historic Judaism—or so you would think! **Yet, the orthodox Jewish community wasn’t ready to abandon Judaism.**

REFLECTION: What does the statement from Jesus while on the cross: “It is Finished” - mean to you?

>>> You see, even though the Temple had been destroyed and the priesthood/sacrificial system was no longer in operation—**they figured out a way to keep things going!**

One historian tells us how:

“In order for the religion of Judaism to continue without a Temple, a priesthood, or sacrifices, it had to be totally revamped to compensate for its losses. Israel’s way to God no longer existed and therefore a new way had to be ‘cobbled’ together. Old Testament requirements, additional traditions, modifications, and contributions from leading rabbis, were put together in documents known as the Mishnah (AD 200), the Jerusalem Talmud (AD 400) and the Babylonian Talmud (AD 500).

The Talmud, with its more than twenty volumes containing input from hundreds of rabbis, is the book that dictates much of Jewish religious life today. The Jewish Midrash consists of paraphrases of Scripture and Rabbinical commentaries. These are an added component in latter-day Judaism. The Talmud, however, is the chief source of its practices and beliefs, and a large portion of Talmudic practice is found within the Hebrew Roots Movement.

The brilliant Hebrew Christian Alfred Edersheim said that applying the Talmud to Christianity was a huge mistake and that the Talmud had follies and superstitions of former days that needed to be refuted (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, page 8).

Many in the HRM claim to be “Torah observant” (living according to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), when what they actually are is ‘Talmud observant’.

Adherents of the HRM believe that they are following biblical customs when, in fact, they are recreating later practices and even medieval traditions. For example, the wearing of the yarmulke or kippa (a type of skull cap) by Jewish men is a human tradition with no basis in the Law of Moses. Another apparent necessity in the HRM is the wearing of what is called a “prayer shawl,” also called a Tallit, a Hebrew term that is found in the Talmud but nowhere is there evidence of such a practice in the Hebrew Old Testament.

The widespread practice of interpreting Talmud content as though it were true to biblical content creates misinformed Jews.

Among HRM followers there is a serious lack of searching out the genuine biblical roots of their beliefs and practices—not to mention a general lack of understanding of the Old Testament versus the New Testament, and the concept of Law versus grace.”

>>> Now, as we said last week, a number of Christians (that number is growing) **have embraced the belief that they need to observe part of the Law if they are going to be fully sanctified, fruitful and blessed by God.**

Therefore, 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.

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—and most if not all evangelical Christians understand that.**

But what about the moral law?

Well, this brings up an interesting debate among certain groups within the Christian church—**“As Christians are we still under the moral law (think Ten Commandments)?”**

We spent time last week answering that question (so go online and listen to the message) and **the conclusion we came to was that the Law has been fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 5:17).**

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 for salvation by teaching us that we could never be righteous through the law—all it could do was condemn me for breaking it.

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.

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.**

It’s like the initial rockets that were used to propel the space shuttle off the launching pad into outer space free from earth’s gravitational pull. That was their sole purpose, and once they carried the shuttle to that point, they fulfilled their purpose and were then jettisoned—the same is true with the law.

Once the law has brought us to Jesus for His righteousness—it is no longer needed and is therefore jettisoned—but only for the person who receives Jesus and becomes a Christian:

1 Timothy 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners...

Romans 10:4 (NKJV)

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

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.

REFLECTION: As Christians, why don’t we need the “law”?

➤ “So, then I can live anyway I want because I’m free from the law?”—No, of course not!

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!

For the rest of our time this morning let me address the issue of the **Sabbath** since there are many who believe that as Christians, we are still bound to keep the Ten Commandments—which includes the Sabbath.

The first time the concept of the **Sabbath** is introduced in the Bible is in Genesis 2—

Genesis 2:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

When it says that God “rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done”—it isn’t implying that God rested because He was tired or weary—

Isaiah 40:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary...

God doesn’t need to rest in the sense of rejuvenating Himself or replenishing His energy because when God works there is no loss or dissipation of energy and therefore—**He can’t be fatigued:**

Psalms 121:4 (NLT)

⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps.

The Hebrew word translated “**rested**” in Genesis 2:2 (*shabat*) **simply means to ‘cease from activity’**—and when applied to God in Genesis 2 means that—**God ‘ceased from His creative activities or work.’**

In other words, He had completed all creation, so there was nothing more for Him to create—therefore, **He rested from creating.**

>>> Even though it says that God rested on the seventh day **the word Sabbath isn’t used**. The first time the word ‘Sabbath’ appears in the Scriptures is in Exodus 16:23 when God gave it as a law to Israel. In fact, we read in the Torah that God gave the Sabbath to Israel as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant—

Leviticus 25:2 (NKJV)

² “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: ‘When you (Israel) come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD.’”

Exodus 31:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

Again, **the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant and as such was only intended for Israel.**

>>> Now there are many who believe that since God singles out the seventh day for special mention in Genesis 2:3 when it says that “*God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work.*” Since this predated the Mosaic Covenant by 2500 years—they claim it means that the Sabbath *transcends* the Mosaic Covenant and applies to all mankind—even Christians under the New Covenant.

However nowhere in the O.T. does God ever give the Sabbath as a law to the Gentiles—He only gives it as a law to Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. For that matter, when it says that God rested on the seventh day—He doesn’t apply that to Adam nor is man even mentioned in connection with this seventh day rest.

Man at this point didn’t need to rest from his labor because—he didn’t need to work to feed himself before the fall. **Even though it says that God rested from His creative work on the seventh day and blessed and sanctified it—He gave no mandate here that man was to observe the Sabbath.**

REFLECTION: How would you define “sabbath”?

➤ “Then why did God sanctify the seventh day and bless it if it wasn’t to be observed as a day of rest?”

I didn’t say the seventh day wasn’t to be observed at all as a day of rest—all I’m saying is that it was not given to all mankind as a **law to be obeyed**—but rather was intended by God as a **principle to be observed**:

Exodus 23:12 (NKJV)

¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

It’s good to rest one day out of seven—but as a principle not a law.

Warren Wiersbe—

“Jehovah is the God of time as well as the Lord of eternity. It was He who created time and established the rotation of the planets and their orbits around the sun. It was He who marked out the seven-day week and set aside one day for Himself. Every living thing that God has created lives a day at a time except humans made in God’s image! People rush around in the frantic “rat race” of life, always planning to rest but never seeming to fulfill their plan.

It has been said that most people in our world are being “crucified between two thieves”: the regrets of

yesterday and the worries about tomorrow. That's why they can't enjoy today. Relying on modern means of transportation and communication, we try to live two or three days at a time, only to run headlong against the creation cycle of the universe; and the results are painful and often disastrous."

Once again, prior to Adam's fall, as one author said, **"There was little if any distinction between labor and leisure, so the pattern of six days' work and one day's rest would have had little significance...until after Adam sinned."**

Which brings us to something interesting that needs to be pointed out here. Notice that there is something significant that the Holy Spirit purposely leaves out when He mentions the seventh day.

When it comes to the six days of creation, they all end with the words, *"And the evening and the morning were the [...] day"* (verse 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

- However, those words are not used in connection with the *seventh* day—*what is the Holy Spirit saying to us by this omission?*

It means that God only intended to create for six twenty-four-hour days—but the seventh day began a rest that He intended to continue on—indefinitely!

>>> One well-known author put it this way—

*"The rest that commenced on day seven could have continued indefinitely if it had not been interrupted by Adam's sin. **Everything was in a state of pristine perfection.** There was no decay. There was no sickness or pain or death. There was no labor, in the sense we think of labor in a fallen world. Adam would have lived in a perpetual Sabbath rest, if he had not fallen into sin. Everything in creation was perfectly delightful, and God was enjoying it—as were all His creatures. What a paradise it must have been! Only sin could have interrupted such a rest, and as we shall see in the following chapter, that is precisely what happened."*

In other words, when man sinned God had to go to work again—this time He would begin the work of the 'second creation'—which would take a lot longer than six days.

The second creation is what Paul refers to as the *'new creation'* in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15—and is another way of saying **the work of redemption.**

The work of redemption climaxed at the cross with the words of Jesus "It is finished" and will be fully completed after the thousand-year millennial kingdom when everyone who would be redeemed will have been redeemed.

Revelation 21:3-6 (NKJV)

³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." ⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." ⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End..."

REFLECTION: Can you explain in your own words "God's Sabbath?"

Once again let me state that **the Sabbath was never given to mankind as a universal law**—it was only given to *Israel* under the *Mosaic Covenant*. **Nowhere in the New Testament is the Church commanded to keep the Sabbath**—on the contrary we read—

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths,

¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

A shadow contains no substance but is cast by *something* or *someone* of substance.

The O.T. feasts, sacrifices and Sabbaths all pointed to Jesus who is the *Substance*—He said, “*The volume of the Book it is written of Me.*” (Psalm 40:7; John 5:39)

>>> However, once the reality has come, we no longer live in the shadow—we now live in Christ who is the fulfillment of these things. For the Christian who is in Christ every day is a day of rest from our religious works—which couldn’t get us into heaven anyway.

For those living under the New Covenant—we are now resting in the finished work of Jesus on Calvary’s Cross (“It is finished”—John 19:30)—which means that Jesus is our perpetual Sabbath rest! (read Hebrews 4).

And finally, Paul said,

Romans 14:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it...

If the Sabbath law was still in effect and applicable to the Church Paul wouldn’t have taken such a lax position on those who didn’t set aside one day (the Sabbath) **but treated everyday as a special day of worship and communion with the Lord.**

In fact, when the Church was born, right from the very beginning, they didn’t worship the Lord on the Sabbath (Saturday) they worshipped on Sunday which they called the ‘Lord’s Day’ because that was the day Jesus rose from the dead.

As a Christian every day is a Sabbath—a day of rest from our works (keeping holy days, sacraments, lighting candles, praying the rosary and other acts of piety to earn righteousness)—**and we now rest in Jesus and worship our King every day!**

REFLECTION: As Christians, do we need rest and if so, how?

One pastor has this to say about the wisdom of observing the Sabbath as a practical principle rather than a punitive law:

“At the time the Law was given, no culture had ever taken a day off of work. In agrarian societies, this would have been unthinkable. But here in the very beginning of time, we see the institution of the Sabbath. “But I don’t need a Sabbath because I’m not tired,” you might be thinking. Gang, God wasn’t saying, “Whew, am I beat! This creating stuff is really draining.” No, He was saying to you and me, “I’m your Father, and here’s a key to navigate life successfully: Shut it down one day in seven.” “But I can get ahead if I just do a little bit of work on the seventh day.” As an observer, as a Bible teacher, as a pastor, I tell you with surety that if you don’t take a Sabbath day, it will catch up with you either mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Ever wonder how Samson could sleep through the looming of his hair? He was exhausted! I am convinced that many people—men in particular—find themselves sleeping on the lap of Delilah because they haven’t kept the Sabbath. I’m convinced many people have physical problems they wouldn’t have if they took one day in seven and said, “I’m going to rest and relax, be refreshed and renewed.” I’m convinced many people are seeing psychiatrists and taking pills because, failing to take a Sabbath, they’re just mentally fried. I’m convinced many people have collapsed spiritually because the weekend finds them revving up their ski boats rather than finding renewal and refreshment in the Lord. Be renewed, gang. I’m not saying what you should or shouldn’t do on the Sabbath day because that’s where the Pharisees erred. Instead, I would just remind you that because God rested on the seventh day, we get to as well. The principle He modeled on the seventh day of creation continues to be a healthy one for us.”

REFLECTION: How might you celebrate or acknowledge the “Lord’s Day”?

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