

Finding Freedom in Christ

Galatians: What laws do we have to obey? (#5)

Read Gal. 3:15-25

Introduction

Paul is clarifying the role of the Law in the life of the believer. He points out that covenants were established, promises were made, an inheritance was guaranteed and God keeps His word.

The Promise to Abraham

Take a look at Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-21; Rom. 4:1-25; Heb. 6:13-20

God's covenant with Abraham was one-sided. He self-imposed His obligation to Abraham (Gen. 17:7) And it foreshadowed the new covenant between God and the believer (Heb. 8:7-9:25).

It was initiated in Gen. 12:1-3. Abraham went out from Haran, set out for the land of Canaan and lived there for a time (Gen. 12:4-5). After Lot separated from Abram, God again promised the land to him and his descendants (Gen. 13:14-17).

The covenant between Abraham and God was ratified in Gen. 15:1-21.

Note the elements in chapter 15:

1. The need for FAITH vs. 6 (see Heb. 11)
2. The formal ratification vs. 9-10
Remember, covenants in the OT were a solemn binding with both blessings and curses attached. The formal ratifications involved things like salt (Num. 18:19, Lev. 2:13), shoes (Ruth 4:7) and blood (Heb. 9:12, 22).
3. The participants vs. 12-17
Note that only God passed amidst the sacrificial animals, it was a one-sided covenant.
4. The anticipated blessing vs. 18-19

The Purpose of the Law

- A. The Law did not set aside God's promise to Abraham. The promise is not null and void.

The nation of Israel was and is important to God. They have a future. (Be careful to not spiritualize Israel away. There is a literal future ahead for Israel. Study the Millennium in Revelation.)

Through Israel all the nations of the world were, are and will be blessed. (Gen. 12:3)

B. The law exists to lead us to Christ

Without a standard, there is no method to evaluate character, morals, ethics and the like. If everyone “does that which is right in his own eyes,” (see the book of Judges) moral living is totally subjective. The standard becomes, “If it feels good, do it.”

God uses the Law to make sure we understand just how far short we fall. Perfection is a bright light that causes mankind to pause. With the law in place, Almighty God is seen clearly. His standard is understood.

With the moral law stated, the civil laws enforced and the ceremonial laws in play, men were and are able to conclude their sinful nature leaves them woefully short of perfection. The Law makes the point that we need a Savior.

God’s holy and righteous nature cannot be appeased by keeping the law.

So, the purpose for the law? To convince us that we need a Savior. And, it acts as a guide leading us to Him.

Consider the illustration of the guardians and trustees in Gal. 4:2.

So What? Does the law have no bearing on the New Testament believer? Do we still have to follow the OT laws? If so which ones?

Principle #1 Jesus did not destroy the Law. (See Matt. 5:17-20) The term “destroy” literally means to “loose down” or “tear down.” He was not violently destroying anything.

Principle #2. Jesus came to fulfill the Law. He fulfilled the messianic prophecies (more than 300 of them). He fulfilled the demand for perfect obedience. The constraints of the Law were terminated when Christ died on the cross- “It is finished” (see John 19:28-30). Payment in full was made.

Principle #3. Those laws were a shadow of things to come. But the substance belongs to Christ (See Col. 2:16-17).

Principle #4. There is value to the whole of God's law. (See Matt. 7:12 and II Tim. 3:16-17). "The legacy of that body of literature is vast, wonderful, and abiding." (Wayne Jackson) See I Cor. 10:6

Note too that the NT writers affirm all of the moral standards found in the Ten Commandments (except keeping the sabbath). It was wrong to murder under the law, it is still wrong to murder under the new covenant of grace.

Principle #5 We keep the moral laws of God because they are good and right, not because keeping them gains us merit with God (See Eph. 2:8-9).

Principle #6 The Old and New Covenant are two different systems. The former was replaced with a "better covenant" (See Heb. 8:6).

Bottom line: Eat pork, don't eat pork. Just don't think that refraining from eating pork gains you favor with the Lord. (Might be better for your stomach though...)