

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

What is the Purpose of the Law? (Part 2) Galatians 3:23-29

The Law was a temporary guard keeping us imprisoned until our salvation by faith (Gal 3:23)

- *Before faith came* - the function of the Law as jailer was designed to be only temporary, until the time when it was possible to appropriate the promises through faith in Christ.
- *Kept in custody* (NASB) = kept under guard, continuing the figure in 3:22 (*shut up under sin*). The imperfect tense indicates the continued activity of the law as a sentry - not for our protection but to guard against escape.
- There would be only one way of escape = through faith in Christ's work on our behalf. This work of Christ in which we can now place our faith was *later to be revealed* from the perspective of the dispensation of the Law.

The Law was given to point out our need for Christ so we could be justified by faith, but now that salvation by faith has come we no longer need the pointer to it (Gal 3:24-25)

- *tutor* (NASB) = overseer or guardian. Typically a trusted slave in a Roman household who would act as a "child conductor" and disciplinarian until the child came to the age of maturity in that culture.
- The ultimate purpose of the Law as guardian was to point us to Christ so *that* we might be justified by faith.
- But now that faith has come, we no longer need a jailer or guardian. We are free from the condemnation that the Law imposes. We no longer must labor under an oppressive system of rules and regulations in the impossible hope of being declared acceptable to God by our own efforts.

By faith we become full-fledged sons (legal adults) who are free and no longer require a guardian (Gal 3:26-27)

- Sons (*huioi*) = sons of full age who have outgrown the need for supervision by the guardian. Here "sons" is used in contrast to "children." (Paul will elaborate on this idea in the next chapter of Galatians.)
- Those who are justified by faith in Christ have entered into a new relationship with God, becoming His sons who have come of age and receive the same name as the Father, as well as the status of heirs to the family fortune.
- Those who are baptized into Christ is a parallel expression to "those who are justified by faith in Christ" (see First Corinthians 12:13). This baptism happens at the moment of salvation, and in this act the believer is said to be "clothed with Christ." Christ becomes the *toga virilis* (the Roman garment of a man who has come of age). In the culture of Paul's day a young man would actually change his wardrobe at the time set by the father in order to signify that he had ceased to be a child. This defines a Christian - "one who has put on Christ."

By "putting on Christ" the worldly distinctions no longer apply - no more *haves* and *have nots* - all believers receive the inheritance (Gal 3:28)

- Differences of nationality/race, socio-economic status, or gender can no longer keep a person from enjoying the blessings God promised to those who believe.
- In the new dispensation since the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, all believers enter directly into this new relationship as sons of God by grace and through faith.
- In Roman society, your nationality or previous status in life did not matter once you were adopted as a son and heir.

If we belong to Christ, then we are heirs of God's rich promises given through Abraham (Gal 3:29)

- This is the real test: Do you belong to the *SEED of Abraham*, that is, Christ? (see Gal. 3:16)
- If you belong to Christ, then you are an heir of the promises given to those who would follow in the footsteps of Abraham and come to God by faith. This does not happen as a result of a blood relationship to Abraham, but as a result of a faith relationship according to the example of Abraham. You become an heir of the blessings promised through Abraham to all who would believe.

The purpose of the Law was to lead us to the conclusion that the only way to be declared righteous before God was through faith in Christ's finished work on our behalf.

- God desires that each of us become emancipated sons who are eligible to receive the inheritance of the promises. A person can receive all of this through faith in Christ.
- Motivation to Share: Those who do not understand these truths *need to be told* so that they can become sons of God through faith in Christ.
- Motivation to Grow: Believers need to understand these truths so that they can explore the riches they now have in Christ. We need to stop living like prisoners of the Law and start living like fully mature sons and heirs of God.

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