

KERNSTOWN UMC
Sermon Manuscript
August 9, 2020
Text: Galatians 3:15-25
Title: "Why the Law?"
WEEK 9

Introduction

[RAMP] Why? Have you ever asked that question? I'm sure you have. Each of us wants to know what the purpose of an endeavor is, so that we can determine if we want to give our most precious commodity- time- to doing said endeavor. "Viktor Frankl is the founder of logotherapy, a form of psychotherapy that he developed after surviving Nazi concentration camps in the 1940s. After his experience in the camps, he developed a theory that it is through a search for meaning and purpose in life that individuals can endure hardship and suffering."ⁱ

[RELEVANCE] Why did God give Moses the Law? This is the question Paul is going to answer in our text today. When we live by faith in Jesus Christ for justification we have a joy that will empower us to endure and persevere through all of life's challenges. It is important to look at the Book of Galatians where the Apostle Paul lays out the reasons for justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

[OUTCOME] Today we will look at why the Mosaic Law was given, so that we may understand how to properly use them in our walk with the Lord. This will help us to live by the leading of the Holy Spirit and not a set of rules.

Body

[CONTEXT] Paul has just finished showing how justification is the result of faith in Jesus Christ. Just as Abram was pronounced righteous by believing in God's promise to him to have many descendants, so too with those who believe that Jesus is God and Savior are pronounced righteous. Therefore, God's people are not to live by works righteousness as the False Teachers are trying to make them do.

But what purpose did the Law have? If the Law is to be set aside, then why was it given in the first place? This is the next logical question Paul must answer to defend the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. This is exactly what Paul is going to do here in Galatians 3:15-25. Let's take a look.

[P.O.D. 1] **THE ANSWER: PART ONE- Covenant Promise (V. 15-18).** “15 Brothers and sisters, I give an example from daily life: once a person's will has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it. 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, “And to offsprings,” as of many; but it says, “And to your offspring,” that is, to one person, who is Christ. 17 My point is this: the law, which came four hundred thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. 18 For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.”

Paul uses an example from daily life of a will. A will is a legal agreement between two individuals about an inheritance. It is a binding agreement, which means it cannot be changed no matter what happens in life's circumstances.

Verse 16, Paul shows between whom the covenant was made. It was made between God and Abram. God promises Abram God would make this happen, and there was nothing Abram needed to do. Paul says that the, “offspring,” of Abram, who would make this covenant promise a reality is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ brings salvation and justification, among other gifts, and it is belief in Him that everyone is made righteous. Paul shows how in Genesis 15 God is foretelling of the Savior's identity and work.

In Abram's time, a covenant was made by taking animals and cutting them in half. The two people making the covenant would make promises to the other while walking through the middle with the halves of the animals on each side. The two were saying that if they didn't keep the covenant to the other, that they deserved to become like the animals...cut and half...dead. But interestingly, in Genesis 15, Abram doesn't walk through the middle of the animals...only God does! This means God is the one responsible for making the promise of many descendants to Abram a reality. This is a picture of grace. Jesus fulfills this promise when He dies on the

cross to make atonement for the sins of everyone who comes to Him in faith believing He is able to forgive their sin and give eternal life.

Paul emphasizes the point he wants to make in verses 17-18. Paul says that God giving the Law 430 years later to God's people does not make the covenant-promise null and void. The Law does something else entirely than the covenant promise. The False Teachers thought the Law brought about righteousness, but that is completely false.

Paul emphasizes that if something comes from a promise, then to receive it we only have to believe. If something comes from the Law, then we are to obey and this is justification by works. Paul says, no, by pointing out the promise to Abraham was not made void from the giving of the Law.

[P.O.D. 2] **THE ANSWER: PART TWO- Purpose of the Law (V.19-20).** “19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. 20 Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.”

Paul says the Law was added because of the sin of humanity, “Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions...” God's people, and all of humanity, needed to understand that they were guilty of sin. No one was righteous. This was necessary, so that God's people would know that they needed salvation, and Paul says it this way, “until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made.”

Weirsbe says about this verse, “It was added ... until the seed should come.” Now it is obvious that a temporary law cannot be greater than a permanent covenant. When you read God's covenant with Abraham, you find no “ifs” in His words. Nothing was conditional; all was of grace. But the blessings of the law were dependent on the meeting of certain conditions. Furthermore, the law had a terminus point: “until the seed [Christ] should come.” With the death and resurrection of Christ, the law was done away, and now its righteous demands are fulfilled in us through the Spirit (Rom. 7:4; 8:1–4).”ⁱⁱ

Verses 19b and 20 say, “and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. 20 Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.” Let's listen again to what Warren

Weirsbe has to say, “When God gave the law to Israel, He did it by means of angels and through the mediation of Moses. Israel “received the law by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53). This means that the nation received the law thirdhand: from God to angels to Moses. But when God made His covenant with Abraham, He did it personally, without a mediator. God was revealing to Abraham all that He would do for him and his descendants. A mediator stands between two parties and helps them to agree; but there was no need for a mediator in Abraham’s case, since God was entering into a covenant with him, not Abraham with God. “God is one” (Gal. 3:20), therefore there was no need for a go-between.”ⁱⁱⁱ God made the covenant promise to Abram directly. There were no conditions put on the covenant-promise, as were given with the Law. When the Law was given to God’s people, God told them, “If you obey my commands, then I will...” The Law was conditional. However, the covenant-promise was based on God’s grace and therefore not affected by the Law.

The next step in Paul’s logical explanation of why the Law was given, is to show that the Law is not against God’s promises. Verses 21-22, “21 Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law. 22 But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” Paul says here that the purpose of the Law was to show that humanity is imprisoned by sin. Everyone, God’s people, is held under the power of sin. **The Law shows everyone that we are in need of a Savior.** All of the sacrifices God’s people performed were to show them the consequences of sin is death, and that they needed a savior who would be the Lamb of God to take away their sin.

Paul now shows specifically how the Law and the Gospel work together. Paul uses two metaphors to explain the role of the Law. (23-25). **First**, in verse 23 Paul uses the metaphor of a, “Guard,” “23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.” The word, “guarded,” means, “being protected by military guards.”^{iv} God’s people were protected from sin. The Law showed God’s people what God desired, and they would know what actions and attitudes were sinful. This would be important as they lived in the world alongside other nations. God did not want them to live the same way the other

nations did. The Law, “protected,” them by showing them how to live to please God. The Law was not intended to provide salvation to God’s people. The Law was to show God’s people how to live and that they needed as Savior.

The second metaphor Paul uses to explain how the Law is used by God is a, “Disciplinarian.” [24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.](#) [25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian...](#) Wiersbe says, “In many Roman and Greek households, well-educated slaves took the children to and from school and watched over them during the day. Sometimes they would teach the children, sometimes they would protect and prohibit, and sometimes they would even discipline. This is what Paul meant by schoolmaster (Gal. 3:24), this word our modern idea of a schoolteacher. The transliteration of the Greek would give us our word pedagogue, which literally means “a child conductor.”

By using this illustration, Paul was saying several things about the Jews and their law. First, he was saying that the Jews were not born through the law, but rather were brought up by the law. The slave was not the child’s father; he was the child’s guardian and disciplinarian. So, the law did not give life to Israel; it regulated life. The Judaizers taught that the law was necessary for life and righteousness, and Paul’s argument shows their error.

But the second thing Paul said is even more important: The work of the guardian was preparation for the child’s maturity. Once the child came of age, he no longer needed the guardian. So the law was a preparation for the nation of Israel until the coming of the promised seed, Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal in God’s program was His coming (Gal. 3:22), but “before this faith [Christ] came” (v. 23 NIV), the nation was “imprisoned by the law” (literal translation).”^v

In this section of our text, Paul has explained the purpose of the Law, and in doing so shows that the Law and the Covenant-Promise have two complimentary functions. The Law showed God’s people they were sinful and needed a Savior. The Covenant-Promise, the Gospel, gives salvation and justification by faith.

[APPLICATION]

BELIEVERS AND THE LAW. What purpose does the Law play in a Believer’s life today?

First, the Law shows us how the Holy Spirit will work in our lives. As we live our lives led by the Holy Spirit we will fulfill the Law. The Holy Spirit will convict us of sin and move us away from practicing sin as we live in close relationship with the Holy Spirit. Before the Holy Spirit the motive for living by the Law was fear of death. After the Holy Spirit was given to us as a gift, our motive for living a holy life is love for God.

Second, the Law shows us who we really are, and the righteousness of God. Pastor Tim Keller says that the Law shows us that we are sinners, and this knowledge grieves us, but also gives us joy.^{vi} Keller puts it this way, “The Law shows us as we really are. And so the Law points us to see Christ as He really is: our Savior, the One who obeyed the law on our behalf and then died in our place so that we might receive the promised blessing. The Law allows us to love Jesus, and enables us to show our love in grateful obedience to Him.”^{vii}

Conclusion

[GOOD NEWS] The Good News of today’s Scripture lesson is we learn the purpose of the Law. The Law was given to show us our sinfulness and need of a Savior, Who is Jesus. The Good News is that we do not have to try to live by the Law for salvation as the False Teachers were saying. The Good News is that we live by faith in Jesus Christ and this justifies us before God. Praise God! Amen.

ⁱ www.verywellmind.com/an-overview-of-victor-frankl-s-logotherapy-4159308

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Free (Galatians): Exchange Legalism for True Spirituality (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 82). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Free (Galatians): Exchange Legalism for True Spirituality (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 82). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{iv} Keller, Timothy. Galatians for You. Pg. 83.

^v Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Free (Galatians): Exchange Legalism for True Spirituality (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 84). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

^{vi} Keller, Timothy. Galatians for You. Pg. 87.

^{vii} Keller, Timothy. Galatians for You. Pg. 87.