

## **Paul's Epistle to the Galatians**

### **What is the Purpose of the Law**

Galatians 3:19-25

#### **1. What is the Purpose of the Law? (v.19)**

If the Law is not the means by which one is justified, what then is its purpose? Paul has thoroughly refuted the false teaching of the Judaizers and now is responding to some anticipated objections that might be put forward.

##### **A. A Short Answer:**

The New Testament illuminates three particular and distinct purposes and uses of the Law: a mirror, curb, and guide. The Law is a mirror exposing the presence of sin (Ja. 1:22-25; Ro. 7:7-11), a curb to restrain sinful activities because of the consequences prescribed for its violation (Dt. 13:6-11; Ro. 13:3-4), and it is a guide revealing those things which please the Lord (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:3). Paul's answer to the Galatian believers is that 'because of transgression' the Law was given to expose and define sin for what it is (1 Jn. 3:4) as well as to exacerbate the sinful proclivities within man (Ro. 7:8).

##### **B. Some Simple Contrasts:**

The promise was made by God directly to Abraham (Gn. 15:6), whereas the Law was given indirectly through a mediator (cf. Ex. 20:18-21). The promise would be fulfilled because God would be faithful to complete it (Gn. 12:1-3; 22:16-18; cf. Isa.45:23), and the Law was given until the time when God would fulfill His promise.

#### **2. Is the Law Opposed to God's Promises? (v.21)**

The Law is not able to impart life, but it is not opposed to God's promise to give life. The covenant that God made with Moses was one which the people were unable to fulfill (cf. Gal. 3:10-11), and were unable to receive life on its basis (cf. Gal. 2:21). The purpose of the Law was to make both the absolute holiness of God and the pervasive sinfulness of every man abundantly clear (cf. Ro. 11:32).

#### **3. The Law Leads us to Christ (v.24)**

The purpose of the Law was not to impart life, but it was to prepare us to receive the blessings of the promise by faith (Mt. 1:21; Lk. 3:1-18; cf. Rom 7:7). The Law allows a man to see himself as he truly is: dead in his own sins and not merely sick (Eph. 2:1). The one who sees himself as dead in sin and absolutely unable to achieve righteousness himself will look only to God and trust fully in the sufficiency of His gracious salvation (v.25).