

# Galatians: “Freed by Christ, to Follow the Spirit”

Galatians 3:15-29 “The Law’s Powerful Purpose”

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Key Truth

## **The Law Chases us to Christ**

In our study of Galatians so far we have clearly seen that there is no way for the law to bring about justification. The only way to be justified and have a right relationship with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. This has always been the way, and will always be the way! The sign that we are justified and part of God’s family, is that the personal Spirit of God comes to live in our mortal bodies! These churches in the region of Galatia had experienced justification through faith, followed by the gift of the Spirit and the resulting fellowship with other believers, both Jew and Gentile alike. These legalistic false teachers had come in and claimed that when the law was given, it set up a NEW way to be justified and part of God’s family, and it replaced the old promises given to Abraham. In this section of Galatians, Paul clears up just what purpose the law does serve, and he shows us that it is a powerful one!

**(Galatians 3:15-18)** Paul begins by pointing the readers to the simple fact that once a covenant is established, it isn’t cancelled or added to later. His point is to show the foolishness of thinking that the law could ever cancel or add to the unconditional promises God made to Abraham and Abraham’s “offspring”, Christ Jesus. Abraham was justified at that point in time because he believed God, and that is the only way anyone can be justified. Justification was given by a promise, not by the law, and we respond to promises by believing with faith. Now that Paul has shown that the law doesn’t and cannot cancel God’s original plan to justify humanity, it begs the question...Why then did God even give the law? I’m so glad you asked.

**(Galatians 3:19-24)** We know that the law was good and righteous and holy, but what actual purpose did it serve? Paul here explains, that even though the law was never meant to justify, it did actually serve a very powerful purpose. The law actually chases us to Christ! Paul cleverly walks us through the different steps of how this happens. First the law makes us aware that we are wicked sinners. While we all might have a sense that we aren’t perfect people, the law makes our sin abundantly clear. It reveals the areas where we are “transgressors”, leaving us without any excuses. Paul changes focus a bit to deal with a possible objection (**v19-20**). The fact that the law was given through angels and then by an “intermediary”, would seem to imply that God had set up a new way to be justified, after all, isn’t that what mediators do? Don’t they work between two parties to come to an agreement on which plan of action to take? So here we see the Judaizers using this reasoning to argue that since God used a mediator in giving the law, then the new plan of justification is through the law. Paul cuts this argument off at the knees with one simple statement. God is one. God is one is his program to justify those who have faith. The giving of the law has no bearing on His provided means of justification.

The second powerful purpose of the law is to imprison everything under sin (**v22**). The law shows the power of sin in our lives and how it permeates everything we do! There is no one outside the reach of sin in this world. Our very world is trapped by sin and the law helps us to recognize this more clearly. For as we think more about the law, the more we recognize how

impossible it is to keep it perfectly! Thirdly it holds us captive in that imprisonment until Christ came and provided a way out of its prison. The law makes it abundantly clear that we could never set ourselves free, and that we can never follow perfectly the law. The law provided no way out in itself. What it does, is chase us tirelessly until we finally end up at a dead end without any hope of being made right with God on our own power or by keeping the law. The end result of this chase, is that when we finally give up, what we see is that it has chased us straight to Christ **(v24)**. It seems terribly harsh when we think about the law revealing our wickedness, imprisoning us in sin, and holding us captive there. However, the purpose of this is to lead us straight to Christ! Once we admit that we cannot escape sin and we cannot fulfill the requirements of the law, then we find Christ offering justification through faith alone. What an immense sense of relief and thankfulness this truth brings about in our lives.

**(Galatians 3:25-29)** Once we have been justified through faith, we are no longer under the law! The chase has ended, the law releases us to Christ, and we are made sons of God! This is the first time Paul uses this term of the believers and it is a powerful one. All those who have believed in the work of Christ on the cross have received the promised Holy Spirit and there is no greater bond on this earth than between those of the family of faith! God's family is made up of brothers and sisters of faith, no race, gender or social status. Here we can see clearly how the gospel uniquely and powerfully ends the divisive distinctions so prevalent in not only Galatia but in our world as well. Paul doesn't stop there though, not only are we sisters and brothers, son's of Abraham and of God, but we are also heirs according to the promise. **(v29)** Next week we will see exactly what this means in our lives.