

Nothing but the Blood (Part 10)

Galatians 3:23-25

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In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he tells them that they would be foolish to return to the Law after having received a reconciled relationship with God by grace through faith. Today we don't tend to bind ourselves to following all the regulations in the Law, yet often we have the same mindset. When we are dissatisfied and struggle in this life we tend to think that it's because we aren't doing enough for God. This mentality is the same mentality that made the Galatians turn back to the Law. But we must remember that we have already received everything by faith in Jesus. By faith we received all blessings from God, by faith we will experience the fullness of His promise when Jesus returns, and by faith we endure and grow in Christ in the meantime. Faith was always the means by which we are saved because it is superior to the Law in every way. The Law was a temporary and cold two-party contract that didn't give life or salvation. Instead it pointed out sin, which through the Law separated people from God and cursed them. Why would we want to go back to that system?

In Galatians 3:23-25 Paul changes his focus to the purpose of the Law, which was to point to Jesus. Here Paul uses the word "faith" as a metonym for Jesus. The Law fails to save, but it points to the One who never fails. The first thing we notice from the words "before" and "until" in v. 23 is that the Law has come to an end (see also vv. 19 and 25). The Law was effective for a certain time, but its period of efficacy ended with the coming of "the faith." This is an important point for us because although many Christians will not follow the whole Law, sometimes we pick and choose specific commandments to bind ourselves to, for example keeping the Sabbath or not getting tattoos. As personal preferences or disciplines this is fine, but don't think that God requires it of us in order to stay in His favor, or that we should bind others to such preferences. Don't make God's love conditional when it is unconditional. Paul clearly states here and in verses like Ephesians 2:14-15 that the Law is abolished.

Some may be confused about this because Matthew 5:17 seems to say Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it. However, the language strongly suggests the meaning is that He did not *merely* abolish the Law but also, and more importantly, He fulfilled it. This language is also clearly used in the same way in 1 Peter 3:3-4 (Peter is not prohibiting women from getting dressed, but the heart is more important than appearances), Acts 5:1-4 (Ananias and Sapphira did

lie to men, but more importantly to God), and in John 12:47 (Jesus will judge all men as Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:1, but more importantly He saves). So make no mistake, Jesus did abolish the Law. But more importantly, He fulfilled it in every way. The entire Law points to Jesus. God made Israel prisoner to the Law so they would cry out for relief. The Law made them realize how much they need God to save them because it pointed out their sin and made them feel in part the weight of the condemnation it brings. Once salvation came through Jesus, there was no longer a need for the Law.

We see in vv. 24-25 that while the Law was in effect, its purpose was to be a “guardian,” “tutor,” or “supervisor” (depending on translation). These words all have a positive connotation, but the word in Greek is *paidagogos*, which means more of a babysitter. This is the chaperone that would watch over a young heir and take him from his home to the master for his lessons. The babysitter is not the master. Likewise the Law is merely a babysitter that takes us to Jesus, who is the master. Jesus is the final destination. When the boy reaches the master, the babysitter’s job is over. Romans 9:3-4 and Luke 16:19-31 reinforce the idea that the Law is meant to lead us to Jesus. It was oppressive, but it had a purpose. However, despite this Israel did not receive Jesus. They were blind to what the Law was telling them. But for we who have received Him, let us continue to be assured that God’s love is not conditional. Don’t let guilt or shame lead you to deny the grace of God or to think that He has turned away from you. And when you are suffering, know that you have not lost God’s favor, which was freely given, and that everything God does is out of compassion for us. And always be assured that God is faithful to keep His unconditional promise.