

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

Jkroberts_us@yahoo.com

www.pacolethillbaptist.org

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Romans 3:19-31

1. Last week we saw Paul functioning as a prosecuting attorney, and we focused on his masterful presentation of God's indictment against every human being.
2. He concluded with, "What then? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles or Greeks)? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, 'there is none righteous, not even one.'" Romans 3:9-10
3. Whether Jews who are under the Law of God, or Gentiles who are a law unto themselves, all are guilty before God and thus objects of His wrath and judgment.
4. In Romans 10:1-4 we read the following:
Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**
5. In this passage Paul pointed out that the Jews of his day were zealous but misguided.
6. They were ignorant related to God's righteousness and thus sought to establish their own righteousness before God.
- NOTE: This is the situation most people find themselves in.
7. Then Paul stated, "For Christ is the end (goal) of the law for (leading to) righteousness to everyone who believes."
8. In this life God's initial destination for you and me is for us to find Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and in doing so we become the righteousness of God in Him, and thus become God's instruments in the lives of others. 2 Cor 5:20-21
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**
9. Our relationship to the law changes once it has accomplished its purpose in our lives.
10. Now let's look at the passage before us under three headings.

I. The verdict. 19-20

- A. All people are guilty before God, and cannot put any argument forward to refute or change that fact.
- B. The law was designed to close every mouth and to convince every person that they must answer to God.
- C. The reason being, as Paul has already set forth, is that no human being can live a sinless and righteous life before God and thus be justified in His sight.

D. Note several verses from Galatians that clearly reveal that the Law was never designed to save anyone just like Romans 3:20 states.

1. Gal 3:6-9

Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. 8 **The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."** 9 So then those who are of faith are **blessed with Abraham, the believer.**

2. Gal 3:10-14

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, **"CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."** 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." 12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" — 14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

3. Gal 3:19-22

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. 21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! **For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

4. Gal 3:23-29

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 **Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.** 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 **And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

II. The vicarious substitution. 21-26

A. An act is vicarious when it is performed or suffered by one person as a substitute for another or to benefit another.

B. Paul pointed out that God's plan to redeem sinful man was clearly revealed in the Old Testament, a fact Jesus affirmed in Luke 24:44-48.

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 "You are witnesses of these things.

C. Our salvation must be based on something other than our ability to live up to God's standards or there is no hope for anyone.

D. The righteousness of God is offered to anyone and everyone through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe; for there is no distinction.

E. Romans 3:23 is often used as a proof text in many witnessing programs, but its real message is to those of us who have already believed and been saved.

"Since all have sinned (past tense) and are (presently) falling short of the honor and glory which God bestows or receives." (AMP)

NOTE: What hope would we have if our salvation was based on our performance?

F. Since we are incapable of earning or maintaining our standing before God He took matters into His own hands.

1. He justified us (declared us righteous) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. See 5:17

2. Our justification is based on Jesus Christ and His sacrificial, propitiatory act on our behalf.

3. Through His death as our Substitute, divine justice was satisfied and the wrath of God was appeased.

4. Subsequently God is both just and able to justify the ungodly who have faith in Jesus.

III. The victory. 27-30

A. Any truly saved person is saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

B. When we repent towards God and believe on Jesus Christ and His finished work of salvation we receive the gift of righteousness.

C. Being saved by grace, through faith is both a destination and a departure point.

NOTE: More on this as we continue our study in Romans.

APPLICATION

1. Salvation by grace through faith does not nullify the Law, rather it establishes the Law in that Christ not only fulfilled the Law, He also suffered the penalty of the Law.

2. All that Jesus suffered He suffered for us and because of us, and to satisfy the demands of the Law. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23