

The Purpose of the Law

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[0 : 00] About two weeks ago, there was a man who worked amongst the poor in Britain. In Britain, the poor are often known as the skint, apparently. And he inherited a 50 million pound estate.

So on the next slide, next one, yep, here's the headline. Skint or poor care worker inherits 50 million pound estate after DNA tests prove he was the son and heir.

On the next slide is the man, Jordan, with his wife Katie and their son Joshua in front of their new home. And for those Escape to the Country fans like my wife, here's another slide that you can drool over.

Now talk about inheritance, hey? 50 million pounds, just to put it in our terms, is 91 million Australian dollars. What an inheritance. And how did you receive it?

Well, simply by being related, which is why Jordan needed the DNA test to prove he was the son and heir. Now today, this idea of inheritance and being a son and heir runs beneath our passage.

[1 : 05] And when it talks about being God's sons, it's not so much about a gender thing. It's about an inheritance thing. Because in the ancient world, it was the sons who were the heirs. But it runs beneath our passage and pops up a couple of times.

So if you just look over the page at the end of chapter 3, you can see it there popping up. End of chapter 3 at the top left-hand corner. We are heirs according to the promise. And at the end of our reading, chapter 4, verse 7, God has made you also an heir.

Do you see that? So end of chapter 3, end of chapter 4, verse 7. But before we get into that, let me just quickly recap what we've seen so far.

You might remember there's false teachers telling the Galatian churches that faith alone in Christ is not enough to make them right with God.

It's not enough to save them. They've got to add works of law. Things like circumcision or following special days and seasons if they want to be made right with God.

[2 : 07] The false teacher's gospel was faith plus works of law. But as we've seen over the last few weeks, that does not save us. It condemns us.

It's dangerous, which is why Paul hasn't pulled any of his punches. I mean, if one of your children was about to step out in front of a car, you don't say gently and quietly, Hold on there, my pet. Just wait a moment. You yell, Stop! Car! What are you doing? That's why Paul is calling them fools and saying that anyone who preaches this gospel will be eternally condemned because what's happening is dangerous.

It does not save. And Vijay showed us four reasons from the passage last week why we are not justified by works but by faith. So we saw firstly they became Christians or we became Christians by faith.

So that's how it started. So that's how it's meant to continue. Now, second, Abraham was declared right with God by faith. God has always worked by faith, you see.

[3 : 15] And then third, the law only brings curses because we cannot keep it. And then the fourth reason was that God does not set aside the promise of inheritance by the law.

Rather, the promise is something separate given by grace. Now, you can quite get to that last reason last week. But that's where Paul introduces the idea of inheritance.

So have a look back with me to chapter 3, verse 16. Now, this is what we need this preparation for today's passage. Verse 16, chapter 3, verse 16. Top of the page.

He says, And he says, Now, Now, what he's saying here is the law and promise are two separate things.

and one doesn't do away with the other. After all, that's the nature of a promise, isn't it? You don't earn it by doing works. You are given a promise by grace.

[4 : 49] And what is this promised inheritance? Well, we heard about it from our first reading. It's the promise of land. So on the next slide is a verse from our reading, Genesis 12, verse 7, where it talks about, to your offspring, it's the same word as seed, I will give this land.

That's what God said to Abraham. And whenever God says to Abraham, to your offspring, it's always referring to the land throughout Genesis. So I've given you another couple of references to show you.

Now for us, this promised inheritance of land is really inheriting God's kingdom in the world to come. It's the new creation. It's inheriting a share in the new heavens and earth.

As Jesus said in the Beatitudes, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Yeah, two people knew that. Yep, that's good. They shall inherit the earth, which kind of makes a 50 million pound manna seem like peanuts, really, in comparison, doesn't it?

But hang on a second. How does that fit with verse 16? Remember verse 16? Chapter 3, verse 16 says, that the promised inheritance was to Abraham and his offspring singular.

[6 : 03] And that single offspring or descendant, the rightful heir is, verse 16, Christ, not us. So how do we get it?

Well, Paul puts that issue on a coat hanger and hangs it up for a moment because he's got to deal with another question first. And the question is, if God is always operated by faith, not by works of the law, then why on earth did he give the law in the first place?

That's the presenting issue. And as Paul answers that question, he'll also show us how we receive the inheritance too. So there's kind of two things happening in our passage. So we're at point one in your outlines and verse 19 in your Bibles.

Have a look there where he asks that question. He says, Why then was the law given at all? Well, it was added because of transgressions until the seed to whom the promised inheritance referred to had come.

The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. A mediator, however, implies more than one party, but God is one. Here, Paul points out that the law was given through angels and a mediator, who was Moses.

[7 : 24] In other words, it was indirectly given from God to the people through many parties, angels and Moses. Whereas the promise was given directly from God to Abraham.

And God is one party. And what he's getting at is, the promise is better than the law. That's what he's trying to say. But if that's the case, then why was the law given? Well, verse 19, because of transgressions.

Now, you'd think that would mean to stop transgressions, wouldn't you? I mean, that's why we give our kids rules to stop them doing the wrong thing. But the law actually caused transgressions to increase.

How? Well, because as soon as you add a law, our sinful nature wants to break it. I mean, it's like the old sign that says, wet paint, don't touch.

As soon as you see that law, what do you want to do? Touch it. And when you do, you become a transgressor, a lawbreaker, guilty of judgment.

[8 : 30] In Ireland, there are some famous cliffs of Moer and there's a law written on one of the signs that says, please do not go beyond this point because it's dangerous. In fact, in 2006, someone was blown off the cliffs and died.

And so here it is on the next slide. There is, do not go beyond this point, but look who is beyond that point. A whole stack of people. Now, if the sign was not there, they still would have gone, right? But now that the sign is there, now that the law has been added, it's actually turned those people into lawbreakers. Do you see? Adding the law has actually caused them to be lawbreakers, caused them to transgress.

And in doing so, makes them guilty. That's what the Old Testament law does. Instead of being able to declare us right with God, the law declares us guilty of sin.

That's what its purpose was. To lock us up under sin. Put us in prison so that we might look to another way, to faith in Christ. Have a look at verse 21 and 22.

[9 : 36] Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not. For if the law had been given, that could impart life, then yeah, sure, righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

But, scripture has locked up everything under sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe, who have faith.

The law is not opposed to the promises, it's just that it had a different purpose. If the law's purpose was, verse 21, to bring life and righteousness, then it would have done that, if it was its purpose. But it wasn't the law's purpose. Rather, verse 22, the law's purpose, was to show us as sinners, and to lock us up under sin's penalty, guilty, guilty, of breaking the law, so that we might look, to faith in Christ instead.

Here is the first purpose of the law, to lock us up as guilty, in order to point us, to faith in Christ. And the second purpose of the law, was to be a guardian, until that faith in Christ came.

[10:56] Sorry, point to, verse 23. He says, before the coming of this law, we were held in custody, under the law, locked up, until, the faith that was to come, would be revealed.

So the law was our guardian, until, Christ came, that we might be justified, by faith. Before, in verses 19 to 22, it was, everyone was under sin, but here, it's particularly the Jews, who were under, the Old Testament law.

And they were locked up, under law's authority, and custody. The law acted like a guardian, to supervise Israel, in its infancy, as a nation.

You know, it guarded Israel, to keep it from being like, the other nations. It taught Israel, about God, and holiness, about sin, and sacrifice. Christ. But notice, the law's authority, over Israel, had a limited, lifespan.

See verse 23, it was only, until, the faith in Christ, that was to come, would be revealed. Or verse 24, it was our guardian, only until, Christ, came.

[12:19] And once Christ, had come, the law's authority, ended. It's kind of like, a babysitter. I don't know, if you've had to get, babysitters for your kids, but when the babysitter, arrives, they have authority, over the kids.

Theoretically. But they have authority, over the kids, don't they? But when you come back home, their authority, stops. Doesn't it? It's the same, with the law.

Verse 25, now that this faith, has come, well, we are no longer, under the babysitter. In other words, now that faith in Christ, has been revealed, the Jews, are no longer, under the law.

They've been, set free, from its authority. Now to be fair, this would have been, a massive bombshell, for the Jews. It's hard enough, for some Christians, to realise, that we are free, from obeying, the Old Testament law, including even, the Ten Commandments.

But it would have been, even harder for the Jews, who studied the law, all their lives, to realise this. It took them time. Even though, they should have known it, by what they studied.

[13:27] But now that it has come, they've been set free, from law's authority, in order to become, God's sons, with us Gentiles. You see verse 26? They're no longer, under a guardian, because in Christ Jesus, they're now all, children, or literally, sons of God, through faith.

For all of you, both Jew and Gentile, who are baptised, into Christ, have clothed yourselves, with Christ. There is neither Jew, nor Gentile, neither slave, nor free, nor there is there, male and female, for you are all one, in Christ Jesus.

In other words, we've now all become, sons of God. How? Well, not by works of the law, verse 26, but through faith.

Paul then explains, the kind of process, he says in verse 27, when we were baptised, that is, it's another way of saying, when we converted, when we put our trust in Jesus, we put on Christ.

That is, we were united, to Christ, as one, verse 28. It doesn't mean, by the way, that we stop being male, or female. The Bible upholds, gender differences.

[14:44] It's just that, these earthly differences, take a back seat, to our unity, in Christ. It's a bit like, when my son joined, a basketball team. When he joined, he was given, a jersey, this is his jersey, and then when he, put it on, he became one, with the team.

He didn't stop being, a year, eight, nine, nine boy. He didn't stop being, a year nine boy, and his friends, didn't stop being, who they are.

It's just that, those old differences, didn't matter as much anymore, because having put on the jersey, they are one team. When we become Christians, when we put our faith, in Christ, the spirit, unites us, to Jesus.

It's as though, we put on Christ, and become one, with him. We don't stop being, Jew or Gentile, male or female, it's just, those old, or those differences, are no longer, as important.

They're still important, but not as important. What's more, now that we are all, sons of God, whether we're male, or female, we're sons of God, it means we inherit, the inheritance.

[15:57] The sons were the heirs, remember. So, back in verse 16, do you remember, verse 16, the one who was, the promised seed, was Christ.

It was his inheritance, only he got it. And so, if we want to share in it, we need to somehow, be connected to him. And by faith, we are, we've put on Christ, we've become sons of God, by being united, to the son of God.

We've become seeds, of Abraham, by being united, to the seed, of Abraham. Do you see verse 29? If you belong to Christ, if you're united with Christ, then you are now, Abraham's, look, seed. And therefore, heirs, according to, the promise. See, we who belong to Christ, who are united to him, are now going to inherit, the earth.

That's how it works. And it's extraordinary. See, the purpose of the law, was to act as a guardian, until the time of faith, in Christ came. Its authority, had a limited lifespan, because when faith, in Christ came, Jews were freed, from the law's authority, and united together, with us Gentiles, in Christ.

[17:12] So that together, we can all share, in his inheritance. This was always God's plan. But again, it was a lot for the Jews, to take in. And so, Paul repeats these ideas.

This time though, by talking about, how the law also, enslaved us. So chapter 4 verse 1, he says, look, what I'm saying is this, that as long as an heir, is underage, he is no different, from a slave. Although he owns, the whole estate. The heir, is subject, to the guardians, and trustees, until the time, set by the father. So an heir, can have, own a billion dollar estate.

But if they are underage, they're not free, to fully enjoy it. They're subject, to their guardians, and trustees, who dictate, how it's going to be used. And so Paul says, they're no better, than a slave. And this is what Israel, was like, under the law. They may have, had these promises of God, but they were not free, to enjoy them fully. Instead the law, had made them, like slaves.

[18:19] Not just to the law itself, but also, verse 3, to the elements, of the world. He says, so also, when we were, underage, we Jews, were in slavery, under, it's literally, the elements, of the world.

We're not sure, exactly what the, that phrase means, which is why, our NIV Bibles, have inserted, spiritual forces, of the world. But it's literally, elements of the world.

And I suspect, it's actually talking about, something more basic, like the sun, and the moon. Why? Well, because if you look down, in your Bibles, to verse 9 and 10, it uses the word again, only it translates it, at forces.

It says, but now that you know God, or rather, are known by him, as his sons, you know, men and women, how is it, that you are turning back, to those weak, and miserable, elements?

Do you wish, to be enslaved, by them all over again? You are observing, notice, special days, and months, and seasons, and years. You see, all religion, whether it's, pagan, Gentile religion, of the world, or even if it's, God-given, Jewish religion, it's all tied, to the elements, of the world, the sun, and the moon, and so on.

[19:38] For example, the Sabbath, was on the seventh day, from sundown Friday, to sundown Saturday. And so the Jews, not only followed, the Sabbath law, but they had to do it, when the sun, told them to do it, you see.

Or the law of festivals, in the Bible, were done at certain months, of the year. And so they not only had to, follow the law about festivals, but they had to do it, when the seasons, told them to do it. And so, while Israel, verse 3, was under age, under the guardianship, of the law, it meant they were also, slaves, under the elements, of the world too. But the good news is, that Christ has freed them, from all that.

So that they can be, sons of God, and heirs of inheritance. He says the same thing again, verse 4. But when the time, set time, had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those, under the law, that we might receive, adoption to sonship.

And because you are his sons, God sent the spirit, of his son, into our hearts, the spirit, who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer, a slave, but God's, literally, son.

[20:56] And since you are his son, the one who gets the inheritance, well, God has also made you, an heir. Paul is, saying the same thing, isn't he?

You see, the law's authority, was only ever meant to have, a limited, a limited, a limited, life span. It was only meant to last, until the set, time, had fully come, when God sent his son, into the world, to

die for our sins, so that we could be, redeemed, all of us, from sin's penalty, and the Jews, particularly, from the law's authority.

And instead, we could be, adopted as his sons, in Christ, given his spirit, so we can, call the creator, of the world, Father. I mean, that's an extraordinary privilege. But we often, take it for granted, don't we?

And if we do, then, you only have to talk to, people who have come, from other religions, who are not allowed, to approach their gods, so easily, and intimately, and realize, how free it is, to call the God, of the universe, Father.

It's extraordinary. And what's more, as his sons, we are made, heirs of the inheritance. And so, what does all this mean for us? Well, one don't, and two do's.

[22 : 13] At first, don't depend on laws, or religion, to make you right with God. It's been a consistent application, all the way through the letter. After all, the law's purpose, was never to bring righteousness now, nor inheritance later.

That wasn't its purpose. And so, it would be ridiculous, to try to use the law, to achieve something, it wasn't designed to do. It kind of reminds me, of this German commercial, about iPads, when iPads first came out.

Let's have a look, at the slide. He's asking, how he's enjoying, his new iPad. Good. That's good. Is he finding it helpful?

Yes. And there it is. What? You get the point?

It's ridiculous, trying to use something, for a purpose, it wasn't designed, to be used for. And it's the same, with the law. The law was never designed, to make us right with God.

[23 : 34] That wasn't its purpose. Its purpose was to show us, how much we needed Christ. Now what's more, the law's authority, over Jews, has ended. And so to go back to it, would be like, going back to a babysitter, when you're an adult.

It'd be like, going back to being a slave, when you're a son. It'd be like, going back to prison, when you're free. It's crazy. Now for us, it's unlikely, we'll be tempted to add, the laws of circumcision, like the Galatians, were tempted to do.

Particularly for those, who are women. In fact, I suspect even for us, who are men, we wouldn't be tempted either. But we often find it so hard, to simply receive things, in life, don't we?

That we feel like, we have to do something, to earn it. Even if someone invites you over, for lunch one time, you've got to, what, you've got to invite them back, don't you? Is that for them, or for you? I suspect it's usually for us, to feel better.

It's so hard to receive something, for free. And so we're very often tempted, to turn good things, into salvation things. Things we do, to earn our righteousness, or to earn our inheritance.

[24 : 47] Things like, I must go to church every week, and if I do, I'll be right with God. Or, if I have communion, every time, every month, I'll earn my inheritance.

Or, I need to keep being kind, to my neighbours, and then I'll get to heaven. They're all good things, to do, that we should do. But, we must not, depend on them, to make us right with God, or, earn our inheritance.

We do them in response, because God has already, given it to us. As we'll sing in a moment, there's no other name, but Jesus, in whom our hope, is found.

Our hope of inheritance. And if you want to work out, if you're depending on laws, then, imagine what you'd say to God, if we all fronted up, to the pearly gates of heaven, and God said to you, why should I let you, into heaven?

What would your answer be? Because I'm, good, ish? Because I go to church. Well, you know, three out of four ain't bad. What would you say?

[25 : 55] We ought to be saying, something like, well God, you shouldn't let us in, but by faith alone, in Christ alone, you've made me yours.

Which actually means, he's not going to ask the question. He'll already know us, as his children, and welcome us in. But you get the point, don't you? Our answer will show us, what we depend on, for our inheritance, and our righteousness.

But don't depend on, works of law. For that was never, the purpose, and its authority, has ended anyway. That's the big application. Two quick ones. Second, do, read the law.

I mean, all this talk about, how the law is pretty hopeless, and it only makes us sinners, you might get the impression, that we should just rip it out, of our Bibles. But no, no, no. We're still to read it.

Because while the law, no longer has authority over us, while it contributes nothing, to our salvation, it does help, our education.

On the next slide, Paul says this, in Romans chapter 15, verse 4, he says, everything that was written, in the past, in the Old Testament, was written to teach us, educate us, so that through the endurance, taught in the scriptures, and the encouragement, they provide, we might have hope. [27 : 10] The Old Testament, still teaches us, about God's character, about Christ's sacrifice, all for our encouragement, and hope, and endurance. In fact, it also shows us, how we might follow, the two great commandments, of the New Testament, loving God, and loving neighbor.

The Old Testament law, helps us to love God, by having no other gods, but him. The Old Testament law, helps us to know, how to love others, by not lying, or murdering, or stealing. And so we do, read the law. Thirdly and finally, do receive, our inheritance, gratefully. For by faith in Christ, God has graciously, given us his spirit, who strengthens us, and connects us to Christ, who makes us, sons and heirs, of the world to come.

I've asked my Bible study, group last week, what do you do, to receive an inheritance, thinking they say, oh by being related, to someone, or actually not doing anything, but someone said, oh you receive it, gratefully.

It's true isn't it? How much more so, for our inheritance, which is worth, much much more, than 50 million pounds. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you, for the law, which points us, to faith in Christ.

[28 : 37] And we thank you, that by faith in Christ, you have made us, your children, as sons and heirs, of the inheritance, to come. Our Father, we pray, that you might help us, and to ever be grateful, for all you've done, through Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.