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Daily Devotional - Thursday, January 16, 2025 - The Purpose of the Law

JANUARY 16TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

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I've been teaching long enough that I can often predict how a semester will go. I know which assignments students will breeze through, and which will give them trouble. And I can anticipate what questions they will ask in response to certain content.

Clearly, Paul knew his Galatian readers well. In today's passage, he asks two rhetorical questions, which he believed were still burning in their minds. After his instruction on the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic Law, Paul's first question is broad and blunt: "Why, then, was the law given at all?" (v. 19). Why did God's people need the Law if it didn't improve upon the covenant? His answer is just as abrupt: "Transgressions" (v. 19). In a limited and temporary way, the Law was intended to address sin until Jesus—the promised redemption— would come (v. 19).

Paul does not specify *how* the Law addressed sin. But from other Scripture passages, we form a more complete understanding. The Law warned God's people against sin and taught them what it means to follow God and obey (Ps. 51:13). The Law restrained God's people, protecting them from the full power of their sin nature. It highlighted their sinfulness, revealing the need for redemption and grace, preparing

them for the coming of Christ (Rom. 5:20).

But ultimately, the Law was insufficient; it required a human mediator (v. 20). Only redemption through Jesus would remove every barrier and bring a direct, intimate union between God and His people. Paul's second question states: "Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God" (v. 21)? He answers, "Absolutely not!" The Mosaic law and the Abrahamic covenant were not contradictory or mutually exclusive. They were always intended as two distinct things. The Jewish Law could not transform people's hearts.

Why was the Law not enough? How does God's Law reveal our need for a Savior?

We are reminded today of how much we need You, Lord! Thank You that You revealed Yourself in Your Word! "What more can He say than to you He hath said, to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?" ("How Firm a Foundation," 1787)

LAST UPDATED ON JANUARY 16TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

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