



This Sunday we picked up where we left off last week, in Galatians 3v15-25. If following the law is neither how we began *nor* how we continue in the Christian life, what then is the relationship between the promise and the law? This is the issue Paul addresses in this passage, writing to a group of believers who, just like us, love to fall back on obeying the law for their assurance.

1 – Don't live by the law *because it was only ever a PS (v15-18)*

We began by considering how important the Jews considered the law of Moses to be. But important as the law is, Paul writes, the promise came before it and was *even more* foundational (v17). In God's promise to Abraham, God had *already* established a covenant with his people – a way that he would relate to them and they to him. A way that was entirely based on promise.

The law did not change this! It did not become the new way that God's people were to be saved. It was only ever intended to be a PS – a place holder, an interim measure. It was never meant to be an upgrade or replacement.

2 – Don't live by the law *because it is nothing like living by the promise (v19-20)*

If the law wasn't given as a method of salvation, *why*, Paul asks, was it given at all (v19)? "It was added because of transgressions" (v19). The law given not to save, but *because of sin*. It reveals our sin, helping us to see how sinful we are. Sinful as we are, it even leads us to sin more as we lust after the forbidden fruit.

The law had 2 parties and required action from both: God makes the promises, his people keep them, and God rewards them. The promise does not work like

this! The promise also has 2 parties, but it requires action from only *one*. God commits to being both covenant-maker and covenant-keeper. He does it all!

3 – Don't live by the law *because it will only lock you up (v21-23)*

If the law and promise are this different, are they, Paul asks in v21, "opposed" to each other? Are they enemies? Is the law just wrong? No, says Paul. If there could have been a law that would have got a sinful people to heaven, God would have given it! There was simply no law that could do that. The law is not *against* God and his promises, it was simply not intended to be the way we gained life.

God gave the law with a good purpose: to lock us up (v22). The law is about sin, not salvation; it leads to imprisonment, not life. The law as our prison officer, Paul says, keeping us under lock and key. It shows our problem: that we have done wrong. But it does not, in itself, provide a solution. It gives us no way out.

4 – Don't live by the law *because Christ has come (v22-25)*

Remarkably, it is *God* who, by his word, has locked us up through the law (v22). But he has not left us in the law's captivity. The law says earn, but grace says give. And God has given the key to his Seed (v16) who he has now revealed (v25). Now that faith has come, we are locked up no more (v25). We are free to walk out of our prison of pleasing God through works. Our strict governess has been dismissed. We are God's sons and daughters, his heirs. We are slaves no longer.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. In what ways do we slip into living by the law and finding our assurance in how well we feel we are doing? In what ways do we require other believers to live by the law? Why is it so tempting to slip back into this way of living?
2. How would you explain the relationship between the law and the promise? In what ways might we misunderstand this? Why is it vital that we get it right?
3. What are we to make of the fact that the New Testament contains many commands for Christians to obey? Are we, as Christians, to live by God's law(s)?
4. What does the law promise us, and what does it give when we keep it? How do you find the law to be like a harsh prison officer or a strict governess?
5. How do we use the law rightly as Christians?