

Understanding the Purpose of God's Law

DARRELL DELANEY

Once upon a time, there were two believers, each navigating life's challenges in different ways. One believer, anchored in the law of Moses, diligently followed every move and sought validation through strict adherence. Meanwhile, another believer, freed by grace, embraced the liberty to love and serve without constraint. On this episode of *Groundwork*, we uncover the contrasting paths of legalism and freedom, unraveling the transformative message of Galatians 3 and 4. Stay tuned for an enlightening exploration next on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are in part three of our four-part series on the book of Galatians; and in the first episode, Paul was just laying out his foundation; and he was pretty upset in the first episode, where we talked about him defending his apostleship against these people who follow Mosaic law, called Judaizers.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; Paul dispensed with the usual epistolary niceties. He skips over any thanksgiving section for the Galatians, which are in all the other twelve letters of Paul, because he is upset...he is angry...he is worried. We are going to see that in this episode, really; he is anguished that the Galatians have come to believe what he calls a false gospel. Jesus didn't do enough to get the job done; you have to help out by following the law. So, Paul just couldn't let that go for one second; and so, he gets right into it in Galatians 1, as we saw in the first program in this series; and he continues. We have seen in the second program, too, he talks a lot about the tradition of the law; and ultimately, in Chapter 2, he gets us to the cross, and the famous line: I have been crucified with Christ. I no longer live. You have to look to Jesus alone.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; he also gave permission for us to lovingly confront people who we care about, because Peter was going back into the ways the Judaizers were, and Paul rebuked him, openly confronted him and said: How is it that you are going back to those old teachings? And you know that the Spirit has fallen on everyone by grace and through faith; and so, Paul actually was able to help his friend, who was straying from the truth, to come back to his senses as well.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; Peter knew better. He had had this direct revelation from God that the Gentiles were included in the kingdom of God without having to become Jews first. He knew better; but then, when some powerful fellow Jews came by one day, basically Peter caved in to peer pressure...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And he pretended like: Oh, yeah; no, no, no; you do have to...you know, you Gentiles have to follow the law and keep kosher and get circumcised. So yes, Paul let him have it for that, and to Peter's credit, he listened. Now we are going to move, Darrell, into Galatians Chapter 3. We are looking at Galatians 3 and 4 today; and of course, we start with 3.

DARRELL DELANEY

It starts like this: You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? ⁴Have you experienced so much in vain—if it really was in vain? ⁵So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? ⁶So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Paul begins here with a series of questions, and he uses...for one thing, how many times has he called them “foolish” in this letter? I mean, he is kind of piling on the foolishness here, because he just cannot believe that they have been duped like that; but then, the beginning of Chapter 3 also uses that interesting word: I wonder who *bewitched* you?

DARRELL DELANEY

Bewitched...it reminds me of one of my favorite shows back in the day, where there was a lady who was a witch, and she had done some powerful spells to clean up the house and things like that. To be serious, I think Paul is actually trying to help them understand that they are being manipulated and tricked...bamboozled, if you will...out of the real gospel truth. That means they have been saved by grace through faith, and these people who are Judaizers...and the Judaizers, we remember, are those who want you to follow the Mosaic law and become a Jew before becoming a Christian; and that makes the gospel and salvation message very murky and challenging; and Paul is saying: That is a message that will manipulate you and move you far from truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly, yes; but what is interesting is, Paul* says: I depicted Christ as crucified right in front of your eyes. The only reason the Son of God would have ended up on a cross is if that was the only way to get saved. How could you have come to believe that there is another way or a supplemental way that you do? I showed you Jesus on the cross; you saw him; you knew what it meant. So, now you have been tricked and bamboozled, as you said, to think something else. Then Paul keeps going with a series of rhetorical questions, and rhetorical questions don't get answered because the answer is obvious. In this case, the answer is always *no*. So, Paul says: Look, you got the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit anointed you. Was that after you kept a bunch of rules? No. It came from out of the clear blue. It is grace, right? So, you didn't begin this journey by works; you didn't get the Holy Spirit by works; you didn't get saved by works; so, how do you think now that works can, you know, carry the rest of the load for you? That is just wrong.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I want to make clear before we continue that Paul is not anti-law. Paul actually understands the power of the book of the law. In Romans, he really explains how the law is good, because it actually shows us what sin is; and it shows us that we are lawbreakers. If I didn't know I was speeding, the speed limit lets me know that I am violating the law. So, he knows the law is good. Even though it sounds like he is negative on the law, he is actually trying to show them that the only reason why he is saying the law is bad is because you cannot earn your salvation by following it. There is no one on earth who has perfectly followed the law and earned their own salvation. That is why Paul is so upset.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we will actually think about that more in the final program of this series, when we get to Galatians 5 and 6; and he also uses the example of Abraham, and you know, the traditional line that Abraham just believed, and he was declared righteous. There was no law in Abraham's time. It was before the law was given. He just believed what he heard, and Paul is saying that is what you did. You believed what you heard. I told you Jesus Christ did it all for you; you believed it; you were made righteous. That is how you got saved, not by your works—not by comparing yourselves, like: Oh, I follow more laws that you are so I am more saved than you are. Huh-uh; don't do that either, Paul says. Look to Abraham, who received it all by grace, and that is how we all receive it now, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

And in verse 7, it says: Understand, then that those who have faith are children of Abraham. ⁸Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham. "All nations will be blessed through you."

So, what Paul is saying here is that those who live by faith are saved, and they are incorporated into the spiritual family of Abraham. We know that now as the Church; and these are the people who have believed and been saved by faith and not adherence to the law, because Abraham, of course, comes before the law of Moses came, and before Moses was even born.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; he also writes in Galatians 3:10: If you rely on the works of the law, you are under a curse. In other words, if you think you can get it done, then you had better get it done perfectly, or else you are cursed, right? If your salvation requires you to be like a straight-A student, you better never get an A-, because that is not going to do it. Why would you want to live that way? Because living like that, Paul is saying...thinking that your works and keeping the law gets you saved or keeps you saved, or makes you more saved than those who don't do those things...it is like saying in the end you don't fully actually even need Jesus; and Paul is saying: If you think you don't need Jesus, you do; because he took the curse, right? ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." ¹⁴He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is always going to be about what Christ has done for us; and Abraham was saved by faith because he believed God's promises to him; and Paul is reminding the Galatians, and he is reminding us, that we don't need to create our own righteousness; and it will be always about what God has done in and for us, and not what we can do for ourselves. So hopefully, that is a comfort for us. In just a minute, we are going to talk more about the book of Galatians, so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we have already covered a lot in the first part of this program, Darrell, in Galatians Chapter 3, but we are not done with Chapter 3 yet, so let's jump right back into it at the 23rd verse:

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶So in Christ Jesus you are all children

of God through faith, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. ^{4:1}What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ²The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

That last bit there, Darrell, were the first seven verses of Galatians 4.

DARRELL DELANEY

Oh, it is so good. So, first thing to note is that Paul is saying that the law was our guardian until salvation by faith came, and the power of the Spirit came. So, because we are now saved by grace through faith, the guardian is not necessary anymore. So, we have to be, you know, watched over and kept in check by the law; but once we receive the salvation that comes by faith in Jesus Christ, then the actual role and responsibility of the law to convict us has actually been removed; and so, now Paul is saying: Listen; you don't have to go back and keep doing that to earn salvation. You are already there.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, what Paul is doing here, Darrell, is he is answering the question that he anticipates the Galatians are asking. So, he has been saying: God never gave the law to save us; it was never going to be the way you are going to get saved. So, the logical question is: Well, then; what was the law? What is the big deal with the law? Why did God give it if we couldn't get saved by it? Well, Paul says, it was your babysitter; it was to take care of you; to keep you from harming yourself; to keep you from harming others...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It was to take care of you until you could grow up, and until the Son of God came, born of a woman. So, the law had a purpose, and a really good one, right? It took care of you; it kept you safe when you were underage; it was like your babysitter, but it was, all along meant to get you to the point where you would grow up and be an adult and be a full child of God through Jesus, that you can even call God Abba, Father.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is one of the sweetest phrases that God could be called. I know that back in the day before Paul started introducing this language, God is a formal being...God...you do not approach God; you do not speak God's name; you do not enter into God's presence a certain way because he is holy; he is righteous; and there could be consequences to it; but what Paul is saying is that because now we have a relationship with Jesus, and Jesus, actually before he ascended, he said: Go tell the disciples and Peter that your Father and my Father... He actually started saying: Our Father. He taught them how to pray, saying: Our Father; and that is the most intimate language you could say to a God who is now in a deep relationship with you. I think, too, about when my first time, when we had children, and they were babies, and they started saying *Dada* to me; and my heart melted because, I mean, like, they are saying *Dada*; they are really saying it. It is like, it is beautiful; and I kind of gloated to my wife, saying: They said Dada before they said Mama; I just want you to know that. It was really funny to me to poke at her with it, but...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yeah, how did that work out?

DARRELL DELANEY

It melted my heart, but it kind of made her feel like, wait a minute. I am important, too; and she is. So, I just wanted to connect that, because if we are praying and we are coming to God with the prayers that we have, and he hears us calling him Dada like that, and I think it is a really very intimate language that Paul wants to make sure that they know they have a connection with God now.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and he keeps working this idea of being underage, you know, not being of age, as we would say; not being a legal adult; when we needed guardians and we needed a babysitter; and Paul says: You know, at that time, you were almost no better than a slave; but why would you want to go back to going under the law, and being a slave again, when you have already been made an heir? You have been made a member of the family. Why would you want to go backwards, and essentially make yourself a slave again? You are in the family of God now. God is your Abba...your Father. Don't go back to the law now, because all that leads to is bad things.

DARRELL DELANEY

And because we are heirs... An heir is a person who has an inheritance coming. So, Abraham was actually credited with righteousness when he believed God that God said: I will bless you and I will make your name great. I will give you land; I will give you descendants; but if you fast-forward to Hebrews, it says that Abraham was looking for a spiritual inheritance that would never spoil or fade or be stolen from; and so, when we become children of God, Scott, we actually join a spiritual family as children of Abraham under that same promise, and we get the inheritance of eternal life and being in the presence of God; and we look forward to that; and that is the Church of Christ that we are now a part of. We are all children of Abraham, spiritually speaking.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And then Paul goes on in Galatians 4, starting at verses 12 and following, where he really, you know, shows them his heart: ¹²I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷[Those] other people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. ¹⁹My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul is letting them know he is showing them his whole heart now; and it was anger in the beginning, but now it has melted into this vulnerability. He talks about how when he was ill, that they took care of him when he was ill, and they made sure that he was okay...nursed him back to health; and he doesn't want these harsh words to break the relationship that they have. He is telling them these things because he loves them.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; it was love all along, including even in the harsh opening in Galatians Chapter 1; and you know, it is always risky. I mean, sometimes in all of our lives, Darrell, we have to maybe confront a friend or a roommate or a loved one in the family. It is not comfortable; it does come with risks; you know, you could ruin the relationship; and Paul is saying: I hope I am not your enemy now because I have had to kind of mix it up with you. I have had to plead with you; I have had to rebuke you; but I don't want to be your enemy. I want us to be friends. I mean, when I was with you, you know... We think that...and this will come up in the final program of this series, too...we think Paul had an eye condition that may have stemmed from that Damascus Road blinding encounter. So, it seems like whatever his illness was has something to do with vision; whether he had pus coming out of his eyes...I don't know what was going on, but he said: You would have torn your own eyes out if you could have given them to me. That is how much you love me. I hope you

still love me that much, even though I have had to, you know, get a little rough with you.

DARRELL DELANEY

And Paul feels like a spiritual father to them. He went over there; he preached the gospel; planted a church and saw them come to faith. If you ever led someone to Christ, or you shared your faith with someone and they responded, you feel responsible for them. He wants to make sure that they are okay; and as the father of three children, I know I want to make sure that my children are okay. When they grow up and leave my house and they are not under my roof, I want to make sure that they follow Christ and they actually follow the faith. That is the thing that I pray for, and that is what Paul is praying for, that they see this letter and they are encouraged by it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Paul even says he is in the pains of childbirth, which is a funny thing for a man to say; but he is saying: I am trying to give birth to you in Christ. I want Christ to be formed in you; I am perplexed about you because I love you. So, please, please, please let Christ be formed in you.

Well, that is a quick look at Galatians 3 and 4, but we have a little bit of time left in this program, so in just a moment, we will look at a few practical applications. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are wrapping up this third program of a four-part series on Paul's letter to the Galatians. Now, as we often do here on *Groundwork*, Darrell, we want to kind of get to the "so what" part of the program. Where does the rubber meet the road here? How does this apply to our lives? I think we have three things; practical, important lessons we can draw out of Galatians 3 and 4.

DARRELL DELANEY

I think the first thing, Scott, is to understand that Christ is central. He is the very essential reason for salvation. Our relationship with God isn't or never will be based on regulations that we keep, or the laws that we keep. It is always going to be based on our trust in the finished work of Christ, who was born and lived under the law, and lived it perfectly, like none of us ever could. He lived the life we couldn't live; he died the death we couldn't die; and paid the price of atonement. That gift we have, we receive it by faith; and that is why God calls us beloved children. It is never going to be because of what we do or don't do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I mean, it was in Ephesians...not here in Galatians...where Paul says it is by grace you have been saved, not by works; but that is basically the message all through Galatians. Jesus didn't do part of it; Jesus did it all. Jesus didn't get the salvation ball rolling and now you have to finish it by keeping the law and being good doobies. Huh-uh. Jesus did it all. Never takes your eyes off that cross. Jesus did what you couldn't do; what you could never have done; then, he did the further act of grace by crediting his righteousness as yours. It was like he took all of his righteousness and transferred it into your spiritual bank account and my spiritual bank account. Never take your eyes off Christ. That is the first thing.

DARRELL DELANEY

That spiritual bank account you are talking about, Scott, is what the Spirit uses in order to bring us into what is called our sonship, our daughtership, being able to be connected to the Lord as our Father; and that Abba, Father language comes back to the surface because when we trust in God and live our faith out daily as best we can, relying on his promises, we are actually expressing our intimate relationship with God; because Jesus said this. He said: If you obey God's commands, it shows you love him. It is hard to show love to a person you cannot see, but if you obey God's commands...if you do what he tells you to do...if you love like he tells you to love...if you serve like he tells you to serve...and you follow a model of that, then you are

practicing what it means to walk with Christ day by day; and the Spirit gives us the power to do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So first, never take your eyes off of Christ and his cross; second, live daily as children of God; and then, I think a third thing from Galatians 3 and 4, Darrell, is remember that we have a unity as believers. We are supposed to have unity as believers...as children of God...heirs according to God's promise. We didn't do anything with it in the previous segment, but there is that line in Galatians 3, which has sometimes been called sort of the Magna Carta for the Church, that ^(verse 28)there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; all are one. So, Paul is saying God has wiped out all the things that we use to stratify ourselves in society; all the things that keep us apart; all of that melts away because you have all received the same grace—you have all received the same kindness from God; and that makes us all one. We are one with Christ, right? We have union with Christ. Paul's favorite prepositional phrase: In Christ. That is where we live; and when you live in Christ, you have a unity that transcends all the differences that often keep people apart in this world.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and we are very good at making differences, Scott. I love the fact that you can continue to extend that into our day. There is neither Republican nor Democrat; male nor female; you know, black nor white or Latino or Asian or whatever. You can still have Christ as the determining factor of who your unity is connected to. It is, in fact, what Jesus prayed for in John 17, that they will be one as he and the Father are one; and so, his Spirit that he has left us has given us the opportunity to practice that; and I pray that as we live according to faith and by faith, that we would demonstrate that we are ambassadors for Christ in this way.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; we can never, never, never do enough to display that kind of unity to the world, and to work super hard because...that kind of unity that you just described, Darrell...because it is so important, there is a counter-spiritual force in the world that is constantly trying to move the Church away from that; constantly trying to move us to reinforce the divisions—the socioeconomic divisions—the racial divisions. This is a constant, constant struggle in the Church to remember that we are all one in Christ, and to not let the external things like skin color or bank accounts or the kind of work you do or the accent of your speech, not let those things erase for us the fact that we are all one in Christ Jesus our Lord.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, Paul begins with a frustrated tone in the beginning of the book, but by this time in the book, his anger has melted into a deep love and concern for them, which is why he was upset in the first place; and isn't that like the heart of God, Scott, where sometimes when God is upset, he really is showing his deep love for us that he wants us to be led by him, guided by him, so that we would trust and love him with all of our hearts. Thanks be to God.

Scott Hoezee;

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we conclude our study of Galatians with Chapter 5 and 6.

Connect with us now at groundworkonline.com, where you can share what *Groundwork* means to you. Tell us what you would like to hear discussed on future *Groundwork* episodes as well.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee.

***Correction:** In the audio of this episode, host Scott Hoezee misspeaks and says Christ when he meant to say Paul.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/understanding-the-purpose-of-gods-law>

Printed on July 12, 2025