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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.

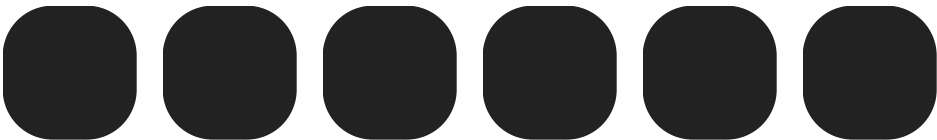
Why was the Law not enough? How does God’s Law reveal our need for a Savior?

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)

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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 14, 2025 - The Purpose of the Law

JANUARY 14TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

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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.

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Daily Devotional - Friday, January 10, 2025 - Faith vs. Law

JANUARY 10TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Friday, January 10, 2025 - Faith vs. Law

If you've been a member of a congregation on the verge of a split, you know how confusing and painful it can be. Unfortunately, this threat to Christian unity is as old as the church itself. The transition into today's passage feels abrupt. Paul just finished describing the harmony between himself and the Jerusalem apostles (vv. 1–10). Then suddenly, he reports on a direct, public confrontation when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch (v. 11).

Many Jewish believers had fled to Antioch because of persecution, and they had shared the gospel with the Gentiles in that prominent city (Acts 11). A great number of people believed, and “the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:21, 26). The church leaders in Jerusalem felt responsible for this fast-growing body of believers, so they sent Barnabas to encourage and train them (Acts 11:22–24). Barnabas recruited Paul to join him (Acts 11:25–26). And for a year, the two men had disciplined the Antioch church. As a result, Antioch became a home base for Paul and a launching pad for his missionary work.

At some point, Peter also came to help. But unfortunately, the visit went south. Paul describes a significant shift in Peter's behavior. When Peter first arrived, he ate with both the Jews and Gentiles. But when James's disciples came from Jerusalem, arguing that the Gentiles ought to be circumcised, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles and refused to fellowship with them (Gal. 2:12). In Paul's estimation, he did so out of fear. To make matters worse, the Jewish believers of Antioch followed his lead, and even

Barnabas was “led astray” (v. 13).

Paul boldly called them all hypocrites. He publicly challenged Peter to live in alignment with the believer’s justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by the works of the Law (v. 16).

Why did Paul challenge Peter? What ripple effect did their disagreement have? Why was it necessary?

Even the strongest believers can fall victim to legalism and hypocrisy. Galatians chapter 2 is a stark reminder of this danger. Loving Jesus, may we never forget that we are not under Law but under grace.

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Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 8, 2025 - Faith vs. Law

JANUARY 08TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, January 8, 2025 - Faith vs. Law

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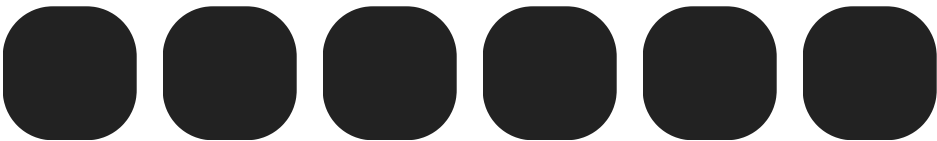
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Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 7, 2025 - Defending the Truth

JANUARY 07TH 2025 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, January 7, 2025 - Defending the Truth

Over the centuries, the gospel message has been distorted in many ways, from an over-emphasis on rules or performance to an excessive pursuit of emotion to supernatural wonders or prosperity. Still today, Christians must be vigilant about discerning and protecting the truth.

In Galatians 2, Paul jumps forward 14 years to his second Jerusalem visit as a follower of Christ (v. 1). For this important trip, he took with him Barnabas, his principal partner. Barnabas provided support and substantiation as Paul defended his ministry to the “esteemed leaders” who had been hearing defamatory reports from spies (v. 2).

Paul explained that he traveled to Jerusalem “in response to a revelation” (v. 2). He doesn’t tell the story of how he received this particular “revelation,” but he uses the same word that he did in 1:12 to speak of his conversion encounter on the Damascus Road. This repetition highlights the fact that God alone is leading Paul’s ministry, every step of the way.

In Jerusalem, Paul met privately with the most prominent apostles and gave them a report regarding his gospel ministry to the Gentiles (v. 2). He was seeking their blessing and partnership. He hoped they could present a united front as the gospel message of freedom in Christ—rather than slavery to the Law—spread to all people (v. 4).

One central issue of confusion and contention was circumcision. The “false believers” were insisting that the Gentile converts be circumcised. But Paul preached a gospel of

grace, which did not require such slavish adherence to Jewish Law. Titus, a Greek, was also with Paul in Jerusalem (v. 3), and Paul offered Titus as a living example. Though he was a faithful believer and a devoted minister of the gospel, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

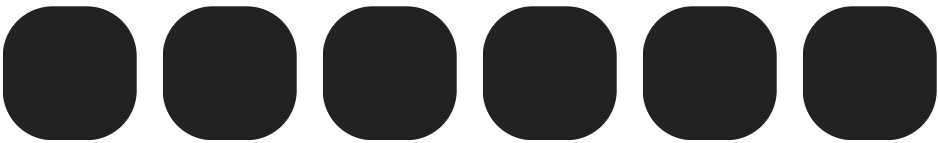
What false messages are added to the gospel today? How can we protect the truth of the gospel of Christ?

Father, Your Word is truth! May we always walk in Your truth. May we be blessed with rest and peace amid life’s storms, knowing that You are with us. Give us confidence that, like Paul, we are safe in Your arms.

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