

## Why The Law Then? (1)

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Paul asks the question in Galatians 3:19, *“Why the Law then?”* We must ask the same question today! Why was there a Law before Christ? We sometimes do not recognize the value behind studying the Old Law. It was, after all, the oft-forgotten law of a people that are no longer recognized by God. It was a series of seemingly tedious codes of conduct that regulated everything from marriage, to treatment of livestock, to animal sacrifice, and everything in between. We are no longer under this law, either. This is clear in another passage from Galatians: *“Know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified”* (Galatians 2:16).

Consider the problem from our perspective; we do not often see the usefulness of the Old Law because we are the partakers of Christ’s Law, the more perfect system of faith combined with works of obedience. We *seem* to have every reason to disregard the Old Law completely. But Christ’s covenant with us is established because of (or, rather, in fulfillment of) that first covenant! Understanding the importance of the Old Law in the scheme of redemption and history is absolutely important in understanding the structure and purpose of the New Law. If we do not have ourselves grounded in the Old Testament, then we will never truly comprehend the New Testament! The two of them go hand-in-hand. Notice the way that John puts it in John 1:17. He writes, *“For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”* Though the Law of works came through Moses the prophet, the system was perfected by the grace found in the sacrifice of our Lord.

*So, why the Law then?*

### To Help Men See God’s Holiness

**Psalm 119:137-138** – From the psalmist’s perspective, every law of God – all His statutes and regulations – is what makes God Holy. From the pure and righteous God comes forth pure and righteous judgments! The Law of Moses was so perfect, in fact, that it would have taken a perfect person to fulfill all the parts of this Law. God made His edicts so that mankind would fully understand its place as sinful and lowly; there is no conceivable way for man to achieve perfection by the Law (Galatians 3:10). It is a standard too far above man in every way to make us perfect (Hebrews 7:19 says, *“for the Law made nothing perfect”*).

- We have in the Old Law a set of rules meant to regulate God’s people. These rules are perfect in every way. They cannot all be followed by simple men. If they cannot be followed completely, then no man can ever be saved by them.
- In order to emphasize the one-way dependence of the relationship, God gave rules that required perfection. In lieu of perfection, the alternative is grace and forgiveness, which can only be given by God (Luke 5:19-24).
- The Law was also given by God to show how sinful man is in comparison to God! *“Whereas God’s laws are an expression of His righteous character, they are also*

*a reminder of man's lawlessness and iniquity" (Hymel, The Law of Moses). Romans 3:10-12 reads, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks after God. All have turned aside, they have together become worthless; there is no one who good, not even one." It is a quotation from Psalm 14:1-3.*

- The Law showed how much man had fallen short of God's glory. All of the rules and regulations were meant to be targets toward which the Israelites could aim. The Law was the ideal, the perfect, the way to be holy as God is holy. At the same time, though, it reminded the Israelites how much they had missed that mark.
- And that is exactly what sin is! Notice the Greek word *hamartia*, which literally means *"to miss the mark"* (*Vine's Dictionary*). Every departure from God's divine word is missing the mark He has set for man. It is missing the standard and falling below what is expected of us!