

**Review –
Questions
raised by the
fact of many
gentile
conversions
to Christ**

• **How much
Jewishness?**

• **Isn't knowing
Jesus enough?**

• **Do we need
to understand
about
justification?**

**We do need
to
understand
what God
has revealed**

• **Well founded
certainty**

• **Keeping the
gospel
straightforward**

• **The blessing
of assurance**

Let us once again review the thread of Paul's argument. There was a crisis in the churches at about AD 44. Hundreds of gentiles were becoming Christians and it led to many questions about the nature of salvation. People were asking, 'Do Christians need to become Jews at the same time that they become believers in Jesus?' Before that time every Christian was Jewish. It was hard to imagine anyone could be a Christian without also being a Jew. So some questions were being asked. Do new Christians need to be like the old Christians? Do they need Jewish culture? Christians found this a difficult question. Paul was specially raised up by God to give God's answer to these questions. He said it loud and clear. 'Justification' is by the grace of God, through faith in Christ's cross. Nothing else is 100% necessary. Christians need to know why and how they are justified. They need to know the basis of salvation.'

Why is it not enough just to be saved? Do we need to know the theory? Do we need to be astronomers to enjoy the sun? Do you need a degree in computer science to use a computer? Nowadays people use computers which are user-friendly. Can we not have a gospel which is user-friendly? Do we need to know the theory of the gospel? So long as we know Jesus, is that not enough? Do we need to know about 'justification' and what it means to be covered with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer is: we **do** need to understand the gospel as much as God has revealed it. Of course the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is a mystery. We shall never fully understand it. But we do need to know what God has revealed. God has revealed to us as much as we need to know, and we do need to know **that**. If God has gone to so much trouble to reveal the gospel to us, it is an insult to God for us to imagine that we do not need what He has given to us. There are many reasons why we need to follow what Paul is saying in Galatians. (i) We might think we are saved when we are not. (ii) We might be making the gospel needlessly difficult. Why demand circumcision – or anything else – if it is not necessary? (iii) If we are not sure of the basis of our salvation, we shall never be sure of our own salvation, and assurance of salvation is a great blessing. It is **possible** to be saved without being **sure** of your salvation. This can happen, I believe. But it is a great tragedy. How sad it is if a child of God is not sure whether he or she is a child of God. We need to understand (so far as it can be understood) what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now these are the themes of the apostle Paul at this point. He has restated his gospel ^{☐¹} and backed it up with arguments from the experience of the Spirit ^{☐²} and the story of Abraham. ^{☐³} But this required yet further explanation. The covenant with Abraham was not altered by the covenant with Moses. ^{☐⁴} The law was a late addition to the institutions of Israel and was designed to restrain sin until Jesus came. ^{☐⁵}

Now Paul plans to develop this last point. The Christians needed help in knowing how they were to view the Mosaic law. Paul says they do not relate directly to the Mosaic law at all! They are free from it. They have 'died' to it. They are justified before God without it. They are born again without it. They live godly lives without it. They receive the Spirit by faith alone. ^{☐¹} They are children of Abraham. ^{☐²} The Abrahamic covenant has not been replaced by the Mosaic covenant. ^{☐³} The law was given temporarily on account of transgressions. ^{☐⁴}

**how
Christians
should view
the law of
Moses**

^{☐¹} 2:16–21

^{☐²} 3:1–5

^{☐³} 3:6–14

^{☐⁴} 3:15–18

^{☐⁵} 3:19–22

^{☐¹} 3:1–5

^{☐²} 3:6–14

^{☐³} 3:15–18

^{☐⁴} 3:19–22

1. It was needed before Christ came

1. **The law was needed by the people of God at an early stage of their history.** Paul says, *'Before the coming of this faith we were guarded by the law like prisoners; we were restricted, until this future faith should be revealed'*. ¹ He is referring to the time before the coming of Christ. 'Before the coming of this faith' means 'Before the coming of Jesus and the possibility of full and explicit faith in him'. The word 'we' means 'We believers' or 'We Jewish believers'. He is thinking of the story of the people of God. 'We' – people like us who believe in the promise concerning the Messiah – 'were guarded by the law like prisoners'. The people of God at that time were all part of the nation of Israel. God had reasons for putting Israel under the 'yoke' of the law. The nation needed to be almost forced into obedience by the fear of punishment. They needed to be kept entirely separate from the gentile people who were so degraded in sin. So the law was needed at that time. In the same way, modern nations need law! They need rules and policemen and systems to compel the safety of society. When the people of God was a nation, 'we' believers – within Judaism – needed the Mosaic law.

¹ 3:23

2. It was needed to keep Israel separate for God

2. **But the law was needed to preserve Israel only until the coming of Christ.** 'We were restricted, until this future faith should be revealed,' says Paul. *'So the law was our custodian until the time of Christ, in order that we might be justified by faith'*. ¹ Paul keeps on using the word 'until'. The law was vital in the plan of God 'until ... until', but only 'until' the coming of Christ. The words 'until the time of Christ' (Greek *eis Christon*) mean just that! That translation 'schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ' is quite misleading. The law is not a schoolmaster. And it is the Spirit who brings us to Christ. Paul's Greek (*eis Christon*) means 'until the time of Christ'. The law was temporary. Again and again Paul is insisting that the Mosaic law was a temporary measure in the story of God's people. We must not talk (as some do) of 'the eternal law of God'. God's eternal holiness – yes! But God's eternal Mosaic law – no!

¹ 3:24

3. Christ – not the law of Moses is the object of our faith

3. **Christ – not the Mosaic law – is the object of our faith.** It is in Christ that we are 'declared righteous' in the sight of God. We are 'justified' before God. The law had the coming of Christ in view. It was preserving the people of God so that Christ could come in Israel, and then He would be the object of faith. 'This faith' – faith in the known person of the Lord Jesus Christ – would come into being. The purpose of the law was focused on the coming of Christ. It guaranteed that Christ would come, and Christ is the One who justifies the people of God.



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