

The Problem with Rules

Galatians 3 & 4 (selected passages)

- I. We do not need rules to guide our behavior because we have the Holy Spirit within us (Romans 3:21-4:20).
 - A. Rules cannot truly transform hearts (“impart life”); only the Holy Spirit can (Galatians 3:21-22; see 3:14).
 - B. Rules were needed in the immature stage of the Law to reveal man’s need for Christ (Galatians 3:23-24).
 - C. Because we are spiritually adult sons of God, we don’t need to be supervised by rules because the Holy Spirit can guide us (Galatians 3:25-4:7; esp. 3:25 & 4:6).
 - Clarifying different kinds of rules/choices – See Below
- II. There will always be those who want to enslave others to Christian “rules” (Galatians 4:8-11, 17, 19-20).
 - A. Rules can enslave Christians in immaturity when they should be mature sons of God led by the Spirit (4:8-11).
 - When Rules are the Right thing – See Back of page
 - B. Rules are often created by people in pride, seeking to control others, not to produce true godliness (4:17).
 - C. True godliness grows as *Christ* (who lives in us by His Spirit – 2:20; 3:3) is “*formed in us*” outwardly (4:19-20).

Conclusion: The problem with rules is not that all rules/standards are wrong, but that rules keep us spiritually immature. Rules keep our focus on other people or our own ability instead of depending on God’s Spirit within us.

Some Clarifications about “Rules”

Clarifying different kinds of rules/choices

1. **Absolutes** = Timeless Rights and Wrongs in God’s word (commands and principles).
2. **Convictions** = Choices we make in the effort to personally apply biblical principles.
 - *The process of **spiritual maturity** is to depend upon the Holy Spirit as we seek to obey what God says clearly in His Word (absolutes) without being told by others and to make wise personal choices (convictions) as we apply God’s principles in a way that will help us glorify God.*
3. **Preferences** = What we prefer to do or may wish others did, but which we realize are not biblically taught.

When Rules are the Right thing

- Children – Parents must safeguard children who are spiritually immature. But the goal is to raise adults who respond to the Spirit and don’t need rules.
- Schools, employers, government, churches – Authority is how God brings basic order to saved and unsaved groups who must function together. But all essential rules/policies are more effective when given with an attitude of grace.
- Personal Rules – Under the Spirit’s guidance we should discern boundaries and disciplines we personally need in order to aid us in our pursuit of godliness (2 Corinthians 7:1).