

Freedom and the Law

Galatians 3:18-29

SS Lesson for 05/15/2022

Devotional Scripture: Heb 7:11-19

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Gal 3:29

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Leads to Jesus by identifying sin (18-19)

Sin would not be known except through the law (Rom 7:7-12)

For those who live under the law, the law will be used to identify their sins (Rom 2:12-16)

Through the law people become conscious of sin (Rom 3:19-20)

Where there is no law, there is no transgression (Rom 4:15)

The law was added to identify the trespasses that increase (Rom 5:20)

The law was made to be used to identify the ungodly and sinful (1 Tim 1:8-10)

Leads to Jesus by identifying promises (19)

It was through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise (Rom 4:13-14)

The law tells the good news of God's fulfilling of His promises (Acts 13:32-33)

Those who listen to God's words hear God's promises to His people (Ps 85:8)

The law tells of how God's promises are tested and are proved true (Ps 119:140-142)

Leads to Jesus by appointing a mediator (19-20)

The one and only mediator of Jesus (1 Tim 2:5-6)

The mediator of a superior covenant (Heb 8:6)

The mediator of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15)

FREEDOM THROUGH PROMOTING FAITH (GAL 3:21-23)

Faith because the law is not able to provide righteousness (21)

The law was powerless because it was weakened by the sinful nature (Rom 8:3)

The law can kill, but the Holy Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6)

God's righteousness is apart from the law (Rom 3:21-22)

Spiritual life and righteousness are not by works of the law, but by faith (Rom 9:30-32)

The righteousness that comes from God is by faith (Phil 3:9)

Faith because the law confines all under sin (22)

All are confined by the law because there are none who are righteous (Rom 3:9-12)

All are confined by the law because all have sinned against God (Rom 3:23)

All are confined by the law because sin came in the world through one man (Rom 5:12-13)

All are confined by the law so that God can have mercy on them (Rom 11:32)

Faith because the law was a guardian (23)

A guardian of accountability (Rom 3:19)

A guardian that obligates the believer (Rom 8:12-14)

A guardian of a body brought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)

A guardian of one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:6-9)

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Galatian Christians were a community of believers in the region of Galatia, located in modern-day Turkey. Paul's missionary journeys took him through this region and its cities. Depending on whether "Galatia" is understood in a political sense or a demographic sense, it was during either Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13–14) or his second (16:1–18:22) that he first taught the gospel message to the Galatians (see 4:12–13). The year Paul wrote the Galatian epistle is unknown. Some research has proposed that it was written as early as AD 48 or as late as AD 57/58. The latter would imply that Paul wrote this epistle after the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. If this were the case, part of Galatians includes Paul's retelling of the council's key concerns: circumcision as part of adherence to the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:1–10; see Acts 15:5). These same concerns were of importance among the Galatian churches. The Galatians had received the gospel message from Paul (Acts 16:6; 18:23; Galatians 1:11–12), but there were some among them who tried to add to the message. These individuals taught that circumcision as part of adherence to the Law of Moses was a requirement for salvation; Paul declared that to be "a different gospel" (1:6; see 2:14). Advocates for this approach were known as Judaizers because they called for Gentile believers to adhere to the distinctions of Jewish law. The Judaizers' beliefs were understandable. From their point of view, Israel was and continued to be the distinct people of God. It was to Israel that God had revealed himself, given his law, and prescribed circumcision as a mark of his covenant (Genesis 17:7–14). Paul urged the Galatian churches to reject the Judaizers' addition to the gospel message (Galatians 1:7–9). Paul reflected on his own "extremely zealous" experience in Judaism (1:14) as he highlighted his inability to follow the law to the point of justification (2:15–21). Through Christ, the promise of salvation was to be revealed to the whole world (3:6–9). Paul went on to show the unifying nature of that salvation for all who would believe in Christ.

Key Verse: Gal 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

In the first two chapters of the epistle Paul established the divine origin of his apostleship and his message. Then he turned to the Galatians who were being urged to add works to faith, to keep the Mosaic Law in addition to placing faith in Christ as the grounds of acceptance before God. The Galatian Christians would receive, the Judaizers thought, a more complete salvation and a greater sanctification if they would obey the Law. But, Paul argued, to supplement the work of Christ is to supplant it. There can only be one way of salvation, and that is by faith in Christ alone.

3:1. Paul's tone was direct and severe as he remonstrated, **You foolish Galatians!** To embrace a doctrine which declared the death of Christ unnecessary was irrational (cf. 2:21). It would almost appear they had been **bewitched**, cast under some evil spell by a malign influence. For this they were, however, without excuse because the Savior had been **clearly portrayed** (*prographē*; lit., "to write for public reading" as

with the posting of a public announcement) **as crucified** before them. Paul had vividly and graphically proclaimed the crucified Christ to the Galatians; yet their eyes had been diverted from the Cross to the Law. They were without excuse. In order to demonstrate convincingly that faith alone is God's method of dealing, the apostle asked four questions.

3:2. (1) *How did you receive the Holy Spirit?* This rhetorical question pointed to the time of their conversions, when they received the Holy Spirit (cf. 4:6). Thus Paul did not question their salvation but challenged them to consider whether they were saved and received the Spirit by faith or on the basis of works. It was of course by faith, when they heard Paul preach the gospel. As an essentially Gentile church they did not possess the Mosaic Law anyway.

3:3. (2) *How will you be sanctified?* Presupposing the answer that the Galatians became Christians by faith, Paul asked if they were **so foolish** as to think they could begin the Christian life in one way (by faith) and move on to spiritual maturity in another (by works). This was what the Judaizers promoted (cf. 4:10; 5:2; 6:13), but the means of justification and sanctification were (and are) the same. There was no provision under the Law for the Holy Spirit to do a work of sanctification. The Galatian believers probably thought that keeping the old Law would aid them in their spiritual lives, but it would not.

3:4. (3) *Did you suffer in vain?* The third question looked back on the persecution the apostles and new believers experienced in the region of Galatia. As Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps at the end of the first missionary journey, they warned the Galatian converts that they would suffer as Christians (Acts 14:21-22). Persecution evidently soon followed, and Paul reminded them that if they turned from grace to Law they would brand their former position in error and would then have **suffered so much for nothing**. But the apostle was unwilling to believe that this was so.

3:5. (4) *On what basis did God perform miracles?* That **miracles** were performed among the Galatians by divine power was recorded in the Book of Acts (14:3, 8-11). It was clear, furthermore, that these supernatural works were not the result of the works of **the Law** but from the hearing that leads to faith. The Galatians did not know the Law, and Paul's message was that of justification by faith.

3:10-11. Contrary to what the Judaizers taught, the Law could not justify; it could only condemn. Paul quoted Deuteronomy 27:26 to show that **the Law** demanded perfection and that **a curse** was attached to failure to keep any part of it. The breaking of only one command even once brings a person under the curse; and since everybody fails at some point, all are under the curse. The proposition that a person can gain divine acceptance by human effort is therefore totally destroyed. Quoting the Old Testament again, Paul showed that even during the dispensation of **Law** legal obedience was not the basis for a **justified standing before God... because**, as the Prophet Habakkuk wrote, **The righteous will live by faith** (Hab. 2:4).

3:12. But perhaps **faith** and **the Law** could be combined; perhaps both are needed. Quoting again from the Old Testament Paul proved this to be scripturally impossible. Law and faith are mutually exclusive. The basic principle of the Law is found in Leviticus 18:5: **The man who does these things will live by them**. Only perfect performance could win divine approval under the Law, but since that was not achievable the Law could only condemn a person (cf. James 2:10) and cause him to cast himself on God in faith.

3:13. The positive side of Paul's argument emphasized that there is hope for all who have broken the Law and are therefore under its curse. That hope is not in man but in **Christ who redeemed us from the curse of the Law**. But how did Christ redeem (*exēgorasen*, lit., "buy out of slavery"; cf. 4:5; see chart "New Testament Words for Redemption" at Mark 10:45) man? The answer is **by becoming a curse for us**. This is a strong declaration of substitutionary redemption whereby Christ took the penalty of all guilty lawbreakers on Himself. Thus the "curse of the Law" was transferred from sinners to Christ, the sinless One (cf. 1 Peter 3:18), and He delivered people from it. The confirming quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23 refers to the fact that in Old Testament times criminals were executed (normally by stoning) and then displayed on a stake or post to show God's divine rejection. When Christ was crucified, it was evidence He had come under the curse of God. The manner of His death was a great obstacle to faith for Jews until they realized the curse He bore was for them (cf. Isa. 53).

3:14. Two purposes for Christ's redemptive work are given, each introduced by the Greek conjunction *hina*, "in order that" (cf. 4:5): (1) **Gentiles** might receive **the blessing given to Abraham**; as already stated (3:8) this is a reference not to personal or national blessings but to the promised blessing of justification apart from works of the Law, available to all who believe; (2) all who thus believe **might receive the promise of the Spirit**, that is, the Holy Spirit, who was promised (cf. v. 2). Again the apostle emphasized that salvation and sanctification come **by faith**, not by works.

3:15-16. Even if Paul's opponents admitted that Abraham was justified by faith, those Judaizers might have argued that the Law, coming at a later time, entirely changed the basis for achieving salvation. To refute this, Paul declared that just as a properly executed Roman **covenant** (or will) cannot arbitrarily be **set aside** or changed (probably reference to ancient Gr. law), so the promises of God are immutable. Further, **the promises... spoken to Abraham and to his seed** were not fulfilled before the giving of the Law. Rather, they found fulfillment in Christ and are in effect forever. The blessing of justification by faith is therefore permanent and could not be changed by the Law. The stress on **seed** (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7), not **seeds**, was made simply to remind the readers that the faithful in Israel had always recognized that blessing would ultimately come through a single individual, the Messiah (cf. Gal. 3:19). And Matthew declared Christ to be *the* Son of Abraham and the true Heir to the First Covenant's promises (Matt. 1:1).

3:17-18. Finally, Paul applied the principle of the permanence of faith by affirming that a covenant made so long before could not possibly be altered by a later giving of the Law. **The Law** was given **430 years** after the promise. When did that lengthy period of time begin? Some have suggested it began with Abraham, in which case the 430 years included the Israelites' time of about 200 years in Canaan and about 200 years in Egypt. The Septuagint supports this view, but this conflicts with the clear statement in Exodus 12:40 that the Egyptian sojourn was 430 years. Another suggestion is that the period began with the confirming of the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob (Gen. 35:9-12). A third and perhaps best view is that the period began with the final confirmation of the covenant to Jacob (given in Gen. 46:1-4). Accordingly the 430 years went from the end of one era (the Age of Promise) to the beginning of another (the Age of Law). This seems to fit best with Exodus 12:40. (Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6, in referring to the sojourn in Egypt as 400 years, may be using rounded figures.) During that long interval God blessed the patriarchs on the basis of faith alone, and the coming of the Law could not change this in any way. Additionally **the Law** could not alter God's dealing with **Abraham** on the basis of a **promise** because the two are fundamentally different in nature. They do not comingle; they cannot be combined. Instead, **the inheritance** (i.e., justification by faith) was given by **God** as an unconditional gift to those who believe. Contrary to the claim of the Judaizers, obedience to the Law was not necessary to gain the inheritance. God's way of salvation has always been by grace through faith.

3:19. An indignant Judaizer was sure to respond with objections to Paul's insistence that the Law could not give the Holy Spirit (vv. 1-5); could not bring justification (vv. 6-9); could not alter the permanence of faith (vv. 15-18); but does bring a curse (vv. 10-12). **What, then, was the purpose of the Law?** Why *was* a change made at Sinai? Paul answered by declaring the purpose and character of the Law. First, it was given **because of transgressions**, that is, the Law was given to be a means for checking sins. It served as a restrainer of sins by showing them to be transgressions of God's Law which would incur His wrath (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-11). Second, the Law was temporary and served **until the Seed** (the Messiah; cf. Gal. 3:16) came, after which it was no longer needed. Third, the Law was inferior because of the manner of its bestowal. While God made promises to Abraham directly, **the Law** was established **by a mediator**. There were in fact two mediators, the **angels** representing God, and Moses representing the people.

3:20. This verse appears to be closely related to the last part of verse 19. **A mediator** implies a covenant between two parties both of whom have responsibilities, facts true of the Mosaic Covenant. On the other hand **God is One**, that is, the "promise" (v. 19) was unilateral and was given to man directly without a mediator, God alone having responsibility for fulfilling it.

3:21-22. Another question was raised: Is there conflict between **the Law** and the **promises of God**? "Perish the thought" (*mē genoito*), declared the apostle. God gave both the Law and promises, but for different purposes. And it was not the purpose of **the Law** to give **life**. Theoretically salvation could have come by the Law if people had been capable of keeping it perfectly, but they could not (Rom. 8:3-4). The **life** promised to those who sought to obey the **Law** refers to temporal blessing on earth (Deut. 8:1). But if the Law is not **opposed** to the promises, if there is no conflict between them, how can their harmony be demonstrated? By recognizing that while the Law could not justify or give life, it did prepare the way for the gospel. What part then did Law play in this respect? It declared **the whole world... a prisoner of sin**. Referring perhaps to Psalm 143:1-2 or Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul declared that the whole world is trapped and under the dominion of sin (cf. Rom. 3:9, 23). When people recognize this and give up attempts to please God by their own works, the way is prepared for them to receive the promise of salvation **through faith in Jesus Christ**.

3:23-25. Continuing to comment on the purpose of the Law, Paul used two figures of speech, likening the Law to a prison and to a child-custodian relationship. **Before this faith came** means before the advent of faith in Jesus Christ (see v. 22). Justifying faith was operative in the Old Testament but faith in the person

and work of Christ did not come until He was revealed. Before that, Israel was under the protective custody of **the Law**, God thus shielding His people from the evil heathen rites surrounding them. Further, the Law served as a “tutor” (NASB). The word *paidagōgos* is difficult to render into English since there is no exact parallel to this position in modern society. Phillips suggests “a strict governess.” The pedagogue here was not a “schoolmaster” (KJV) but a slave to whom a son was committed from age six or seven to puberty. These slaves were severe disciplinarians and were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. This was like the Law’s function until **Christ** came and people could **be justified by faith** in Him. It is better then to understand that the Law did not *lead us to Christ* but that it was the disciplinarian *until* Christ came. Thus the reign of Law has ended for faith in Christ has delivered believers from the protective custody of the prison and the harsh discipline of the pedagogue.

3:26-27. First, **all** who believe in **Christ** become **sons of God**. The change in person from the first to the second (**you**) indicates that Paul turned from looking at Israel as a nation to address the Galatian believers. Under the dispensation of Law, as seen in verse 24, the Law was a discipling pedagogue, and those under its supervision were regarded as children. However, now that Christ had come, the Galatian believers were adult sons **through faith** and were no longer under a Jewish slave-guardian. Why should they seek to revert to their inferior status? The exalted position of “sons of God” is explained in verse 27 to involve a living union with Christ brought about by being **baptized into Christ**. This is the baptism of (or in) the Holy Spirit, which according to Paul (1 Cor. 12:12-13) joins all believers to Christ and unites them within the church, Christ’s body. This union with Him means being **clothed with Christ**. In the Roman society when a youth came of age he was given a special toga which admitted him to the full rights of the family and state and indicated he was a grown-up son. So the Galatian believers had laid aside the old garments of the Law and had put on Christ’s robe of righteousness which grants full acceptance before God. Who would want to don again the old clothing?

3:28. Second, believers **are all one in Christ Jesus**. Since all believers became one with each other, human distinctions lose their significance. None is spiritually superior over another, that is, a believing Jew is not more privileged before God than a believing Gentile (**Greek**, in contrast to **Jew**, suggests all Gentiles; cf. Col. 3:11); a believing **slave** does not rank higher than a believing **free** person; a believing man is not superior to a believing woman. Some Jewish men prayed, “I thank God that Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” Paul cut across these distinctions and stated that they do not exist in the body of Christ so far as spiritual privilege and position are concerned. Elsewhere, while affirming the coequality of man and woman in Christ, Paul did nonetheless make it clear that there is a headship of the man over the woman (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3) and that there are distinctions in the area of spiritual service (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12).

3:29. Third, believers in Christ **are Abraham’s seed**. As Paul previously stated, **Christ** is *the* Seed of Abraham (vv. 16, 19); therefore being in Christ makes a believer a part of that seed and an **heir of the promise** to Abraham. Any discussion of the seed of Abraham must first take into account his natural seed, the descendants of Jacob in the 12 tribes. Within this natural seed there is a believing remnant of Jews who will one day inherit the Abrahamic promises directed specifically to them (cf. Rom. 9:6, 8). But there is also the spiritual seed of Abraham who are not Jews. These are the Gentiles who believe and become Abraham’s spiritual seed. They inherit the promise of justification by faith as Paul explained earlier (cf. Gal. 3:6-9). To suggest, as amillenarians do, that Gentile believers inherit the national promises given to the believing Jewish remnant—that the church thus supplants Israel or is the “new Israel”—is to read into these verses what is not there.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Freedom that Leads to Jesus (Gal 3:18-20)

18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

Leads to Jesus by identifying sin (18-19)

Sin would not be known except through the law (Rom 7:7-12)

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

For those who live under the law, the law will be used to identify their sins (Rom 2:12-16)

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Through the law people become conscious of sin (Rom 3:19-20)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Where there is no law, there is no transgression (Rom 4:15)

15 because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

The law was added to identify the trespasses that increase (Rom 5:20)

20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

The law was made to be used to identify the ungodly and sinful (1 Tim 1:8-10)

8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. 9 We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, 10 for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

Leads to Jesus by identifying promises (19)

It was through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise (Rom 4:13-14)

13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14 For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless,

The law tells the good news of God's fulfilling of His promises (Acts 13:32-33)

32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: "'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'

Those who listen to God's words hear God's promises to His people (Ps 85:8)

8 I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints--but let them not return to folly.

The law tells of how God's promises are tested and are proved true (Ps 119:140-142)

140 Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them. 141 Though I am lowly and despised, I do not forget your precepts. 142 Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.

Leads to Jesus by appointing a mediator (19-20)

The one and only mediator of Jesus (1 Tim 2:5-6)

5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time.

The mediator of a superior covenant (Heb 8:6)

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

The mediator of an eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15)

15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance-now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Freedom through Promoting Faith (Gal 3:21-23)

21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

Faith because the law is not able to provide righteousness (21)

The law was powerless because it was weakened by the sinful nature (Rom 8:3)

3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

The law can kill, but the Holy Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:6)

6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

God's righteousness is apart from the law (Rom 3:21-22)

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Spiritual life and righteousness are not by works of the law, but by faith (Rom 9:30-32)

30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.

The righteousness that comes from God is by faith (Phil 3:9)

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Faith because the law confines all under sin (22)

All are confined by the law because there are none who are righteous (Rom 3:9-12)

9 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

All are confined by the law because all have sinned against God (Rom 3:23)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

All are confined by the law because sin came in the world through one man (Rom 5:12-13)

12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned- 13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

All are confined by the law so that God can have mercy on them (Rom 11:32)

32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Faith because the law was a guardian (23)

A guardian of accountability (Rom 3:19)

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

A guardian that obligates the believer (Rom 8:12-14)

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

A guardian of a body brought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

A guardian of one who is controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:6-9)

6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

A guardian that requires one to live by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-18)

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Freedom through being a Teacher (Gal 3:24-29)

24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

A teacher that brings us to Christ (24)

Bringing to Jesus as part of the fulfillment of the law (Matt 5:17-18)

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Bringing to Jesus so that Jesus can live in us (Gal 2:19-20)

19 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Bringing to Jesus to find the true reality (Col 2:16-17)

16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Bringing to Jesus so that there will be no condemnation (Rom 8:1-2)

8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Bringing to Jesus so that we can stand firm (2 Cor 1:21-22)

21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

Bringing to Jesus to become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

A teacher that leads to justification (24-26)

Justification by faith by the one and only God (Rom 3:30)

30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Justification by faith to fulfill God's promise (Rom 4:16)

16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Justification by faith because that is the only way (Gal 2:16)

16 know that a man is not justified by observing 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 observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Justification by faith with accompanying works (James 2:24)

24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Justification by faith for those who believe in Jesus (Acts 13:39)

39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

A teacher that teaches how to be baptized into Christ (27-29)

Baptized in Jesus and His death (Rom 6:3)

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Baptized in Jesus as part of God's unity (1 Cor 12:13)

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Baptized in Jesus' name to become a disciple (Matt 28:19)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Baptized in Jesus so as to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Baptized in Jesus so that we will be raised by Him (Col 2:10-12)

10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Baptized in Jesus to have a good conscience toward God (1 Peter 3:21)

21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Let us briefly review the context of our passage in relation to the third chapter of Galatians. In the first half of chapter 3 Paul has already shown that the Law could not pronounce a blessing upon men, but only a curse. In verses 1-5, he reminds the Galatian saints that it was by the principle of faith that the Holy Spirit was initially given to them at the time of their salvation, and that He continued to work mightily in their lives. In verses 6-9 Paul reminds his readers that Abraham, the "father of their faith," was justified (declared righteous) on the basis of his belief, rather than on the basis of works. In verses 10-12 Paul concludes that the Law was only able to curse men, not bless them, for absolute, total obedience is required of the Law on every particular. The Law was not based upon belief, but upon perfect behavior, something man is incapable of doing. While the Law could not bring blessing to men, but only a curse, neither was the Law able to prevent the fulfillment of the blessings God had promised all men through Abraham. There are several reasons for this, which Paul spells out in verses 13-18.

First, the curse which the Law pronounces on all men was borne by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. God's promise of blessing through Abraham is still possible, but only through faith (vv. 13-14).

Second, the Abrahamic Covenant preceded the Mosaic Covenant by 430 years, and thereby has preeminence (vv. 15, 17-18). Since God Himself ratified the Abrahamic Covenant, it cannot be modified or set aside by the later covenant which was made with Israel through the mediation of Moses. In this case, newer is not better.

Third, the promise made to Abraham demands fulfillment because it was also made to his seed, Jesus Christ (v. 16). While the blessings promised to Abraham and to his seed are corporate, Paul shows that the Abrahamic Covenant also had a singular promise, one made to the Son through whom all the promises will be fulfilled. Since God is both the promisor and the beneficiary, in Christ, the promise and its blessings are assured to all, unhindered by the Mosaic Covenant with its curse. Having learned the limitations of the Law from the

preceding verses, let us turn our attention to the proper function of the Law, as it was intended by the God who gave it to men through the mediation of angels and Moses.

The Purpose of the Law (3:19-20)

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

Although it produced a curse on all men, the Mosaic Law was given by God. We may ask then, what purpose did God have in giving the Law? Contrary to what the Judaizers sought to practice and promote, Paul summarizes two purposes of the Law in verses 19 and 20. I will cite the more accurate renderings of the NIV and the Berkeley Version:⁶⁵

What, then, was the purpose of the Law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The Law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one (Gal. 3:19-20, NIV).

Where, then, does the Law come in? It was superimposed to show up sins in their true light, until the Offspring should come concerning whom the promise was made. It was ordained through angels by means of a go-between. But there is no call for an intermediary in case of one, and God is One (Gal. 3:19-20, Berkeley).

The first purpose of the Law was to dramatically display the depth of man's sin. It is not enough that something is free—it must also be necessary. At garage sales I have often seen an item for sale at a bargain price, but for which I had no need. Admittedly, for me this is very unusual, but even I occasionally find good buys which I pass up because of no real usefulness. The fact that the gift of salvation in Christ is free is not enough to compel men to accept it. Men must first be convinced of their need of salvation before grace is recognized as a desirable solution. The Law was given to bring men to the point of recognizing their need for grace.

At first reading, it might appear from verse 19 that the Law was given in response to man's great sin. Paul's words are translated, "It was added **because of** transgressions." While it is grammatically possible to interpret Paul's words to convey the thought that the Law was given as a result of man's sin, here it is better to understand the Law as the means which God has employed to make sin evident.⁶⁶ We know that the Law was given to define sin:

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet" (Rom 7:7).

Occasionally I work on air conditioning systems, and at times the problem is the result of a leak. A refrigerant leak is difficult to find because freon is virtually invisible as a gas. In order to spot a freon leak a red liquid is pumped into the system leaving a very visible indication of the leak. The Law is like that red die—it does not cause sin, but it does reveal it.

The Law not only defines sin; it stimulates sin so that its presence and power cannot be denied or ignored:

But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me (Rom. 7:8-11).

We see, then, that the Law defines sin and intensifies it so that it may be recognized as a problem for which only grace is the solution. Sin is something like an injury. The darkness or discoloration of a wound reveals its presence, but the swelling of the injured portion of the body makes the injury even more obvious. The Law magnifies the problem of sin just as swelling draws attention to an injury. As sin increases, the grace of God is enabled to abound.

And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (Rom. 5:20).

The Law, by defining and magnifying the problem of sin, promotes the grace of God, which is the only remedy for sin. The curse produced by the Law does not exclude God's blessings when it drives men to grace through faith.

We should observe that the Law's divine purpose is precisely opposite of that maintained by the Judaizers. They sincerely believed that the Law was the remedy for sin, rather than the revealer of sin. When we understand Paul's words here we see that sin is like the weeds in my lawn. During the winter, when the lawn is dead, the weeds are indistinguishable from the grass. When spring comes, both the weeds and the grass begin to grow. When I put fertilizer on my lawn, it seems that the weeds grow faster than the grass. The end result is that the weeds are much more visible, but have certainly not been eliminated.

To the Judaizers, the Law of Moses was like a weed killer. Apply a little, kill a few weeds; apply a lot, kill them all. Paul's words here and elsewhere reveal that the Law was really more like a fertilizer. The Law made sin evident; it even caused sin to multiply. This, Paul tells us, is precisely what God designed the Law to do, for it brings men to the place of recognizing the depth of their sinfulness, and their dire need for salvation.

The second purpose of the Law was to provide a temporary provision for man's sin until the permanent cure came in the person of Christ. The purpose which God gave the Law was provisional and preliminary. Paul writes that the Law was given "until the seed to whom the promise referred had come" (v. 19). The word "until" implies that the Law was not permanent, but provisional.

Further evidence of the provisional function of the Law is found in Paul's reference to the participation of angels and a mediator in verses 19 and 20. These very things were emphasized by the Judaizers as proof of the superiority of the Law,⁶⁷ but Paul interpreted them differently. While there was a certain splendor associated with the role of the angels in the giving of the Law (cf. Acts 7:53 and Heb. 2:2), the function of the angels and Moses was mediatorial. As Paul points out in verse 20, a mediator suggests more than one party, since there is no need to mediate between one person. Since God is One (which was the touchstone of orthodoxy to the Jew), His promise required no mediator, as the keeping of it was dependent only upon His faithfulness and power. The Law, on the other hand, required a mediator, for this covenant was made between God and men; since men are sinners, it was destined to fail as a final solution to sin. Thus, its role could only be temporary.

The Law was given as a temporary provision until that which was permanent came. The Law was like scaffolding which is used only during the period of construction and then is removed: The Law was like the temporary walkways and walls in a building being remodeled. We can use the building, though under considerably inferior conditions to those which will prevail when construction is complete.

Those of you who drive a late model General Motors car have an excellent example of a temporary provision in your trunk. A small tire there, provided as a spare, can be used only in emergencies and only for a short time. That tire does not have the traction, the ride, nor the longevity of a "real" tire. It is to be used only when a tire fails, and then only long enough to reach a service station. When the Law revealed the "flat tire" of man's sin, it also provided men with a temporary solution. The Book of Hebrews describes at length the superiority of Christ to the provisions of the Law, proving both the inferiority and the interim nature of the Law.

The Law of Moses is just like the GM spare tire. It was never intended to replace the promises of God made to all men through Abraham. It was temporary until the promises were fulfilled in Christ. Once Christ had come, the Law was no longer required. To return to the Law, now superseded by the grace of God in Christ, is as foolish as going to a tire dealer and asking him to replace your tires with GM spares on each wheel.

Analysis of an Apparent Contradiction (3:21-22)

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22 But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The Galatian saints could not have failed to recognize that Paul was strongly stating that the Law of Moses was inferior to the promises God had made to Abraham. The Law could only pronounce a curse, while the promises alone could produce blessing (3:1-12). The Law was inferior to the promises because it could not modify or nullify them, since the promises came first and were ratified by God Himself (3:13-18). The Law was inferior to the promises because the Law was provisional and preparatory, while the promises were permanent (3:19-20). Perhaps the Judaizers might protest that Paul was going too far in what he was saying for it appeared that the Law, as Paul interpreted it, was contrary to God's promises.

In verse 21 Paul raises this issue to avoid any misunderstanding of what he was saying. His response, "May it never be!" quickly dispels any doubt as to Paul's position. What a terrible thing to suggest, Paul protests. How could God make one covenant with Abraham, only to oppose it with another, later covenant, made through Moses?

As I understand Paul's reasoning in verses 21 and 22, he is insisting that the two covenants could only be contrary to each other if they were competitive. If it were possible for law, any law, to produce life, then that law would be competitive with God's promise, which can and does produce life. Since no law can impart life, there is no competition. Indeed, the Law is complimentary to the promise, for it revealed that nothing but grace can produce life.

Suppose, for example, that two portions of a freeway have been completed, but there is a middle section still under construction. In order to assure that cars travel along a prescribed route of completed roadway, a detour is set up. Along this route are intersections where a driver might become confused. The highway crew eliminates this possibility by setting up barricades with arrows indicating the correct way to go. While these barricades are restrictive, they prevent the driver from going astray. In a like manner the Law serves to direct men to their only hope, not that of self-obtained righteousness through law-works, but through faith in God's promises to Abraham and his seed.

The Law is no more opposed to grace than an x-ray is opposed to healing. While the x-ray cannot repair a ruptured artery, it can expose it and show that surgery is necessary for recovery. While the Law pronounces a curse on all men, it also points to the cure of which the promises speak.

Extinct Distinctions (3:23-29)

23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

In the preceding verses, Paul has focused the reader's attention on some crucial distinctions: flesh versus Spirit, law versus grace, faith versus works, and the Mosaic Covenant versus the Abrahamic Covenant. These distinctions were not adequately understood or applied by the Judaizers. In verses 23-29 Paul turns to the distinctions which the Jews must make, as well as those which, in the light of the cross of Christ, must no longer be made.

Verses 23-25 deal with the Jewish people, including the Apostle Paul. The pronoun "we" draws our attention to the Jewish application of Paul's words. The critical terms are "before" (v. 23) and "now" (v. 25). While the Jews were once kept in custody under the Law (v. 23), they are no longer under the Law as a tutor (v. 25). The Law which the Judaizers sought to exalt, Paul said was abolished. It had performed its function prior to the coming of Christ. The Law's task of restraining men until Christ and leading them to Christ has been accomplished. Therefore, the observance of the Law, as previously required of Old Testament saints, is now only an anachronism, no longer binding on the New Testament believer. Strongly implied in these verses is the foolishness of trying to "turn back the clock" to once again live under the restrictions of the Law.

Verses 26-29 focus on a different group of people, the Gentiles. This is signaled by the change in pronouns from "we" in verses 23-25 to "you" in verses 26-29. I believe that the Jewish Christians are included in the "you" of the last verses, and they are not at all to be seen separately from the group of all true believers.

Faith in Christ constitutes all believers, Jewish or Gentile, as sons of God (vv. 26, 29). Union with **the** Son of God makes any man **a** son of God. This is symbolically proclaimed by the rite of baptism. While circumcision was once the initiatory rite, binding one to the Mosaic Covenant, baptism is the initiatory rite of the Christian. Spirit baptism unites us with Christ, and water baptism symbolizes this union. After the coming of Christ, circumcision is no longer viewed as a significant spiritual act, being superseded by baptism. Paul's emphasis on baptism was a thorn in the side of the Judaizers, but it accurately reflects the change from living under one covenant to another.

On the basis of Paul's words in verses 23-25, the Jewish Christians not only have no need to return to the Law; they must not do so. Let me attempt to illustrate Paul's point with a modern miracle of medicine—the kidney machine. A few years ago, one of the members in our body was diagnosed as having lost virtually all kidney function. How grateful she is to be able to use a kidney machine, which prolonged her life when death would otherwise have been inevitable. The machine was very restricting, and instructions for using it must be followed meticulously, or she will die. Her normal activities are now governed by the hours which she must spend on the machine; nevertheless, her life is marvelously prolonged.

Let's suppose that the doctor called this lady, told her that a kidney donor had been located, and a transplant was scheduled for the next morning. Several weeks after successful surgery the doctors informed her that her body

had accepted the kidney and that she would never again need to use the machine. She has been cured. How ludicrous it would be for her to return, once more, to the kidney machine. Now if she returned to the machine her kidney would stop functioning, for it would be competing with the machine. What was once necessary, but confining and restrictive, would no longer be required (or allowed), due to the reception of a kidney.

Israel's experience is similar. Because of sin, the Law was given, temporarily putting off the penalty of death. With the Law (and previously in the promise made to Abraham) came the promise of a full and permanent solution to sin—the Messiah. After Christ's coming, the Law's purpose as a short-term remedy has been realized, and a return to the Law would be foolish and fatal.

Paul's words in verses 23-25 deal a decisive blow to the teaching of the Judaizers in the Galatian churches. The Law which once distinguished the Jews from the Gentiles is no longer binding, even on the Jews. It is antiquated. The Gentile Galatians had been persuaded by the Judaizers that to be truly spiritual they must place themselves under the Law. Paul counters this by showing that if living under the Law is no longer necessary for the Jews, surely it is not required of the Gentiles either. Just as it would have been needless for Charlotte to return to her kidney machine, it would have been tragic for her to urge all of her friends to use the machine.

Suppose, for example, that there was a law in America in the 18th century requiring every farmer to keep a six month's supply of hay for his horse. Now, years later, most of us do not own horses, nor do we need a reserve of hay. How foolish it would be for us to require all immigrants to buy and keep a horse, along with a six month's supply of hay. What is no longer necessary for us, should also be no longer required of others. The principle underlying Paul's words might be summarized by "One man's trash should not become another man's treasure." The Judaizers didn't understand this principle, so Paul had to point out the change that had occurred for the Jews, and then the implications for Gentiles.

Verse 28 is the climax of this section. It demands that the very distinctions which the Judaizers and others emphasized must be set aside as inconsistent with the equality which all men have in their standing before God in Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28).

Verse 28 spells out the implications of being in Christ. The distinctions which men make, based upon ethnic origin, gender, and cultural, social or economic status, do not in any way determine one's standing in Christ. Since this is true, then there is no reason to compel Gentiles to become Jews. Jewishness is not superior. There is no basis for a woman to feel inferior as a person, in Christ. There is no great tragedy involved if one must remain a slave. This is why Paul is able to encourage the Corinthian saints not to become preoccupied with changing their status:

Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And thus I direct in all the churches. Was any man called already circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called (1 Cor. 7:17-24).

So far as our standing before God is concerned, all human distinctions are done away with in Christ. This frees the Christian from seeking a superior spiritual status by striving to change his social, economic, ethnic, or sexual status. Why do women strive and demand to be like men? I would suggest that it is because they feel that having man-like status makes them a more significant person. Paul taught just the opposite. In Christ, human distinctions of man's worth are abolished, thus giving all Christians equality before God.

There is nothing wrong with improving one's status in life as long as the Christian understands that this has nothing to do with his worth in God's eyes. The effort to improve one's spiritual status is senseless, since all are equal in Christ. While a woman should take advantage of liberties and privileges, just as a slave should take advantage of the opportunity to be free, they should not be compelled. There is not the compulsion that characterizes unbelievers, for the one who is in Christ is secure. Human distinctions pale in light of the fact that God does not distinguish the value of persons in Christ.

There are still distinctions on the basis of factors such as sex and status in life, both in society at large and in the church. Women are prohibited from public speaking and leadership in the church (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-15). Wives are to be subject to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24), slaves to their masters (Eph. 6:5-8), and children

to their parents (Eph. 6:1-3). The important thing to realize is that these distinctions have nothing to do with one's worth to God or his spiritual significance.

In their desperate attempt to prove that the Bible teaches women ought to have equal standing in society with men, a subject which Paul does not address in this passage, the women's liberation movement has entirely missed the point of Paul's words in Galatians 3:28. Those who so quickly condemn Paul for his sexist statements elsewhere praise his wisdom and insight here. They see this passage in light of social implications, when Paul is actually speaking of its spiritual implications. Those women who see themselves as accepted in Christ, with equal standing with every other Christian in the blood of Christ, do not have the compulsive urgency to earn their equality in a man's world by doing what men do. This is not to say that society (and even Christianity) hasn't been wrong in the treatment of women. Rather this text is not the place to prove a point on women's rights.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/contribution-mosaic-covenant-galatians-319-29>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

It was time for the Galatian church to mature. First, they needed to acknowledge that they were no longer under the law as the way to attain God's righteousness. They were heirs of God with full familial rights to God's promises. Second, they needed to realize that following the Law of Moses no longer marked the children of God. Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, male and female—all could inherit God's blessing. Is there something in which we place our faith that is other than the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Embrace Christ and live confidently as sons and daughters of God! When it comes down to it, do we stand with Paul on the bedrock that all believers are one in Christ Jesus?

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Reason for the Law - One part of the reason God gave Moses the Law was to implement some restraint before Jesus came to earth. Without some standard of behavior, people would have destroyed one another through the fleshly nature. The Law also shows us how desperately we need a Savior. Moses and all the Old Testament people needed a mediator. But once Jesus came, the veil in the temple was torn, symbolizing no more priestly separation between God and people. Jesus' sacrifice made a way for those who believe to gain access to God.

Falling Short - Scripture makes it clear: all have sinned, meaning all humanity has fallen short of God's perfect standard. We can only gain access to God by believing by faith and thereby be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who take advantage of that access rest in the freedom of Christ. Satan delights in convincing people, "You are fine—you do not need Jesus, you do not need His blood and God's forgiveness." That is a lie.

More Like Christ - When a person becomes a Christian, he or she is swallowed up in Christ. A follower of Christ, little by little, more and more, evidences Christ—we see more of Christ, less and less of the person. Once a person commits to Jesus, he or she now becomes part of the Body of Christ. Labels like I am a Jew, I am a priest, I am a Gentile are obsolete. When it comes to identifying Abraham's seed, who is in the Jewish family, it includes all that have committed to Christ, not just those who are Jewish by family or cultural association.