

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

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Thursday September 24, 2026

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 3:28 (NLT)

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus

The Inferiority of the Law

Galatians 3:19–22 (NASB95)

- 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 would come to whom the promise had been made.
- 20 Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one.
- 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 everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:19–22 (NLT)

¹⁹ Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. ²⁰ Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham. ²¹ Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. ²² But the Scriptures

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declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.

After showing the superiority of the covenant of promise, Paul shows the inferiority of the covenant of law—first in regard to its purpose, then in regard to its mediator, and finally in regard to its accomplishment.

Point 1- It's Purpose

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (3:19a) NASB

In light of Paul's convincing argument up to this point, the obvious question would be, **Why the Law then?** If salvation has always been by faith and never by works, and if the covenant of promise to Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, what purpose did **the Law** have?

Paul's answer is direct and sobering: **It was added because of transgressions**. The purpose of the law was to demonstrate to man his total sinfulness, his inability to please God by his own works, and his need for mercy and grace. **The Law ... was added** to show the depth of man's **transgressions** against God. It was given to drive him to desperate guilt and the awareness of his need for the Deliverer.

As the apostle explains a few verses later, the law was a "tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith" (3:24). The impossible demands of the law were meant to compel men to recognize their violation of God's standards and to seek His grace through faith in His Son. When a man looks at the law, he sees that his living is more than simply wrong; it is sin, an offense against the holy God, before whom no sinful person can stand. The law shows men their

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violation of the will of God, who rules the universe and holds them accountable for their sin.

The covenant of law is long past, but the moral demands of the law have not diminished, having neither begun nor ended with the Mosaic covenant. That is why preaching the moral, ethical standards of the law today is still imperative in driving men to Christ. Unless men realize they are living in violation of God's law and therefore stand under His divine judgment, they will see no reason to be saved. Grace is meaningless to a person who feels no inadequacy or need of help. He sees no purpose in being saved if he does not realize he is lost. He sees no need of forgiveness by God if he does not know he has offended God. He sees no need to seek God's mercy if he is unaware, he is under God's wrath.

The purpose of the law was, and is, to drive men to despair over their sins and to a desire to receive the salvation that God's sovereign grace offers to those who believe. The purpose of the law was therefore not wrong, but it was inferior. "The Law is holy," Paul says, "and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). But the law merely points to what only grace can produce.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?**
- 2. Why was the law added in Galatians 3:19 ?**

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3. How does the law relate to God’s promise to Abraham?

4. How does grace fulfill the law in a believer’s life?

POINT 2 - ITS MEDIATORS

Having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one. (3:19b–20)

Second, the covenant of law was inferior to the covenant of promise because it was **ordained**, *a technical word for carrying out laws* **through angels by the agency of a mediator**. God gave the covenant of law through two sets of mediators, first **through angels** and then by them through Moses to the people.

God was the Author and Giver of the covenant of law, and He was present with Moses on Mt. Sinai when it was given (Ex. 19:18–24). But in a way not fully explained, the law was given by God to Moses **through angels** (cf. Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2).

When God gave the law, the setting was awesome and forbidding. God warned the people not to come near the fiery mountain, “lest He break forth upon them” (**Ex. 19:24**). But God gave the covenant to Abraham as Friend to friend (see Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–7; 18:1–33). The promise of salvation by faith was so precious to the heart of God that He gave it to Abraham in person. That is the

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way God desires to come to every person who will have His Son as Lord and Savior, **the seed** of Abraham who was to come and **to whom the promise had been made**.

Moses was great and the angels were great; but they were only mediators. Paul warned the Galatian believers not to exalt Moses or angels over God Himself as the Judaizers were doing.

The Greek text of Galatians 3:20 is difficult to translate and interpret, but Paul seems to be pointing out that **a mediator** (literally one who stands between two parties) is needed only when more than **one party** is involved. God gave the covenant directly to Abraham without **a mediator** because He was the **only one** involved in *making* the covenant. Abraham was a witness to the covenant and was a beneficiary, but he was not a party to it. Abraham had no part in establishing or keeping the covenant. That responsibility was God's alone.

The covenant of law, however, not only involved mediators (angels and Moses) but mutual obligations on the two parties (God and Israel). The stipulation of that covenant was, "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live" (Deut. 5:33). Man's part was to obey and God's was to give life, to save. The problem was that man could not keep His part, and therefore God could not grant salvation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?

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2. What does Galatians 3:20 mean by “a mediator is not a mediator of one” ?

POINT 3 - ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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. (3:21–22)

Finally, the covenant of law was inferior to the covenant of promise because of its accomplishments.

Again, anticipating his readers' likely response, Paul asks rhetorically, **Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Contrary** seems better rendered “against” (KJV) or “opposed to” (NIV). God gave both the promise and the law, and He does not work against Himself.

As with other such questions (see 2:17; Rom. 6:1–2; 7:13), Paul immediately gives the strong negative answer himself: **May it never be!** The idea was unthinkable. **For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.** In other words, **the**

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Law was inferior because it could not save, it **was** not **able to impart life**. If it could have done so, it *would* have been against and **contrary to the promises of God**, because it would have provided an alternate and conflicting way of salvation. It would have made the death of Christ tragically unnecessary (2:21). God's grace, Christ's sacrifice, and man's faith would be at best, an optional means of salvation.

But that is not the case, because **the Scripture**, through the law, **has shut up all men under sin**. The phrase **shut up** means to lock up securely, to enclose on all sides with no way of escape. "I was once alive apart from the Law," Paul said; "but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (**Rom. 7:9**), because the covenant with Moses brought "the law of sin and of death" (**8:2**). Not until a person smashes himself against the demands of the law and the accusations of conscience does he recognize his helplessness and see his need for a Savior. Not until the law has arrested and imprisoned him and sentenced him to death will he be driven to despair in himself and turn to Jesus Christ.

The ultimate purpose of shutting up men under sin and death was **that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe**. The law was given to bring **men under sin** to the point of saying, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (**Rom. 7:24**). Grace is given to enable **those who believe** to say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (**v. 25**). God's saving purpose is the climax (cf. Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does the law say about righteousness?

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2. How does faith fulfill the law?

3. Why is it important to consider everyone equal within the body of Christ?

CLOSING PRAYER