

Law and Promise?

Galatians 3:19-25

East Berlin Community Church
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Introduction

- Outdated, absurd laws that are still “on the books”
- Laws make great sense at the time they are written. But over time, they can become outdated, outmoded, no longer relevant.
- *“Is the Law given to Moses at Sinai for today?”*
- False teachers in Galatia contended that salvation was by God’s grace through faith, plus keeping the law.
- Paul’s teaching that salvation is by God’s grace through faith plus NOTHING
- False teachers contend that the Mosaic covenant supersedes and annuls the Abrahamic covenant
- Paul counters in Galatians 3:15-18 proving that the law did not annul or amend the promises God made with Abraham

Law and Promise? — Galatians 3:19-25

A. *“What purpose does the law serve?” — Galatians 3:19 “added because of transgressions”*

1. The Law defines sin. Romans 7:7; 3:20
2. The Law deals with sin.
3. The Law provokes sin. Romans 7:5, 8-12
4. The Law transforms sin into transgressions.
 - a. Before the giving of the law, sin was not a “transgression”—Romans 5:13; 4:15
 - b. Difference in God’s sight between sinning ignorantly and sinning willfully.
 - c. The Law turned sin into a punishable offense.—Romans 5:20
 - d. Bottom line: we are all guilty before God!

B. *“Is the law against the promises of God?” — Galatians 3:21-25*

1. Immediate, emotional response: *“Certainly not!”*
2. *“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law?”*
 - a. Sounds like Paul is open to the possibility that a person could be saved by law keeping.
 - b. The grammar of the ancient text says the opposite. Four kinds of “ifs” in the Greek language
 - 1) First class conditional—affirmation of the condition. Best translated “since”
 - 2) Second class conditional—“contrary to fact”—it affirms the opposite
 - a) *“If you were older, you would understand.”*
 - b) *“If he had left yesterday, he would be here today”*
 - c) *“If there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law”* The truth is: There has NOT been a law given which could have given life; therefore righteousness is NOT by the law.
3. The law does not justify nor give life, but it does prepare the way for the gospel and for faith.
 - a. Like a “prison warden”, it confines all under sin.—Galatians 3:22-23; Romans 3:9-19
 - b. Like a “tutor”, it brings us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith—Galatians 3:24
 - a. The role of the “pedagogue” in Greco-Roman society
 - b. As a tutor, the law...
 - 1) Points out of need for Christ.
 - 2) Shows our hopelessness and helplessness apart from Christ

C. *“Is the law permanent and thus for today, or was it temporary?” — Galatians 3:19-25*

1. The law is a bilateral, mediated, conditional agreement between two parties.
 - a. The role of angels in the giving of the Law—Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2
 - b. The conditional nature of the law—the big “Ifs”—Exodus 19:5-6; Deut. 28:1-2, 15
 - c. Ratification of the law by both parties—Jeremiah 34:18-20
2. The law was a temporary, bilateral, conditional agreement in force until *“the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.”*—Galatians 3:19
 - a. Jesus Christ fulfills the law—Matthew 5:17-18
 - b. Jesus Christ establishes the “new covenant” relationship which renders the old “obsolete”—Jeremiah 31:31-34
3. Historical views of the laws relationship to us today
 - a. No purpose for today
 - b. Prescriptive for today
 - c. Limited purpose, but not normative