

The Gospel In Galatians: Lesson 7  
**The Road To Faith**

**Memory Text:** “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” (Galatians 3:22)

**Setting The Stage:** It’s never fun getting disoriented, let alone down a path that leads to nowhere. I’m sure we’ve all experienced that in some way or another. *The worst type of disorientation however is spiritual disorientation*, which always leads to a spiritual dead end. It’s not worse because we experience a little or a lot of inconvenience. It’s worse because much more is at stake – our eternal life in fact. Thankfully, God hasn’t left us to ourselves. If we want to be led by Him, He’ll lead us.

**Psalm 5:8:** “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face.” (see Ps. 23:3)

**Psalm 43:3:** “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your tabernacle.”

**Isaiah 30:21:** “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.”

**John 16:13:** “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

We can be thankful for the powerful working of the Holy Spirit who has been sent to lead us to know and embrace truth. Through the Holy Spirit inspired writings of Paul, God was helping the Galatians return to the true gospel of justification, or righteousness by faith. They had started well, but were tending toward the dead end of righteousness by works – the idea that doing certain things could earn favor with God. It’s a trap we all need to avoid.

*There is nothing that we can ever hope to do that could ever merit salvation.* God made us in such a way so that it’s difficult to pat ourselves on the back. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

### **Sunday – The Law & The Promise**

Galatians 3:21; Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 6:24; Romans 4:17; John 5:21; Ezekiel 11:19, 20

In Galatians 3:15-20, Paul has argued two things:

(1) Galatians 3:17, 18. *The giving of the law at Sinai 430 years after God made a covenant/promise with Abraham, took nothing away from nor altered or changed that covenant in any way.* In other words, God wasn't changing the terms of salvation from faith to works/obedience. Faith has always been the means by which salvation is received, and always will be. If a person could be justified by the works of the law then God's promises, our faith response, and God's grace are made irrelevant. The question is whether we trust that God's grace is sufficient to accomplish what it set out to accomplish; that is, our complete redemption?

(2) Galatians 3:19. *The giving of the law at Sinai was for the purpose of redirecting Israel back to God and the grace He offers to all those who come to Him in faith.* In other words, the law wasn't given as a justifier of sin, but a revealer of sin directing God's people to the only One who can truly justify – the promised Messiah. When we know how evil our hearts are we then realize that we need a change of heart. But we know we can't change our hearts, so we go to the only One who can – Jesus.

Now to ensure that his readers don't think he is undermining the law, Paul asks and then answers an important question: **Does the law contradict the promises of God?** **Galatians 3:21.** Paul responds with an emphatic, no! Who gave the promise? God did. Who gave the law? God did. Is God trying to hurt His own cause? Not at all. Conclusion: both the promise and the law are valid; they are not the same, but they do fulfill different roles, complimenting each other. *And that's the essence of our study this week: how do they work together, and equally important; how does this affect my walk with God?*

**What mistaken concepts did Paul's opponents have about the role of the law, and is it possible that we have them too?**

**Leviticus 18:5:** "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord."

**Deuteronomy 6:24:** "And the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day."

According to these verses, if a person keeps the law, what benefit comes to them? Life. These verses tell us that keeping the law is a good thing and that if we keep them our life will be preserved. (Fence around sheep to make sheep miserable or to keep the wolves out? Guardrail on edge of road, Yosemite, to make driving experience unpleasant or to preserve us alive?) No one is going to look at the Ten Commandments and say they're not helpful. As a matter of fact, according to Paul, he said that the law is "holy and just and good." (Rom. 7:12)

**But is there spiritual life in the law? Does it have the power to change a person?** Certainly not! **Galatians 3:21, 22.**

**Romans 4:17:** “(as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.”

**John 5:21:** “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”

**Ezekiel 11:19, 20:** “Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

**Paul’s point?** Because of the extent of sin (“all under sin” v. 22) and the limitations of the law (in that it is only a revealer of sin and not a justifier of sin) the promise of eternal life can only come to us through another means; namely, Christ by faith.

### Monday – “Kept Under Law”

Galatians 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18; Romans 6:14, 15

**Galatians 3:23.** By “we,” Paul is referring to the Jewish Christians in the Galatians church who were very familiar with the law. In this verse, Paul is contrasting the place of the law before and after the first coming of Christ. “The faith” is a reference to the fulfillment of the promise revealed in Christ and not Christian faith in general (see last part of verse).

**What does being “under the law” actually mean?** Paul mentions it 12 times in his letter to the Galatians. There’s been a lot of confusion over this phrase. Keep in mind that the word “law” used here refers to the entire legal system under which Israel was constituted a theocracy, at Mt. Sinai, including the moral law, which God proclaimed in person, and the ceremonial laws promulgated through Moses.

Being “under the law” could mean a couple of different things depending on the immediate context of the word (like the word “world” in the Bible):

**Galatians 4:4, 5, 21:** “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons... Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?” (cp. 1 Cor. 9:20)

*Under the laws jurisdiction.* Verses 4 & 5 are referring to Christ who was born, not under the condemnation of the law (see v. 21), but born under its jurisdiction. Christ complied with ritual law to the extent He needed to as a Jew, but He never believed or taught that the practice of those things could ever hope to merit salvation.

**Galatians 5:18:** “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

*Under the law as another way of salvation.* Or in other words, not practicing righteousness by works, which Christ desired His followers to move beyond (see Matt. 5:20).

**Romans 6:14, 15:** “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!”

*Under the law’s condemnation.* Like Rom. 3:19, these verses speak to being under the condemnation of the law because the law has been violated. (Caught shoplifting)

The SDA Bible commentary suggested that the law being referred to here is not any particular law, but law in principle. The point is Christians are not under law as a way of salvation, but under grace. The law can’t save a sinner, nor can law put an end to sin or its dominion. Actually, because of the sinfulness of mankind, the law causes transgression to increase (Rom. 5:20). Like a mirror, whose sole purpose is to point out dirt on the face not cleanse the face of the dirt or prevent a person from getting dirty again, law cannot cleanse sin or provide any power to overcome it.

## **Tuesday – The Law As Our “Guard”**

Galatians 3:19-24

(Many years ago an auto commercial captured the fancy of the national audience, no doubt because of the simple yet profound message it delivered. The commercial featured a woman driving a vehicle and thinking what it would be like to cross the lines on the highway and “go for broke.” She remembers her childhood days when she would “color outside the lines” of the figures in her coloring book. The fantasy comes to an abrupt end when the voice of her kindergarten teacher jolts her back to reality. What did the teacher say? “Stay between the lines. The lines are our friends.”)

**Galatians 3:19-24.** **What is Paul saying about the law in these verses?** The law wasn’t given as an addendum to the promise, to fight with or contradict the promise, or to provide another means of salvation (works rather than faith), rather *the law was given as a revealer of sin to cause us to flee to Christ the great justifier of sin.*

The law is no substitute for the promise of salvation through grace by faith. Actually, the law helps us better understand just how wonderful the promise really is. Someone once said, *“The human heart cannot receive the healing thread of the gospel unless it is first pierced by the needle of the law.”*

**“Kept,”** (v. 23) or “guarded.” Sounds negative doesn’t it? But is it entirely? If I were escorted to court in a police car, would you automatically think that I’m on my way to my own trial? I could be, but not necessarily. Witnesses in a trial can sometimes be escorted in a police car to a trial to, not to prevent them from escaping, but to ensure their safe passage. To be in police custody isn’t always a negative thing. It depends which side of the law you’re on, doesn’t it?

For each of us who have sinned (“for all have sinned”), the law acts as law enforcement taking us into custody and putting under its watch all those who have brought upon themselves the death sentence. But when “faith came” (when we saw a sin-bearing, sin-pardoning Savior and reached out after Him in faith that He would deliver us) we are set free and given not just our own lives back, but granted eternal life.

Now Christ has made me His “witness” (Acts 1:8) to testify of His goodness and grace, countering all the dirty lies the devil has told about God. Being God’s witness places us at odds with God’s accuser. What we now need is protection. God’s law, which once condemned me as a violator of it, now having been justified by faith, protects me and provides me safe passage throughout heaven’s judgment hour only as I stay within its parameters of protection. As we read in Deut. 6:24, keeping the law is for our good always; not as a Savior from sin (because only Jesus saves us), but as a protector from sin as the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4).

### Wednesday – The Law As Our Schoolmaster

Galatians 3:24

*“The law is the light that reveals how dirty the room is, not the broom that sweeps it clean.” – Dr. Phil Williams*

**Galatians 3:24:** “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

**“Schoolmaster,”** (Gr. *“paidagogos”* – pie-die-go-dos) a “tutor,” or a “guardian.” Not a teacher, but a leader of children. “In ancient Greek households the *paidagogos* was a supervisor and companion of boys. He accompanied them to school, protected them from harm, kept them from mischief, and had the right to discipline them. In Greek art he is generally represented with a stick in his hand.” (SDA Commentary, vol. 6, p. 961)

Could it be said that the ceremonial law of OT times fulfilled to some degree this responsibility with Israel? Surely. The sanctuary and its services pointed them to Christ, the way of salvation. The sacrifices and the shedding of blood was designed to teach them the incredible cost and heinous character of sin, including the incredible mercy and justice of God. Every time a lamb was offered it pointed forward to Christ’s coming the first time.

Could it be said that the law of God fulfilled in some degree this responsibility with Israel? Surely. Just like that mirror pointing out dirt and grime and the need for cleansing, so the law points out sin in our life and the need of a Savior. The law acts as a *paidagogos* to lead us to Christ. (see Selected Messages, vol. 1, pp. 233-35)

## Thursday – The Law & The Believer

Galatians 3:25; Colossians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 9:21

**Galatians 3:25:** “But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

Paul has argued that because Abraham was justified apart from the works of the law (circumcision in particular), then all can be justified on the same basis; but even more so now that the promise (his “Seed”) made to Abraham has come (“faith has come”).

*The Galatians are being told that they should give up on their insistence that they can be justified by works. And it’s the same with anyone today who thinks that efforts to please God will earn merit with Him. If we have accepted Christ by faith, then we walk in faith not in works.*

**Colossians 2:6:** “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.”

**1 Corinthians 9:21:** “To those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law”

Paul is not abrogating the moral law. It’s true that the ceremonial law was done away with when Christ died on the cross (Col. 2:14-17), but to suggest that the cross abrogated the moral law would be absolute folly. Genuine faith that justifies the sinner leads that person to honor and obey the law of Christ.

**What does the law do for a sinner justified by faith?**

John Wesley wrote in his *Sermons On Several Occasions*, vol. 1 pp. 314, 315: “I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ; seeing I now want it as much, to keep me to Christ, as I ever wanted it to bring me to Him...Indeed each is continually sending me to the other, the law to Christ, and Christ to the law. On the one hand the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ; on the other, the love of God in Christ endears the law to me above gold or precious stones...This is perfect freedom; thus to keep the law, and to walk in all His commandments blameless.”

The doctrine of grace without obedience to God’s law is a doctrine of disgrace. Thank God that He wants to write His law on our hearts and in our minds (Heb. 8:10). Won’t you receive His promise today?