



January 12, 2025
“Sons of God”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Annual Church Meeting January 19, after the Service.

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GALATIANS 3:19-22 ~ ¹⁹Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations, having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made...

If the Law does not apply, and if it never made anyone righteous anyway, why was it added?

The key to understanding is the radically different purposes of the Promise and the Law.

Since they have different purposes, they apply to different things. If the Law had been added to the promise, it would invalidate the original promise.

The “violations” here, and “sins” in other translations, is παράβασις (pä-řa-bä-sēs), not the word family ἁμαρτάνω / ἁμαρτία (hä-mäř-tä-nō / hä-mäř-tē-ä). It means specific violations of the Law.

The Law was added to define general sin into actual transgressions of concrete commands.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

God's purpose in making general sin specific transgressions was to make the Jewish people keenly aware of their utter inability to obey God. (Romans 4:15, 5:20, 7:7&8).

The Law came through Moses, the mediator, from angels. This distances the Law from God, but far more importantly it means that the Law was always temporary.

The Promise was made directly by God as an everlasting covenant.

²⁰Now a mediator is not for one party only; but God is only one.

Having a Mediator means two parties, indicating a role for the Jews.

"God is One," is the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4. It means that when God promised Abraham, it was a one-sided gift given.

Secondly, God is One means that God is the God of all. (Romans 3:29&30).

²¹Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Far from it! For if a law had been given that was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Since the Law was temporary and did not change the Promise, was it contrary to the promise? μή γένοιτο (mā gě-nōl-tō), "may it never be!"

If the Law was obeyable, then the Law would impart life. If that were the case, Grace through faith would just be an alternative means of Justification. That would be contrary.

Of course, no human being is able to perfectly obey. (II Corinthians 3:6).

The Law isn't contrary to Grace because the two things are not even related to each other in their goal or purpose.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

To use the Law to be righteous is to misuse the Law, because that was never its design.

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

The Law was instituted to condemn, and Grace to bless by providing a way out of condemnation.

The entirety of the Old Testament Scripture confines all of creation under sin. (Romans 8:22, Genesis 3:17).

The purpose of the Law was to point all to their need for a Savior.

It was put in place until the “Seed” would come and provide that specific object of faith – Jesus.

The verse ends with, “so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” It seems redundant.

Because of that, the KJV rendered it “the promise by faith OF Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.”

Humans who believe – emphasizes their activity of believing.

By means of their faith in Christ Jesus – emphasizes the object of faith.

GALATIANS 3:23-26 ~ ²³But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed.

“Before faith came,” means before Christ, the object of faith came, thus making faith fully operable.

Before that, “we,” those under the Law “were kept in custody under the Law, being confined” until...

Notice the word “destined.” When God promises something future... it is destined.

Custody means to guard in the sense of a jailer keeping someone imprisoned. The Law keeps the imprisoned sinners locked up until the “destined” jailbreak by Jesus.

24Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

NASB “our guardian to lead us to Christ,” the KJV, “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” NKJV “the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.”

Those phrases are the word, παιδαγωγός (pī-dä-gō-gös), meaning a male nanny.

This stresses the temporary nature of the Law.

As indispensable as the Law is in understanding the New Covenant and in pointing people to their need for Grace, nothing in it is binding upon Christians.

25But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

This confirms the termination of the Law because Christ has come.

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

Everyone who believes in Him enough to trust in His completed work, is a Son of God.

The NASB has the “sons and daughters of God,” and many other translations have the “children of God.”

Whether male or female, you are a son of inheritance.

Universal Sonship elevates females, it doesn't diminish them.

Galatians 3:19-22, 19Why the Law then? It was added on account of the violations, having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20Now a mediator is not for one party only; but God is only one. 21Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Far from it! For if a law had been given that was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. 22But the Scripture has confined everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

There are always subtle things going on in the Greek text that doesn't translate well, into smooth, succinct English. But these verses we'll examine today are on another level. If you had a hard time following what I just read, you're in good company. Because of the complexity of this section of Galatians there are many who misunderstand the flow of the argument that Paul made. It has led to some erroneous interpretations over time.

I cannot go through all the nuanced theological, contextual, and syntactical reasons that what I'm about

to teach is correct, so, as always, really, you will have to decide whether to trust me or not.

I will say that last week, like nearly every week, beyond my normal prayer and meditation, beyond my normal research into various historical, cultural, religious, and geographical, background issues, I poured over more than 100 pages of highly technical, graduate-level, scholarly, analysis of the original language of these few verses for today.

Those hundred-plus pages came from the life-long devotion and hard work of multiple Bible scholars representing multiple denominational backgrounds. I'm not telling you to agree with me, but I am suggesting that you should come up with a very good reason for not agreeing with me. "It's not what my Sunday school teacher taught me" probably isn't good enough... Again, your choice. But also consider this... I have no agenda other than being faithful to the Lord and edifying you. I'm on your side.

We've been talking about God granting right standing in His presence to people who believe in Him enough to trust Him with their eternity. Basically, God granting

Salvation to those who rely upon Him to do so, rather than to those who try to earn it for themselves.

Since that is the case, why then was there the whole Jewish nation thing, let alone the Law? It all started with a promise to a dude from what is now Iraq, renamed Abraham... why not just leave it at that? Why not just keep it what it was where anyone believing God would be Saved and anyone not believing in God wouldn't. Why the Jews as a nation and a people and why give them the Law?

Paul gives us the answer. As we delve into his answer, please remember a fundamental tenant of Biblical interpretation... Context. Paul had a definite purpose here and it wasn't to give a history lesson. He was trying to show the Galatians why they did not need to be circumcised and follow the Judaic Law. Never lose sight of the overall context. as you study the details. Don't forget the forest, just because your nose is stuck in the sap of a single tree.

If the Law does not apply, and if it never made anyone righteous, why was the Law added in the first place? The Law, as given, to that particular and unique people, called the "Sons of God," was added to those

people, not to the Promise that God had made to Abraham. The key to understanding is the radically different purposes of the Promise and the Law. Since they have different purposes, they apply to different things. If the Law had been added to the promise, it would change the promise thus invalidating, or revoking, the original promise.

It would be God refusing to honor that original promise that He made. A dad promises that right after school he will take his kid to get an ice cream cone. Then when the kid gets home, the dad adds that the kid must finish their after-school chores and their homework first, before he takes the kid for ice cream. The promise was changed and so the original promise was cancelled. A human dad might do that, but God never would.

This is a critical distinction. Here we are in the first half of verse 19... The Law was added, not to the promise, but to the Jewish people on “account of the violations.” Most translations have “because of sins.” That’s misleading. Without diving into the minutia, Paul uses a word, παράβασις (pä-řa-bä-sēs), better translated in the NASB and others as “transgression,” rather than as “sins.” Sin is almost always the word family ἁμαρτάνω /

ἁμαρτία (hä-mär-tä-nō / hä-mär-tē-ä). Here Paul was talking about violations of the Law.

Paul only ever uses παράβασις in reference to the Law. It always means a violation, or transgression, of a specifically defined Law, never as sin in general. When we get that distinction, we can also recognize that the word, translated as “on account of,” here and “because of,” in other Bibles, really has its more common meaning of, “for the sake of.”

I know, relax, what does that mean? What in the world is Scott on about now? Simply put, instead of the Law “was added on account of the violations,” we would translate, that the Law “was added to the people for the sake of defining sin as specific violations.” The Law was added to define general, nebulous, esoteric, undefined sin into actual transgressions of concrete commands. Instead of the general, “be good,” it was now the specific, “Thou shalt NOT have other gods, make idols, take the Lord’s name vainly, violate the Sabbath, dishonor your mom and dad, murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet.”

God's purpose in making general sin specific transgressions was to make the Jewish people keenly aware of their utter inability to obey God.

You see when sin is left undefined as it was for the Gentiles, it is easy to assume that you are a basically good person. But when the 613 Laws of God were written into Holy Scripture, it isn't so easy to claim righteousness.

Now, of course, people being people, the Jews found ways to justify themselves under the Law, but the actual point of the Law was to change sin into transgression, thus revealing sin as specific violations, for the purpose of demonstrating that no man is righteous before God. This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 4:15b, where he wrote, "where there is no law, there also is no violation." Paul did not mean that apart from the Law there is no sin. He was saying that apart from the Law there was no specific violation.

Here in Montana, we used to have no speed limit at all on our highways. That did not mean that you couldn't get a ticket for going too fast. I know from personal experience. But if you get a ticket for going too fast, it wasn't a speeding ticket, there was no specific speed

violated. What you got was a basic rule violation, which was a failure to drive properly and prudently.

Again, that's what Paul was saying in Romans 5:20a, "The Law came in so that the offense would increase." It is the "offense" specifically that increased, not necessarily because people became more sinful under the Law, but because they now knew exactly what constituted sin as a particular violation of the Law. Again, this is what Paul meant in Romans 7:7b&8a, where he wrote, "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." But sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind."

Paul didn't really covet any more than he did before, it was just that knowing about coveting – becoming aware of the sinfulness of coveting, he became far more aware of his own coveting. His sin increased because he now saw it for what it was. That's the point and purpose of the Law.

Take a toddler for example... They are programmed to steal. They are miniature criminals constantly swiping

what does not belong to them. They must be taught that stealing is sinful. Before they learn that, they are unaware that their thieving behavior is wrong. Once aware though, they see theft everywhere. They see it in themselves, and they clearly recognize it as evil in others. Thus begins the tattle-tale stage. We turn them from short bandits into short informants.

The Law was added for the sake of defining sin as specific violations and thereby increasing the recognition of sin and so seeing the vastness of the chasm between God and man. This beautiful gift from Almighty God came to His children the Jews. They were the recipients of the Law and therefore of the knowledge that all mankind is irrevocably corrupt and so, in desperate need of a Savior. A Savior that could only possibly be God Himself.

This Law was “ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator, until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made.” This is not negative, as in the angels are fallen demons, nor is it positive, as in the magnificent angelic host attended the giving of the Law. What’s happening here is a sort of neutral distancing of the Law from God, but far more importantly a hint that the Law was always temporary.

The Law came to the Jewish people through Moses, the mediator. Moses got the Law, not from God, but from angels as indicted in Deuteronomy 33, Acts 7, and Hebrews 2.

The point is that the Promise was made to Abraham directly by God Himself and was a never-ending, everlasting, covenant between the two of them extending to all of Abraham's heirs. The Law, on the other hand, was given indirectly and only for a time and that timespan was "until" the "Seed," the promised Fulfiller would complete the transaction started with Abraham.

Verse 20 is very confusing if you're not following Paul's logic carefully. His point here, in the first part of the verse, is that Moses was the mediator between the Law given through angels and the Jewish people receiving it. Two parties, indicating a role for the Jews. The Jews, as a party, therefore had a specific obligation under the Law.

The second part of verse 20, "God is One," is the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4. Paul's point here is two-fold. 1) First, when God promised Abraham, it was

one-sided. God unilaterally chose to bless Abraham and his true heirs... period. Now, to accept that blessing, one must accept it for what it is, but accepting a gift is not the same as obeying a Law.

Such a promise is not mediated. It comes directly between God and the person blessed. There was no mediator of the Promise to Abraham and so it follows that there would be no mediator of the Promise to his heirs either. There is no mediator for a Christian the relationship is direct. You don't need a Deacon, or an Elder, or a pastor, or a bishop, or a pope, or a saint, or anything else to mediate between you and God.

Hopefully, you thought of Jesus as our Mediator and so He is, which only serves as further proof that Jesus is God. 2) The second element of "God is One," is that He is the God of all, not of the Jews only. This is Paul's point in Romans 3:29&30 NLT, "is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one." One God of all and so the exact same means of Grace to all.

Verse 21 follows from the notion that since the Law was a temporary feature for the Jewish people that in no way altered the promise to Abraham, was it then contrary to the promise? Paul responds with his famous $\mu\grave{\eta}$ $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\iota\tau\omicron$ ($m\bar{a}$ $g\check{e}$ - $n\omicron i$ - $t\check{o}$), “may it never be!” or “Lord, forbid!” or, as in the NASB, “Far from it!”

If the Law was obeyable, then the Law would impart life to all those who perfectly obeyed it. Righteousness, not as a credit, but as an actual fact, would be the result. If that were the case, then Grace through faith would just be an alternative means of Justification. There would be two different avenues to reach God, and they would be completely contrary to one another.

If that were the case, then the person Justified as righteous, and therefore eternally Saved, through their total dependance upon the completed work of Christ, by very definition, would trust entirely in God’s activity, work, and merit on their behalf. While the person Justified as righteous and therefore eternally Saved through their own performance under the Law, by very definition, would trust in their own activity, work, and merit. Two different paths that are contrary to one another.

As we've already seen though, no human being is able to perfectly obey the entirety of the Law. Except of course, Jesus. As the Bible declares in II Corinthians 3:6b NLT, "The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life."

The Law isn't contrary to Grace because the two things are not even related to each other in their goal or purpose. To use the Law to be righteous is to misuse the Law, because that was never its design. To use the Law correctly was to see the impossibility of it and look to God for a solution. Again, if the Law could Save, God would have never promised a Messiah – there would be no point.

The Law was instituted to condemn, and Grace to bless. The Law made sin specific, Grace through Jesus made faith specific. That's what verse 22 is all about. The entirety of the Old Testament Scripture confines mankind under sin. And not just mankind, but the entirety of the physical universe. The word translated as "everyone" really means "all," as in the totality of creation. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:22b, "the whole creation groans and suffers," because of human sin. In Genesis 3, God cursed even the ground.

The goal and purpose of the Old Testament Law was to point humans, yes, but all creation as well, to their need for the promised Messiah or Savior; it was never to become a framework for humans to save themselves and thereby for them to save the planet, or the creatures, or creation.

The Law then was put in place until the “Seed” would come and provide that specific object of faith – the trust in Jesus for Salvation. The original promise to Abraham was fulfilled only after mankind learned, through the Law, how absolutely necessary Christ was.

That, my dear friends, means that not only was the Law not contrary to Grace, it was actually complimentary to Grace in driving us to Christ.

One last point here, the verse ends with, “so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” If you look closely, it seems redundant to say that it is human faith in Jesus Christ, and that the promise is given to humans who believe.

Because of that, the KJV rendered it “the promise by faith OF Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” Now, we have eliminated the redundancy and

have recognized the faithfulness of Jesus along with our belief in Him. It seems better. It's not. What all modern scholars, including those behind the NKJV, now recognize is that Paul wasn't being redundant, he was emphasizing two different aspects of our faith.

The righteousness promised by God is given to humans who believe – the emphasis is on their activity – believing. It come by means of faith in Christ Jesus – the emphasis is on the object of faith – Jesus. Biblical, Salvific Faith... that is faith that Saves, and it is always an activity. A believing, directed at an object, Jesus.

Let me also say that while this is a small example of how we today can be more accurate than the Church of England priests behind the KJV were able to be more than 400 years ago, there is nothing wrong with the KJV. This is a nuance that I appreciate, but it is just that – a nuance – a tiny refinement – that's all. Bottom line, if you enjoy the KJV, by all means enjoy it. The concepts of our active faith in an object as well as Christ's demonstrated faith to the Father and His faithfulness to us are taught throughout the Bible.

Galatians 3:23-26, 23But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the

faith that was destined to be revealed. 24Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. 26For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Verse 23 says “before faith came,” meaning before Christ. Not before faith literally. Before the time when Christ completed His work fulfilling the promise to Abraham that made Grace through faith fully operable.

Before that, “we,” technically the Jews, and those few Gentiles who accepted the Law, “we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined” until Christ was revealed for Who and for What He is.

Notice the word “destined.” When God promises something future... it is destined to be. It will happen because He is faithful, and He is able. You can count on that.

Whereas verse 22 emphasized that all were imprisoned under sin, verse 23 emphasizes custody under the Law. Custody means to watch over or guard in the sense of a jailer or prison warden keeping

someone imprisoned. The Law keeps the imprisoned sinners locked up until the “destined” jailbreak by Jesus.

Verse 24 is often misunderstood and so it is often translated in a misleading way. The NASB has the Law being “our guardian to lead us to Christ,” is just as bad as the KJV, “the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,” and both are almost as bad as the NKJV “the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.”

The phrases “guardian to lead,” or “schoolmaster to bring,” or “tutor to bring,” is one word, παιδαγωγός (pī-dä-gō-gōs). Greek παιδός (pī-dōs), means child. We get all of our “pedo” words from it like Paedobaptism. The second part is the same as the tail end of the word synagogue. It means “to gather together,” or “to lead into one place.”

A παιδαγωγός in the ancient world was typically a male slave who functioned as an au pair, or a male nanny, for young children.

Basically, a masculine version of Mary Poppins. While a παιδαγωγός did teach the kids some things, like basic manners, his primary purpose was to act as their

guardian, not their tutor. He was supposed to look after them until they were old enough to look after themselves.

I bring it up because Paul was not saying that the Law was the teacher leading people to Christ here – he’s already made that point previously. What he was stressing in this verse was the temporary nature of the Law. The Law was only the παιδαγωγός until the kids grew up... It was never to be a permanent fixture.

A better way to translate verse 24 would be as the NIV, “the law was put in charge until Christ came.” Or the NLT, “The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith.” In this case, I really like the MSG, “Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law.”

So, the Law was our guardian to keep us and lead us until Christ appeared. Then we have a purpose clause in the second part of verse 24.

Why was the Law our παιδαγωγός? To set the stage for Salvific faith in Christ. It should have been obvious

that the Law was temporary and so the people under the Law should have been looking for the Permanent Solution.

People under the Law should have been desperately looking for God's promised Savior because the Law didn't Save, it only made sin evident, apparent, obvious. Here, in addition, those under the Law should have understood the temporary nature of the Law and been prepared for their Savior.

Notice what a wonderful blessing the Law was for the Jewish people. They were the only ones who, through the Law, could have been so keenly aware and solidly prepared for the Arrival of the Messiah, Christ Jesus. Both Jews and Gentiles, to this day, are best brought to the feet of Jesus by grasping the concept of need as taught in the Old Testament and particularly the Law. We just need to use it correctly, for what it is... The bad news.

You must accept the bad news before you can even recognize the value of the Good News, let alone embrace it Salvifically.

As indispensable as the Law is in understanding the New Covenant and in pointing people to their need for Grace, nothing in it is binding upon Christians. Even the Ten Commandments have been subsumed within the One Commandment of the New Covenant.

The Law defines crime and punishment. Most people will obey the letter of the law when necessary to avoid the punishment part. That is a far cry from obeying the full intent of the law because you completely agree with the law from the core of your being.

You are driving on the north portion of the bypass. The speed limit is 60 and you are doing 70. You notice a Highway Patrol car joining from an onramp. What do you do? Did you slow down because you suddenly agree with the speed limit? One guy wrote, the Law is like a cage. It can keep a lion from eating a lamb, but it can't keep the lion from wanting to eat the lamb.

What God promised through His Messiah was a change of heart for the people. Now, Christians, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, can obey the One Command from their heart because God has changed their heart with His Love. The command is to Love, pure and simple. As a command, it is an activity that we must

engage in. And as a definition, it is an unconditional kind of love.

If anyone actively loves God in an unconditional manner it is impossible for them to break the first four Commandments of the Law. If anyone actively loves others in an unconditional manner it is impossible for them to break the last six Commandments of the Law. The New Covenant is God's Love poured out to you and then you in turn allowing His love to overflow you and splash out onto Him and all those around you.

Verse 25 confirms the termination of the Law, by declaring that the time of the Law is over. Why? Because Christ has come and with Him a new era has dawned. We are now under the New Covenant written in His Blood. His Blood shed due to Love.

Then verse 26 caps it off beautifully by stating the outcome of this specific faith in Jesus as the Messiah or Christ. Everyone who believes in Him enough to trust in His completed work, is a Son of God.

Notice that the newest revision to the NASB has "sons and daughters of God." The King James, the New

International, the New Century, the New Living and others simply have, “children of God.” It’s a bad plan.

It’s true, as we will shortly see, but it misses Paul’s point entirely. These translators want to stress that females are equally Saved, but that’s a given, especially with what’s to come.

What Paul was stressing here is just what he wrote and what the older NASB, Holman, ESV, and NET, preserve... “in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

Whether male or female, you are a son of inheritance. Universal Sonship elevates females, it doesn’t diminish them. Every female Christian is equally an heir of the promise. Also notice that while equal, males and females are very different. That’s to be celebrated, not diminished.

1) Do you believe that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh and that He lived a perfectly sinless human life thereby fulfilling the Law? 2) Do you believe that He took your sin, not in part, but the whole, and paid for it all on the Cross of Calvary? 3) Do you believe that Jesus died and was buried and that on the Third Day,

He rose again proving His victory of sin, death, and the grave? 4) Do you believe that entrusting yourself to God's Grace through Christ's sacrificial death is the only way that you can be declared righteous enough to enter into His presence forever?

Do you believe all of that strongly enough to trust God that He has made you a Son of God, an heir to the Promise? If you do, you are welcome to partake of Holy Communion.