

## A Practical Study of

### GALATIANS: You Were Running Well

#### "Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free"

### Study #6 – Galatians 3:15-29

#### UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions

Key verse: Galatians 3:19

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.

#### TEXT:

v. 15 Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified no one is (broken vows) nullifying or adding to it.

v. 16 Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed. He is not saying and to the seeds as in respect to many but as in respect to one and to your seed who is Christ.

v. 17 Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.

v. 18 For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.

v. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.

v. 20 Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one.

v. 21 Is therefore the law against the promises of God. God forbid! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.

v. 22 But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

v. 23 But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.

v. 24 So the law became our guardian unto Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.

v. 25 But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.

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

v. 27 For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.

v. 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.

v. 29 Now if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

(Gatherin' Strays by Joe Kreger – 2 CD set) Tonkawa, OK: Hamilton Productions. Copyright – Joe Kreger, 2004.

### ***Black and White***

The popular culture of our day  
writes it's rules in shades of gray.  
It wanders about with impaired sight  
unable to focus on wrong and right.

Ignored today is the God of creation,  
replaced by our ethics of situation.  
The modern world is losing it's way,  
it's map is printed in shades of gray.

We live in a world engulfed by fear,  
following a map that isn't clear.  
We're off the path, we're going astray,  
we follow lines of neutral gray.

Eternal truth God once could seal,  
it stands above how people feel.  
God's word is forever a shining light,  
He writes His map in black and white.

The truth revealed once by the Lord,  
will sever confusion as a two-edged sword.  
He patiently waits to offer His light  
that again we'll see in black and white.

If we submit to His mighty hand,  
He'll deliver this people and heal our land.  
The choice is ours to make today,  
black and white or shades of gray.  
(Disc 2, Track 10)

(Lookin' At Life by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services.  
 Copyright – Joe Kreger, 1997, second printing 2000.

### Smooth Mouthed

Bein' well into the second half  
 of this life's natural course,  
 I've developed a preference  
 for ridin' a smooth mouthed horse.

Back in my younger days,  
 I liked to work with colts.  
 But, since the surgeon worked on my back,  
 I sure don't need the jolts.

The energy of a young horse  
 can really be somethin' great,  
 but to me, the best years for a workin' horse  
 start after the age of eight.

I've always thought that common sense  
 and IQ both went up  
 about the time a horse is losin'  
 his corner pair of cups.

And on a blustery, windy mornin',  
 when you're wishin' you were still in the sack,  
 it's nice to step up on a gentle horse  
 that you know don't have a cold back.

With your seasoned partner,  
 you don't want to spur and jerk.  
 He just takes off in his matter-of-fact way,  
 And he's ready to go to work.

And if the years have taken  
 just a bit of his agility,  
 it's a pretty good trade-off  
 for his proven dependability.

The younger horse may just be  
 a little bit physically fitter,  
 but he don't compare with the smooth mouthed horse  
 in outsmartin' a wily cow critter.

A snakey old cow can fake out a colt  
and cause him to make a false start,  
but your veteran partner won't take her bait,  
because he's just too dang smart.

If you go to any ropin' match,  
where they're competin' for big money,  
you'll see several horses  
that are several years past twenty.

The ropers know, when the stakes are high,  
whether you win or lose,  
depends a lot on the experience  
of the horse you're goin' to use.

It's the same way in the pasture.  
We like a young horse's sped and action,  
but sometimes you just can't depend  
on his tendency to distraction.

Yeah, I know both men and horses  
all have to start out young,  
but I'll leave young horses to young men,  
'cause my spring has already sprung.

But, finally when Old Father Time  
has piled on too many points,  
your partner will get past workin' cows,  
'cause he'll stiffen in his joints.

Even then, it's still not time  
to nail down his coffin lid,  
for he's still got a few years left  
to train some little cowboy kid.

But as time progresses, the time will come  
when his old body's no longer able,  
and you'll choose between total retirement  
or a Frenchman's dinner table.

Either way can probably be  
a truly humane act.  
Life is life, and death is death,

and agin' is a natural fact.

And I know I'm not near ready  
to be laid up on the shelf,  
but I think I might be gettin'  
a bit smooth mouthed myself.

pp. 123-25

(Coolin' Down: An Anthology of Contemporary Cowboy Poetry by Phil  
Martin) Tulsa, OK: Guy Logsdon Books. Copyright– Guy Logsdon  
Books, 1992.

A friend of ours has left us,  
But, hey now, he's okay,  
And you can bet your bottom dollar  
That he's ridin' broncs today.

I'm settin' here a thinkin'  
And tryin' to shake this sorrow  
Hopin' that this won't be true  
When the sun comes up tomorrow.

But, I know this really happen'd  
And we've lost a great comrade.  
And our only consolation is  
The good times that we've had.

So there has to be a reason  
And to my mind it's reassurin'.  
God must have some broncs up there  
That [darn] sure needed spurrin'!

*poem read by Bill Larsen at Deke Latham's  
funeral in Kaycee, Wyoming, 1986.*  
p. (intro.)

(What On Earth Have I Done?: Stories, Observations, and Affirmations by Robert Fulghum) New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. Copyright—Robert Fulghum, 2007.

I speak as an insider. Once upon a time, I was baptized. According to the rules of the church of my childhood. Not sprinkled like the Methodists, as if you were going to be ironed. Not just dipped in an indoor pool for the sake of convenience. Baptized according to Scripture — outdoors in a river, following the example of John the Baptist and Jesus.

My mother was a serious Southern Baptist. And her cousin from Muscle Shoals, Alabama, urged her to take no chances and do it right. The cousin, it seems, was a “Two-seed-in-the-spirit, Foot Washing, Flowing Water Baptist.” When she sang the old hymn, “Shall we Gather at the River”, it wasn't about a picnic.

p. 183

(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings by Erwin Raphael McManus) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright—Erwin Raphael McManus, 2005.

. . . “Dream as if you'll live forever. Live as if you'll die today.” Dean's words are even more poignant when we remember that he didn't live to see his twenty-fifth birthday.

We are all chasing daylight. Our lives are but a brief moment in time. Blink and it's gone. As soon as we are fully aware of life, we become fully aware of death. The more moments we live, the faster they speed past us. And if this life is all there is, the more we make of this life, the more we have to lose when we leave it. The fact that we're all time-dated should lead us nowhere but to desperation. We are all running out of time. If that isn't bleak, I don't know what is. Yet in some strange way even our awareness of death can powerfully work in our favor.

p. (Entry #11)

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright– Brees Company, Inc., 2010.

In many cases, disappointment is what prepares you to achieve greatness in the future.  
p. 270

The tougher the journey, the sweeter the celebration at the end.  
p. 300

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*Thank you, Lord, for this gloriously intricate, put-together, held-together universe. Everywhere I look I find evidence of what you have done. Everything I see gives me another reason to marvel and praise. Amen.*  
p. 217

(The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic  
by Stephen R. Covey) New York: Simon and Schuster. Copyright -  
Stephen R. Covey, 1989.

Suppose you've been having trouble with your eyes and you decide to go to an optometrist for help. After briefly listening to your complaint, he takes off his glasses and hands them to you.

"Put these on," he says. "I've worn this pair of glasses for ten years now and they've really helped me. I have an extra pair at home; you can wear these."

So you put them on, but it only makes the problem worse.

"This is terrible!" you exclaim. "I can't see a thing!"

"Well, what's wrong?" he asks. "They work great for me. Try harder."

"I am trying," you insist. "Everything is a blur."

"Well, what's the matter with you? Think positively."

"Okay. I positively can't see a thing."

"Boy, are you ungrateful!" he chides. "And after all I've done to help you!"

What are the chances you'd go back to that optometrist the next time you needed help? Not very good, I would imagine. You don't have much confidence in someone who doesn't diagnose before he or she prescribes.

But how often do we diagnose before we prescribe in communication?

"Come on, honey, tell me how you feel. I know it's hard, but I'll try to understand."

"Oh, I don't know, Mom. You'd think it was stupid."

"Of course I wouldn't! You can tell me. Honey, no one cares for you as much as I do. I'm only interested in your welfare. What's making you so unhappy?"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Come on, honey. What is it?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I just don't like school anymore."

"What?" you respond incredulously. "What do you mean you don't like school? And after all the sacrifices we've made for your education! Education is the foundation of your future. If you'd apply yourself like your older sister does, you'd do better and then you'd like school. Time and time again, we've told you to settle down. You've got the ability, but you just don't apply yourself. Try harder. Get a positive attitude about it."

Pause.

"Now go ahead. Tell me how you feel."

We have such a tendency to rush in, to fix things up with good advice. But we often fail to take the time to diagnose, to really, deeply understand the problem first.

If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek first to understand, then to be understood. This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication.  
pp. 236-37

C. S. Lovett points out about this particular section of the epistle:

Paul is relaxing now, having let off steam. His tone is softer. First, his Galatians were “fools” (Vs. 1) now they are ‘brethren.’ Resorting to a legal analogy from daily life, he argues that even in business there is a big difference between a contract and a will. A contract has binding conditions between **two parties**, while a will is **one man’s** promise to his heirs. If the Law, a contract between God and Israel and made many years later, could somehow invalidate His sworn promise to Abraham, God’s integrity would be at stake. If the works of the Law have anything to do with justification, then God’s pledge to Abraham and Christ is broken. If God’s promise to one man can be voided, because He later makes an agreement with different heirs, then God’s honor is in question. But God cannot be untrue to His own nature. The promise to Abraham is as valid as the fact that God will not lie to Himself.  
p. 38

We could well write the statement over this particular section of the epistle:

**“WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, READ THE INSTRUCTIONS.”**

Remember we are using the **KEY VERSE** in:

**Galatians 5:7**

You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth.

Then we have pursued that **THEME** through the first five studies:

1. You Were Running Well UNTIL: No Runs, No Hits, and a Big Error (Galatians 1:1-9)
2. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Forgot What God Was Doing in Your Life (Galatians 1:10-24)
3. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Divine Direction Was Not Discerned (Galatians 2:1-10)
4. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Peer Pressure Postponed Progress (Galatians 2:11-21)
5. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said, I Do It Myself (Galatians 3:1-14)

Now we come to Study #6:

6. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions (Galatians 3:15-29)

**Anders** says:

**Argument from the Permanence of Faith (vv. 15-18)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Abraham was saved by faith 430 years before the law was given to Moses. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.*

p. 37

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

### **3. *The seed of Abraham (3:15-18)***

At the close of the preceding section Paul introduced the idea of God's promise to Abraham. Now he picks up this idea once more and develops it in relation to the giving of the law. This is the beginning of the second unit of his alternating answer to the question of v.2: "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?" (see diagram above).

Paul's opponents were undoubtedly not ready to admit that Abraham was justified by faith in God's promise. But even if he were, they might argue, still the giving of the law at a later time changed the basis for a person's entrance into salvation. Anticipating this objection, Paul draws on the acknowledged character of human wills and covenants so as to show that no new development could change the promise made to Abraham.  
p. 723

Bartlett says:

#### **Integrity of God Displayed (3:15-22)**

In verses 15-22 of this third chapter, the apostle proceeds to show that, contrary to what at first might be thought, the promise to Abraham was by no means annulled in the giving of the law, with all the penalties attached thereto.  
p. 63

Baxter says:

The giving of the Law did not override the Abrahamic promise (verses 15-29). The chapter closes with a reiteration of its special emphasis: "Ye are all *sons of God* through faith in Jesus Christ" (verse 26); "If ye are Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed*" (verse 29). So the emphasis in this third chapter is on "sonship." In other words, here is the superiority of the Gospel demonstrated by the superior new *relationship* into which it brings us.  
pp. 146-7

Bickel & Jantz say:

## The Promise of the Law

Galatians 3:15-29

### *What's Ahead*

- The Promise Is Greater Than the Law (3:15-18)
- So Why Was the Law Given? (3:19-25)
- We Are One in Christ Jesus (3:26-29)

p. 75

Dunnam says:

The cause for which Paul is pleading is so crucial that he must use his skills of argument and debate to their ultimate. As in verses 1-9, he is turning again to Abraham as his hinge point. He also introduces not only a new argument but a new type of argument. He turns from involved exegesis of scripture to an illustration from contemporary human life: the matter of *covenants*, or *wills*, with which both the Jews and Gentiles would be familiar. pp. 66-67

Dunnam says:

Paul builds his case on two points: (1) the trustworthiness of God, and (2) the fact that Christ is the *seed* of Abraham to which and through which God's promise was made. p. 67

Fergusson says:

The apostle, having confirmed the truth of his doctrine by several arguments, doth in the second part of the chapter, answer some objections, and jointly herewith refuteth the other error, maintained by his adversaries, about the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; showing, that however the law, or the legal way of dispensing the covenant of grace prescribed unto Moses upon mount Sinai, was for good use, so long as by God's appointment it was to stand in force; yet, Christ being now come in the flesh, the date prefixed for its continuance was now expired, and so the Christian church of Jews and Gentiles wholly freed from the observation of it.  
p. 55

Hendriksen says:

3:15-29

### *C. The superiority of the promise over the law*

The promise is superior to the law because it was *earlier*. Moreover, being in the nature of a testament, already ratified and in force, this promise or covenant could not be set aside by the law which came so much later (verses 15-18). Besides, the promise came to Abraham *directly*; the law was given to Israel *indirectly* by mediation (verses 19, 20). For both of these reasons the promise is superior to the law. The Galatians should remember this and repent of their error of listening to the Judaizers who exalt the law above the promise.  
p. 133

Lenski says:

All Judaistic errors rest on misconceptions regarding law. Too much is then naturally expected of law. Paul has already shown that it leaves all who trust in works of law under the curse, that it cannot possibly justify, that this is done only in connection with Jesus Christ who has borne that curse in our stead. All this will become still clearer when the limitations of law become known. These are indeed great.  
p. 155

Lucado says:

Wouldn't you love to have a video record of Jesus' meeting with Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10)? The law-obsessed religious leaders looking on in shock as Jesus befriends a notorious crook. Bent on earning God's approval through their religious efforts, these Pharisees and scribes are harsh and judgmental. They frown a lot. They think they see, but in truth they are blind. They live in bondage to their own foolish pride. A few feet away stands Jesus, smiling, inviting himself to dinner. He is disarming and gracious. He offers unconditional freedom from the failures of the past, and a fresh start. Is there a better picture of life-giving grace? A grimmer illustration of the death that comes through trying to earn God's favor?  
p. 49

MacArthur says:

#### **D. The Promise of the Covenant (3:15-18)**

**3:15-22** Paul anticipated and refuted a possible objection to his use of Abraham to prove the doctrine of justification by faith that the giving of the law at Sinai after Abraham brought about a change and a better method of salvation. The apostle dismissed that argument by showing the superiority of the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 15-18), and the inferiority of the law (vv. 19-22).  
p. 1666

MacArthur says:

**In Light of God's  
Promise, Why the  
Law? (3:15-22)**  
p. 81

MacArthur says:

Now the apostle anticipates the probable argument his adversaries, the Judaizers, would likely make against what he has just proved. “Very well,” they would argue. “But granted that Abraham and his pre-Sinai descendants were saved by faith, it is obvious that when God gave the law to Moses, the basis of salvation changed. A new covenant was made and a new means of salvation was then established. After Moses, the basis of salvation became law in place of faith or at least as a necessary supplement to faith. The covenant with Moses annulled and supplanted the covenant with Abraham, a temporary measure God provided until He gave Moses the more perfect and complete covenant of law. Abraham and others who lived before the law were saved by faith only because they did not have the law. Why else would God have given the Mosaic covenant of law?”

It is that anticipated, imaginary argument that Paul answers in 3:15-22. The heart of his answer is to show that the covenant with Abraham was an unconditional covenant of promise relying solely on God’s faithfulness, whereas the covenant with Moses was a conditional covenant of law relying on man’s faithfulness. To Abraham, God said, “I will.” Through Moses He said, “Thou shalt.” The promise set forth a religion dependent on God. The law set forth a religion dependent on man. The promise centers on God’s plan, God’s grace, God’s initiative, God’s sovereignty, God’s blessings. The law centers on man’s duty, man’s work, man’s responsibility, man’s behavior, man’s obedience. The promise, being grounded in grace, requires only sincere faith. The law, being grounded in works, demands perfect obedience.

In contrasting the covenants of promise and of law, Paul first shows the superiority of the one and then the inferiority of the other.

p. 82

Machen says:

Salvation cannot be earned by human effort, but must be received simply as a free gift. Christ has died to save us from the curse of the law: to submit again to the yoke of bondage is disloyalty to him—that is the great thesis that Paul sets out to prove.

p. 204

Pinnock says:

Now Paul addresses himself to the question of an imaginary opponent. Does not the law rescind the earlier promise given to Abraham? Did it not annul the earlier agreement? Is it not by law-keeping that God's blessings now must be received?  
p. 43

Ridderbos says:

The apostle proceeds now to look at the matter from yet another point of view, namely, from that of the history of salvation. The main content of these verses is that God first gave his promise to Abraham and that only much later was the law given out on Sinai. Hence no one may make the fulfillment of the promise dependent upon the keeping of the law. That would be to do violence to the unconditional character of the promise, and would be like modifying covenants, something which even among people is regarded as unauthorized and impossible. This raises the question of what the purpose of the law is and what its relation to the promise.  
pp. 129-30

Vos says:

#### INABILITY OF LAW TO ALTER THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM (3:15-18)

In his effort to show beyond a doubt the truth of justification by faith, Paul now argues that the Mosaic covenant, which came after the Abrahamic covenant, could not alter or destroy the unconditional covenant with Abraham. He observes (v. 15) that among men when a covenant is ratified no one sets it aside or amends it, neither the author nor a second party. Of course the implication is that if this is true with men it is even more true with God. A second covenant, the law, could not set aside the promise made to Abraham.  
p. 61

Wiersbe says:

**Explanation** (15-25). The Judaizers wanted the Galatians to go back to Moses, but that was not far enough. *We must go back to Abraham where the promise started.* The law did not annul the promise; the law was given to reveal sin and prepare the way for Christ to come and fulfill the promise. The law is a tutor, not a savior; a mirror, not a cleanser.

**Exhortation** (26-29). Beware! A false gospel robs you of salvation and of membership in the family of God where all believers are one in Christ. It robs you of your spiritual riches as an heir of the promise. Are you rejoicing in the freedom you have in Christ?

p. 768

Wiersbe says:

### THE LOGIC OF LAW (Galatians 3:15-29)

The Judaizers had Paul in a corner. He had just finished proving from the Old Testament that God's plan of salvation left no room for the works of the law. But the fact that Paul quoted six times from the Old Testament raised a serious problem: If salvation does not involve the law, then why was the law given in the first place? Paul quoted from the law to prove the insignificance of the law. If the law is now set aside, then his very arguments are worthless because they are taken from the law.

Our faith is a logical faith and can be defended on rational grounds. While there are divine mysteries in the faith that no man can fully explain, there are also divine reasons that any sincere person can understand. Paul was trained as a Jewish rabbi and was fully equipped to argue his case. In this section, he makes four statements that help us understand the relationship between *promise* and *law*.

p. 79

We are now prepared to launch into:

**Study #6: Galatians 3:15-29**

**You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions**

v. 15 Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified no one is (broken vows) nullifying or adding to it.

The NET Bible titles this first section and then translates verse 15:

Inheritance Comes from Promises and not Law

Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it.

Peterson paraphrases verse 15:

Friends, let me give you an example from everyday affairs of the free life I am talking about. Once a person's will has been ratified, no one else can annul it or add to it.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles verses 15-18 and then says:

BY THE PERMANENCE OF FAITH . . .

**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.

**"BRETHREN, I AM SPEAKING AFTER THE MANNER OF MEN."**

Hogg & Vine translate this phrase:

. . . the standard generally accepted among men . . .  
p. 139

Paul in our previous lesson used Abraham as an illustration of faith, and now he is going to speak of the promises God has made to him in this particular study.

In this verse he is making a general statement upon which he will build his argument:

A man, when he makes a covenant with someone does not break it by making it void nor does he add anything to it after it has been made.

He will then apply this principle to the Abrahamic covenant made in Genesis 15.

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

**15** “Brothers” introduces a change of tone on the part of the apostle, in contrast to the somewhat distant and formal beginning of ch. 3 (cf. 4:31; 6:1). It is as though he now invites the erring Galatians to reason along with him as he uses an analogy from everyday life. Paul is borrowing an illustration from human relationships . . .  
pp. 723-24

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

In Abraham’s day an oath was sometimes confirmed by a ceremony in which animals were cut into two parts along the backbone and placed in two rows, the rows facing each other across a space marked off between them. The parties to the oath walked together into the space between the parts and spoke their promises there. This oath would be especially sacred because of the shed blood. But the ceremony in Ge 15 had this exception: In the case of God’s covenant with Abraham, God alone passed between the pieces of the slain animals, thereby signifying that he alone stood behind the promises (cf. also Heb 6:13-15). It did not depend on any condition to be fulfilled by Abraham.  
p. 724

Bickel & Jantz say:

### **The Promise Is Greater Than the Law (3:15-18)**

The wonderful truth that emerges in this proof is that we do not have a relationship with God based on works (represented by the law of Moses), but on faith (represented by the promise made to Abraham). You see, the Judaizers were arguing that since the law came after the promise made to Abraham, it replaced the promise. But Paul makes it clear that God's promise is irrevocable.

p. 75

Calvin says:

*I speak after the manner of men.* By this expression he intended to put them to the blush. It is highly disgraceful and base that the testimony of God should have less weight with us than that of a mortal man. In demanding that the sacred covenant of God shall receive not less deference than is commonly yielded to ordinary human transactions, he does not place God on a level with men. The immense distance between God and men is still left for their consideration.

p. 93

Eadie says:

“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men”—I am going to use a human analogy, or to propose an illustration from a human point of view. “Brethren, yet beloved and cared for,” though they are censured as senseless in their relapse; affectionate remembrance naturally springing up at this pause in the argument.

p. 253

Eadie says:

To add to a covenant is virtually to annul it; the Judaistic dogma, under the guise of a supplement, was really an abrogation of the original promise or covenant.

p. 255

Gaebelein says:

In verses 15-18, the priority of the grace-covenant is shown and that the law-covenant which came 430 years after cannot disannul the former covenant nor make the promise of none effect. If a covenant is made and confirmed, it cannot be rightly disannulled nor can anything be added to the same. The promises were made to Abraham; they were unconditional promises with no "if" attached to them, grace is the foundation of them. These promises were, afterward, confirmed to his seed. And that one seed (not seeds) is Christ.  
p. 217

Gutzke says:

In Galatians 3:15-17 Paul emphasizes that living in the Lord Jesus Christ, depending on the grace of God to live successfully in His presence, is an old, old idea. God had that in mind when He first created this world. "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (3:15). This means to say that if any arrangement "be but a man's covenant," a human contract, "if it be confirmed," if men have started working on it, "no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." Men do not change it. Nobody alters it at will.  
p. 68

Hendriksen says:

Paul writes: **Brothers, I speak from a human standpoint.** He is taking his illustration from human life so that the Galatians may understand all the better that those to whom they have been lending a listening ear are false guides. Jesus also often made use of earthly stories (parables) to illustrate heavenly realities.  
pp. 133-34

Hendriksen says:

It is a matter of common knowledge that among men a last will or testament, legally ratified, cannot be nullified. Nor can it be amplified: not a single codicil can be added to it. Then would not this be true all the more with respect to the covenant-promise which the immutable Jehovah made to Abraham and his seed? Was not this covenant in the nature of a testament? Was it not re-affirmed to Isaac, Jacob, etc.? Did it not begin to go into effect immediately, namely, when "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness"? Surely, when God's will or testament has been thus decreed and ratified it cannot be set aside or changed. This logical deduction, already implied here in verse 15, is going to be clearly expressed in verse 17. However, the inviolability and immutability of God's promise will become all the more evident when it is understood first of all that, in the final analysis, it is a promise that concerns not physical Israel but Christ together with those who are "in him," for all the promises of God find their Yes in him (II Cor. 1:20; cf. Eph. 1:3). If this be understood it will be seen that the words which now follow are not really a parenthesis but part of the argument . . .  
p. 134

Henry says:

IV. The apostle urges the stability of the covenant which God made with Abraham, which was not disannulled by the giving of the law to Moses. *v.* 15, &c. Faith had the precedence of the law, for Abraham was justified by faith. God entered into covenant with Abraham (*v.* 8). The original word signifies both a covenant and a testament.  
p. 1841

Hogg & Vine say:

**Brethren**,—the tension under which the Apostle has been writing now relaxes, and persuasion replaces argument, but the earnest reasoning and the tender appeal have the same source, loyalty to the Lord and His truth, love to the Lord and His people.  
p. 139

Hogg & Vine say:

The Judaizers, by adding conditions to the covenant which it did not contain, violated this fundamental principle of honourable dealing; and not only so, for, since they claimed Divine authority for these conditions, they were actually crediting God with a breach of faith which even men would condemn in their ordinary dealings one with another. God gave the law, indeed, but neither in place of the promise nor in addition to it; His object in giving it is explained in v. 19.

p. 140

Ironside says:

When men make covenants we expect them to live up to them. God made a covenant of unconditional grace to Abraham long years before. Later the law came in, but did that invalidate the covenant of pure grace made to Abraham? "To Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ." Through the Lord Jesus, then, the blessing of the covenant goes out to every poor sinner who will believe in Him. "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." God was not playing fast and loose with Abraham when He gave him this unconditional covenant of grace. He did not say, "If you do thus and so, and if you do not do certain things, all the world will be blessed through your seed." But He said, unconditionally, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It is not a question at all of human effort; it is not a question of something we earn.

pp. 113-14

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

**15. I speak after the manner of men**—I take an illustration from a merely human transaction of everyday occurrence. **but a man's covenant**—whose purpose it is far less important to maintain. **if it be confirmed**—when once it hath been ratified. **no man disannulleth**—"none setteth aside," not even the author himself, much less any second party. None does so who acts in common equity. Much less would the righteous God do so.

p. 1266

Lange says:

**Brethren.**—An affectionately pathetic address. How different from ver. 1! The tone is greatly softened.—MEYER. “Here is a pause, at which the indignant feeling of the Apostle softens, and he begins the new train of thought which follows with words of milder character, and proceeds more quietly with his argument” . . .  
p. 75

Lenski says:

It is preposterous to think that the Mosaic law altered God’s testament. This is the first great point.  
p. 156

Lenski says:

“In human fashion” means in a way so simple that anyone can understand. Paul will in particular use an ordinary illustration, the inviolability of a confirmed human will and testament. That illustration will help to make the main thought clear. By drawing attention to the fact that this is a human illustration Paul does not excuse his use of it but rather states in advance just what it is so that his readers may at once catch the point he presents.  
p. 156

Lightfoot says:

15. . . . ‘*Brethren.*’ There is a touch of tenderness in the appeal here, as if to make amends for the severity of the foregoing rebuke . . .  
p. 140

Luther says:

To come to Paul's argument. Civil law, which is God's ordinance, prohibits tampering with any testament of man. Any person's last will and testament must be respected. Paul asks: "Why is it that man's last will is scrupulously respected and not God's testament? You would not think of breaking faith with a man's testament. Why do you not keep faith with God's testament?"

p. 122

Luther says:

The Apostle says that he is speaking after the manner of men. He means to say: "I will give you an illustration from the customs of men. If a man's last will is respected, and it is, how much more ought the testament of God be honored: 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.' When Christ died, this testament was sealed by His blood. After His death the testament was opened, it was published to the nations. No man ought to alter God's testament as the false apostles do who substitute the Law and traditions of men for the testament of God."

pp. 122-23

MacArthur says:

**Brethren.** This term of endearment reveals Paul's compassionate love for the Galatians—which they may have begun to question in light of his stern rebuke . . .

p. 1666

MacArthur says:

**manner of men . . . man's covenant.** Even human covenants, once confirmed, are considered irrevocable and unchangeable; how much more a covenant made by the unchanging God (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

p. 1666

MacArthur says:

First of all, the covenant of promise was superior because it was confirmed as irrevocable and unchangeable.  
p. 83

McGee says:

Suppose you made a contract with a man to pay him one hundred dollars. Then about a year later you decide you will pay him only fifty dollars. You go to him and say, "Here is the fifty dollars I owe you." The man says, "Wait a minute, you agreed to pay me one hundred dollars." You say, "Well, I've changed that." He says, "Oh no, you don't! You can't change your contract after it has been made."  
p. 170

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:15 Covenant** here probably means a "last will and testament," which is unchangeable after it is **confirmed**. Most of the uses of the word in the NT refers to a solemn agreement or contract God made with His people.  
p. 1522

Ridderbos says:

The vocative, *brethren*, loosens the tenseness of the tone somewhat: reproach and reprimand give way to an appeal for cordial acquiescence, something to which, indeed, the preceding verses have already formed a transition.  
p. 130

Wiersbe says:

To begin with, once two parties conclude an agreement, a third party cannot come along years later and change that agreement. The only persons who can change an original agreement are the persons who made it. To add anything to it or take anything from it would be illegal.  
p. 80

Wuest says:

Brethren, what I have to say is in accordance with common human practice. Even though it be a man's covenant, when it has finally been ratified, no man annuls it nor adds stipulations to it.  
p. 205

Wuest says:

*IV. God made provision for justification to be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and also the gift of the Spirit to both Jew and Gentile, doing this before the Mosaic law was given. The law therefore cannot make void that which was done by God prior to the giving of the law. (3:15-18).*  
p. 99

Wuest says:

*Verse fifteen.* Paul now presents an argument to show that the covenant God made with Abraham was still in force, basing it upon the priority of the covenant and its irrevocable character. He asserts that it is common knowledge that when men make a contract, and that contract is once agreed upon, it cannot be modified or changed except by the mutual consent of both parties to the contract. Paul applies this to God's covenant with Abraham, contending that the law cannot modify it since it was given centuries later.  
p. 99

Wuest says:

The words, “I speak after the manner of men” have in them the idea of, “I speak from a human point of view,” or “I speak as men do concerning their affairs.” Paul is not apologizing for the illustration he is using, but is desirous of accommodating himself to the ordinary way in which the average man thinks, so as to be perfectly intelligible to his readers.  
p. 99

v. 16 Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed. He is not saying and to the seeds as in respect to many but as in respect to one and to your seed who is Christ.

The NET Bible translates verse 16:

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, “and to the descendants,” referring to many, but “and to your descendant,” referring to one, who is Christ.

Peterson paraphrases verse 16:

Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. You will observe that Scripture, in the careful language of a legal document, does not say “to descendants,” referring to everybody in general, but “to your descendant” (the noun, note, is singular), referring to Christ.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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 . . . 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 . . . And Matthew declared Christ to be *the* Son of Abraham and the true Heir to the First Covenant’s promises (Matt. 1:1).

**“NOW TO ABRAHAM WERE SPOKEN TO PROMISES AND TO HIS SEED.”**

Here we begin immediately to follow the line through:

**ISAAC,**

**JACOB,**

**JUDAH,** and

**DAVID.**

Then the verse concludes:

**“AND TO YOUR SEED WHO IS CHRIST.”**

Here the Apostle Paul is arguing using the **SINGULAR** and the **PLURAL** of the word **“SEED.”**

**“NOW TO ABRAHAM WERE SPOKEN TO PROMISES AND TO HIS SEED.”**

Genesis 13:15 (NIV)

All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.

The earth was to be blessed through Abraham’s **“SEED,”** not through his descendant, for if the plural had been meant, then legitimately, the promise could have come through Ishmael, too.

But the word **“SEED”** in the **SINGULAR** indicates that this promise is to come through Isaac, and ultimately the promise is going to come through his **“SEED WHO IS CHRIST.”**

Isaiah 43:11 (NIV)

I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.

John 14:6 (NASB)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

The God of the universe is very selective and limited in the program for eternal life. It only comes through **ONE SOURCE** and that is a relationship through the Lord Jesus Christ. No other religions of the world will be accepted. They, with the offering of Cain back in the early chapters of **GENESIS**, will be rejected.

Thus, the apostle argues if Christ is the Person to whom the fulfillment of the promises of God is secured, then only such as are in Christ can receive them.

The promises, therefore, come through Christ and not through the works of the law.

Anders says:

. . . Paul appeals to a permanently binding contract or will. Once a permanently binding contract is written and signed, it cannot be changed. Paul argues that God's promise of salvation by faith to Abraham was a binding contract and that nothing, not even the law, could change it. This promise of permanence was made to Abraham and his seed, Christ. The singular use of **seed** (NIV, "offspring") (compare Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7) was allusion, not to Abraham's many physical descendants, but to the coming Messiah who would be the conveyor of blessing (see Matt. 1:1).

p. 38

Barclay says:

Now Paul takes one single word in the Abraham story and erects an argument upon it. Paul goes back to the old promise to Abraham as we find it in Genesis 17:7, 8. There God says to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy *seed* after thee." God says of Abraham's inheritance, "I will give it unto thee and to thy *seed* after thee." To make it clear, let us substitute one word for the word *seed*. Instead of *seed* let us say *descendant*. Paul's argument is that the word *seed* is used in the *singular* and not in the *plural*; and that, therefore, God's promise points not to a great crowd of people but to *one single individual*; and—argues Paul—the one person in which the covenant finds its consummation is Jesus Christ. And, therefore, the way to peace and right relations with God is the way of faith which Abraham took, the way in which God's promise came to him; and we must repeat that way by looking to Jesus Christ with perfect faith. pp. 29-30

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

When Paul speaks of "seed" in the singular as opposed to "seeds," he poses a problem for commentators, especially since the singular form has a collective significance and often denotes more than one person. The nearest English equivalent is the word "offspring." What is the explanation? Obviously, Paul knew as well as anybody that "seed" generally referred to many persons (cf. Ro 4:16-18; 9:6-8). But he is simply pointing out that the singular word "seed" (rather than a plural word like "children" or "descendants") is appropriate, inasmuch as Israel had always believed that the ultimate messianic blessing would come through a single individual. p. 724

Fergusson says:

The covenant of grace made with Abraham and his spiritual seed is a covenant of promise, wherein the thing promised is freely bestowed, and not from the merit or worth of our obedience and works; and herein the promises of this covenant do differ from the promises of the law or covenant of works: for, by the promises, which signify a free promise, is meant the covenant of grace; "to Abraham and his seed were the promises made:" the word signifieth a free promise. p. 56

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

. . . joins in this one Seed, Christ, Jew and Gentile, as fellow heirs on the same terms of acceptability, viz., by grace through faith (Rom. 4:13); not to some by promise, to others by the law, but to all alike, circumcised and uncircumcised, constituting but one seed in Christ (Rom. 4:16). The law, on the other hand, contemplates the Jews and Gentiles as distinct seeds. God makes a covenant, but it is one of promise; whereas the law is a covenant of works. Whereas the law brings in a mediator a third party (vss. 19, 20), God makes His covenant of promise with the one seed, Christ (Gen. 17:7), and embraces others only as they are identified with, and represented by, Christ.  
p. 1266

Luther says:

Heirs do not look for laws and assessments when they open a last will; they look for grants and favors. The testament which God made out to Abraham did not contain laws. It contained promises of great spiritual blessings.  
p. 123

McGee says:

God called Abraham and promised to make him a blessing to the world. He made him a blessing to the world through Jesus Christ, a descendant of Abraham. Christ is the One who brought salvation to the world.

The word *seed* refers specifically to Christ (see Gen. 22:18). Christ said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56).

p. 170

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:16** Jesus **Christ** is the fulfillment of the covenant (v. 15) God made with **Abraham**. Although in one sense all Jews are the physical seed of Abraham, Christ is the final focus of God's **promises**, the ultimate **Seed**. Christians are the spiritual seed of Abraham (v. 29).

p. 1522

Wiersbe says:

Note that Abraham did not make a covenant with God; *God made a covenant with Abraham!* God did not lay down any conditions for Abraham to meet. In fact, when the covenant was ratified *Abraham was asleep!* (see Gen. 15). It was a covenant of grace: God made promises to Abraham; Abraham did not make promises to God.

But Paul revealed another wonderful truth: God made this promise not only to Abraham, but also to Christ. “And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

p. 80

Wuest says:

Now to Abraham were made the promises, and to his Descendant. He does not say, And to the descendants, as in respect to many descendants, but in respect to one Descendant, and to your Descendant, who is Christ.

p. 205

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson,  
2006.

*How faithfully you keep your promises, God! Your presence drives out loneliness, your love banishes emptiness, your commands cure my aimlessness. Thank you for continuing to be with me in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

p. 335

v. 17 Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.

The NET Bible translates verse 17:

What I am saying is this: The law that came four hundred thirty years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise.

Peterson paraphrases verse 17:

This is the way I interpret this: A will, earlier ratified by God, is not annulled by an addendum attached 430 years later, thereby negating the promise of the will.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**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.)

In Genesis 15 we get the account of God making this covenant with Abraham:

Genesis 15:1-18 (NIV)

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.  
I am your shield,  
your very great reward.”

But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” So the Lord said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.” When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

This covenant is an **UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT**. God alone walks between the pieces. What we have involved here is the unconditional promise of God.

Next the Apostle Paul says:

**“THE LAW WHICH CAME AFTER 430 YEARS DOES NOT REVOKE WITH THE RESULT TO RENDER INOPERATIVE THE PROMISE.”**

The law which was given to Moses in the Book of Exodus coming 430 years later **“DOES NOT REVOKE . . . THE PROMISE”** made to Abraham earlier.

Vos points out:

The 430 years referred to here obviously applies to the period of time in Egypt (given in round numbers as 400 in Gen 15:13; Act 7:6). That the law came 430 years after promise must mean that the law was given on Mount Sinai 430 years after the end of the age of promise. The latter ceased when the patriarchs left Palestine at the invitation of Joseph. The legal arrangement introduced could not set aside or alter the unconditional covenant made earlier. A most startling and amazing truth now comes clear. The age of law was merely a parenthesis between the age of promise and the age of grace, the latter being a continuation of the former. Believers today are children of Abraham by faith. The law was fulfilled and done away in Christ. All of the legalistic teaching the church has endured for nearly two thousand years is entirely incompatible with the teachings of grace and the spirit of promise. Perhaps the law cannot alter or set aside promise but legalists for centuries have been doing a good job of smothering the principles of Christian liberty which God Himself has ordained. The assertion that legalism is not the principle on which the Christian life operates must not be construed to mean that grace is lawless. A very instructive passage is Titus 2:11-12, which may be translated, “The grace of God . . . hath appeared to all men, disciplining us.”

pp. 62-63

Barclay says:

Now the law did not come until the time of Moses, and that was four hundred and thirty years later. But—Paul goes on to argue—once a covenant, an agreement, a will, has been duly agreed and ratified, you cannot alter it, and you cannot add additional clauses and codicils to it; it must remain unchanged. Therefore, the later law cannot alter the earlier way of faith. It was faith which set Abraham right with God; the law can never alter that; and faith is still the only way for a man to get himself right with God.  
p. 29

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

If God had been blessing Abraham and his posterity through the way of promise for 430 years and if he was to do the same for all humanity through Christ, how could the giving of the law annul this promise? It could not, as even the human analogy of covenants and wills show. Therefore, the law cannot add to, nor subtract from, God's first and only way of salvation.  
p. 724

De Haan says:

To illustrate this great fact of our unbreakable union with Christ, He goes once more to the history of Abraham. Notice the 17th verse of Galatians 3. Paul illustrates in this verse the fact that ONCE under the grace of God, the Law has no more dominion. He takes first the covenant of grace to Abraham and then the Law of God through Moses 430 years later. The fact that Israel failed under the Law does not annul God's covenant of grace made before with Abraham.  
pp. 110-11

Hendriksen says:

**Now this is what I mean: a covenant that has been ratified by God, the law, which came into existence four hundred thirty years afterward, does not annul so as to make the promise ineffective.**  
p. 137

Hogg & Vine say:

**doth not disannul**,—*akuroō*, as Matt. 15.6, Mark 7.13, where it is rendered “make void” with reference to the Word of God. It is the word translated “confirmed” in the context, but with a negative prefix attached, and is stronger than that rendered “make void” in v. 15.

**so as to**—lit., ‘with a view to’, *i.e.*, the intention of God in giving the law was not to abrogate the promise given centuries before, and which was still unfulfilled. What that purpose was is declared in v. 19, below.  
p. 145

Hogg & Vine say:

**make the promise of none effect**.—*katargeō*,=‘to render ineffective or useless’, as the barren fig-tree did the ground it occupied, Luke 13.7, and as the death of Christ makes ineffective, prospectively, the power of the devil, Heb. 2.14.  
p. 145

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

**17. this I say**—“this is what I mean,” by what I said in vs. 15.  
p. 1267

Lightfoot says:

... ‘Now what I mean, what I wish to say, is this.’ The influence has been hitherto only hinted at indirectly; it is now stated plainly.  
p. 143

### Luther says:

The Law could not cancel the promise because the promise was the testament of God, confirmed by God in Christ many years before the Law. What God has once promised He does not take back. Every promise of God is a ratified promise.”

p. 124

### Luther says:

God did well in giving the promise so many years before the Law, that it may never be said that righteousness is granted through the Law and not through the promise. If God had meant for us to be justified by the Law, He would have given the Law four hundred and thirty years before the promise, at least He would have given the Law at the same time He gave the promise. But He never breathed a word about the Law until four hundred years after. The promise is therefore better than the Law. The Law does not cancel the promise, but faith in the promised Christ cancels the Law.

p. 124

### MacArthur says:

***four hundred and thirty years.*** From Israel’s sojourn in Egypt (cf. Ex. 12:40) to the giving of the law at Sinai (c. 1445 B.C.). The law actually came 645 years after the initial promise to Abraham (c. 2090 B.C.; cf. Gen. 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9), but the promise was repeated to Isaac (Gen. 26:24) and later to Jacob (c. 1928 B.C.; Gen. 28:15). The last known reaffirmation of the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob occurred in Genesis 46:2-4 (c. 1875 B.C.) just before he went to Egypt—430 years before the Mosaic Law was given.

p. 1666

MacArthur says:

The **four hundred and thirty years** refers to the time elapsed between God's last statement of the Abrahamic covenant and His giving of **the Law** to Moses. The Lord repeated the promise to Abraham's son Isaac (Gen. 26:24) and then to his grandson Jacob (28:15). **The Law** came 645 years after Abraham, but 215 years later God repeated the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob, exactly **four hundred and thirty years** prior to the Mosaic covenant at Sinai.

p. 85

McGee says:

God made a promise, a covenant, with Abraham. When the Law came along "four hundred and thirty years" later, it didn't change anything as far as the promises made to Abraham were concerned. Actually, God never goes back on His promises. God promised Abraham, "I am going to give you this land. I am going to give you a son and a people that will be as numberless as the sand on the seashore." God fulfilled that promise and brought from Abraham the nation of Israel—and several other nations—but the promises were given through Isaac whose line led to the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Seed" of verse 16. God also promised Abraham that He would make him a blessing to all people. The only blessing, my friend, in this world today is in Christ. You may not get a very good deal from your neighbor or from your business or from your church. I don't think the world is prepared to give you a good deal. But the Lord Jesus Christ has been given to you—that is a good deal! In fact, it is the supreme gift which God has made. It is a fulfillment of God's promise that He would save those who would trust Christ.

p. 170

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:17 Four hundred and thirty years** was the period of time Israel was in Egypt before the Exodus (Ex. 12:40, 41). **The law**, which was put into force at the end of those centuries, could not override or **annul** the standing **covenant** with Abraham (Gen. 15:18).

p. 1522

Simpson says:

Then later in the chapter Paul reminds them that the covenant with Abraham was made 430 years before the law on Sinai, and, therefore, that later law could not disannul or make the promise of none effect (Gal. 3:17). The covenant with Abraham was an everlasting covenant, and its very principle was free grace and not works, faith and not personal merit. And so all believers still are recognized as the children of Abraham and coinheritors with him of the grace of God.

p. 12

Vos says:

The nature of the Abrahamic covenant must be properly understood. The Greek word is *diathēkē* which, strictly speaking, is not a contract between two parties but is more like a binding will or testament instituted by the first party. In this case God made unconditional promises to Abraham. While some may argue that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant was conditioned on his obedience to God, that can hardly be admitted. But if it should be admitted for the moment, Abraham was after all obedient. Hence no further conditions hinder ultimate fulfillment of the covenant. The law, or Mosaic covenant, instituting the concept of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, could not set aside the unconditional Abrahamic covenant.

p. 62

Wiersbe says:

The 430 years of Galatians 3:17 has puzzled Bible students for many years. From Abraham's call (Gen. 12) to Jacob's arrival in Egypt (Gen. 46) is 215 years. (This may be computed as follows: Abraham was 75 years old when God called him and 100 when Isaac was born, Gen. 12:4; 21:5. This gives us 25 years. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born, Gen. 25:26; and Jacob was 130 years old when he arrived in Egypt, Gen. 47:9. Thus,  $25 + 60 + 130 = 215$  years.) But Moses tells us that Israel sojourned in Egypt 430 years (Ex. 12:40), so the total number of years from Abraham's call to the giving of the law is 645 years, not 430. The length of the stay in Egypt is recorded also in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, where the round figure of 400 years is used.

Several solutions have been offered to this puzzle, but perhaps the most satisfying is this: Paul was counting from the time Jacob went into Egypt, when God appeared to him and *reaffirmed* the covenant (Gen. 46:1-4). The 430 years is the time from God's confirmation of His promise to Jacob until the giving of the law at Sinai.

Regardless of what solution to the dating question we may choose, the basic argument is clear: A law given centuries later cannot change a covenant made by other parties.

p. 81

v. 18 For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.

The NET Bible translates verse 18:

For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

Peterson paraphrases verse 18:

No, this addendum, with its instructions and regulations, has nothing to do with the promised inheritance in the will. What is the point, then, of the law, the attached addendum? It was a thoughtful addition to the original covenant promises made to Abraham.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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 co-mingle; 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.

The word “FOR” at the beginning of verse 18 indicates that in Paul’s argument he is now giving a REASON for the previous statement in verse 17.

If the inheritance is based on law, it would be the payment of a debt and not the faithful fulfillment of a promise.

#### Romans 4:4-5 (DAV)

Now to the one who is working, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due. But to the one who is not working, but is believing in Him who is declaring righteous the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.

#### Romans 4:14 (DAV)

For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith has been rendered void and the promise has been rendered inoperative;

Martin Luther tries to illustrate it this way:

Suppose a millionaire adopted this welfare lad into his home. Remember he does not owe the lad anything. After some years, the millionaire appoints the lad heir to all his fortune. Again a short while later, he asks the lad to do something for him and the lad does it. Can the lad go around and say that he deserved the inheritance by his obedience to the man?

(source unknown)

What does the Apostle Paul mean by the word “INHERITANCE” here in verse 18?

Peter speaks in this same way in:

1 Peter 1:4 (DAV)

unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you,

The **DOWN PAYMENT OF “THE INHERITANCE”** is the promised coming of the indwelling Holy Spirit when we receive Christ as Savior.

And then the **FULL INHERITANCE** will come at the time of our physical death when we will go to be with the Lord. It is then we will experience the blessing of all which the Lord has provided for us.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (DAV)

but even as it has been written: “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, so many things as God prepared for those who are loving Him.

**“THE INHERITANCE”** comes through the **RELATIONSHIP** and not from **PERFORMANCE**.

Romans 8:16-17 (DAV)

The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs; on the one hand heirs of God, on the other fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed, we are suffering with Him in order that we may also be glorified together.

What Paul is saying is that this **“INHERITANCE”** has not come from the law but through the **“PROMISE.”** And that **“PROMISE”** centers in the Person of **JESUS CHRIST.**

C. S. Lovett points out:

The promise was not made to Abraham alone, but to one other Person, his Heir. If the word “heirs” had been used, then national Israel would have been intended. But the promise was to a sole Heir, Christ. This means that the promise cannot be separated from Jesus in any way. As the solitary Heir, He becomes the universal Heir, inheriting the promise for His people. It follows then, for anyone to participate in the promise, he must be “in Christ.” How does one get there? He is baptized (placed—immersed) there by the promised Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This was not possible until the diffusion of Christ at Pentecost. After that, any Jew or Gentile could receive the Lord via the Spirit and be born into the family of God. Christ, the Head of the spiritual family inherited God’s promise to share it with all who are in Him, who are “joint-heirs” (Rom. 8:17).

p. 39

(When Being Good Isn't Good Enough by Stephen Brown) Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright - Stephen Brown, 1990.

The trouble is that most Christians think they're saved by grace but grow by sweat. Many of us believe that when we were saved, God took our slate filled with sin and rebellion and wiped it clean. That's a lie and it comes from the pit of hell.

Listen! God took our slate and He broke it in pieces and threw it away. He does not deal with his family by keeping track on a slate of how we are doing. The slate is irrelevant because of the blood of Christ.

I'm sure you've heard the story about the farmer who had just gotten married at the country church. He and his new wife, still dressed in her wedding gown, were driving away from the church in his horse-drawn wagon. About a mile down the road, the horse stumbled. Pulling over to the side of the road, the farmer got off the wagon, walked in front of the horse, looked the horse in the eye, and said, "That's one."

A short time later the horse stumbled again. The new bride watched, puzzled, as the farmer once again pulled over to the side of the road, got out of the wagon, walked to the front of the horse, looked the horse in the eye, and warned, "That's two."

They had gone no more than a half mile further when the horse stumbled once again. The farmer reached behind the wagon seat for his shotgun, climbed down, walked to the front, and shot the horse.

"What did you do that for?" shouted his new wife. "All the horse did was stumble."

The farmer took his seat in the wagon, looked at his new wife, and said, "That's one!"

We don't admit it, but that's how we feel God deals with us, and it has become the great tragedy in the church.  
pp. 108-9

Anders says:

**3:17-18.** Paul clarifies that the **law**, which was given **430 years** after the Abrahamic grace promise, does not nullify justification by faith. Faith is the permanent path to salvation. **The inheritance** (that is, justification by faith) was given as an unconditional gift to those who believed. Contrary to what the Judaizers taught, the message of justification given to Abraham is permanent and has priority over the later law.

p. 38

Bartlett says:

Had the inheritance been made conditional on obedience to the law given four hundred and thirty years after the covenant made with Abraham, the previous promise would have been thereby invalidated. The promise was not an undertaking based on terms of mutual agreement. God Himself took the initiative. It was a spontaneous offer on His part. Far from being a contract between equals, it was a free and unmerited outpouring of divine mercy. If works of the law were to play any part in justification, that would annul the Abrahamic covenant and would make invalid God's promise concerning Christ.

p. 63

Bartlett says:

We must never for a moment lose sight of the fact that we become heirs of promise only as we yield our hearts to Jesus and thus enter into vital union with the One in and through whom the promise is fulfilled.

p. 64

Harrison says:

**3.—A covenanted blessing, ours as an “inheritance” (3:18).** This is a climactic point in the argument against law and works. One does not work for an inheritance; it is one's by right of birth, or adoption. The law had nothing to do with God's blessing to Abraham; it could have no part in that blessing since it came “four hundred and thirty years after” (3:17). The blessing was wholly of promise (vs. 18). And now God has passed on to us as children of Abraham this method of dealing, namely, by grace through faith, under the New Covenant, a new agreement with promises still more wonderful than those of the Abrahamic covenant, for Christ “is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promise” (Heb. 8:6).

How Christian people need to be aroused to a realization of their riches under the New Covenant, a covenant of life, a covenant that secures the gift of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, to all who believe. And all this is ours, not by merit, not by working for it, but by way of inheritance. So the chapter concludes: “And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29).

pp. 57-58

Hendriksen says:

Says Paul: **For if the inheritance (is) due to law, it (is) no longer due to promise; but to Abraham it was through a promise that God graciously granted it.**

p. 139

Hendriksen says:

The promised salvation is an *inheritance*. Paul says, “If *the inheritance* (is) due to law, it (is) no longer due to promise.” An inheritance is freely bestowed. It is a gift; hence, it is not bought with money, nor earned by the sweat of human toil, nor won by conquest. Moreover, it is duly acquired (by right rooted in grace), and inalienable (cf. I Kings 21:3). As an inheritance it is future glory of which, however, the first instalment has even now become our possession . . .

p. 140

Henry says:

Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead, but the covenant is made with Abraham and his seed. Says the apostle, “It points at a single person—*that seed is Christ*.” So that the covenant is still in force; for Christ abideth for ever. The subsequent law could not disannul the previous covenant or promise (v. 18). If the inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, we may be sure that God would not retract that promise; for he is not a man that he should repent.

p. 1841

Ironside says:

“For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” If it comes through self-effort it is not a question of promise at all. But God gave it to Abraham by promise, and, “The promise,” Pater says, “is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). Perhaps, reader, you have been struggling for years to fit yourself for God’s presence, you have been trying hard to work out a righteousness of your own, “trying to be a Christian.” Let me beg of you, stop trying, give it up! You cannot become a Christian by trying any more than you could become the Prince of Wales by trying. You are what you are by birth. You are what you are as a sinner by natural birth, and you become a child of God through second birth, through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessing of Abraham is yours when you receive it by faith.  
pp. 115-16

Lange says:

[3. *The sum of the Apostle’s argument.* “This, then, is the sum of the Apostle’s argument: A ratified, unrepealed constitution, cannot be set aside by a subsequent constitution. The plan of justification by believing was a ratified and unrepealed constitution. The law was a constitution posterior to this by a long term of years. If the observance of the law were constituted the procuring cause or necessary means of justification, such a constitution would necessarily annul the covenant before ratified, and render the promise of more effect. It follows, of course, that the law was appointed for no such purpose. Whatever end it might serve, it could not serve this end; it could never be appointed to serve this end.”  
p. 77

Lange says:

. . . If a great lord gives us his hand and seal, we are satisfied and believe, that the heavens will fall before such a promise will be broken. Why do we not rather trust the sealed handwriting of our God who cannot lie.  
p. 78

Lange says:

. . . It is impossible to have righteousness and salvation partly from the works of the law, and partly from grace. For these are opposing things, that destroy one another. It must either be of works alone or of grace alone; now it is not of works, therefore it is of grace alone.

p. 78

Lenski says:

“For” makes still clearer the fact that the law, which came into being hundreds of years later than the testament, does not alter its confirmation, does not put its promise out of effect. Paul states it conditionally: “If the inheritance (is derived) from law, no longer (is it derived) from promise.” If, since the days of Moses and Sinai, the source of the inheritance lies in law, then a mighty reversal has certainly taken place, then the source is no longer what it was before, in Abraham’s time and in the centuries following, namely promise. Then no one is able to get this inheritance by simply believing the promise as Abraham, the patriarchs, their families and descendants did during those centuries; then one is now able to get it only by doing works of law as the Judaizers claim by meeting all the legal requirements. Then God’s own confirmation, the oath he made when sealing the testament promise, is canceled and no longer confirms as it did confirm prior to the coming of the law.

p. 164

Lightfoot says:

. . . ‘To abrogate and annul the promise I say, *for* this is the effect of making the inheritance dependent on law.’

p. 144

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:18** The law of Moses and the **promise** God made to **Abraham** were at odds with each other. Paul demonstrated that the false teachers' view that the law was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant had no scriptural basis.  
p. 1522

Wuest says:

Paul's argument in this verse is, that if the law affects the promise at all, it renders it null and void. It cannot be added to it without destroying it. Salvation must rest either upon the promise *or* upon the law. The Judaizers claimed that it rested upon the promise *and* the law. But Paul has shown that the law did not abrogate the promise, and thus it had no effect upon it. Thus, if as the Judaizers say, the inheritance is on the basis of law obedience, then it is not on the basis of promise. But, Paul adds, God gave it to Abraham on the basis of promise. That settled the matter. The words, *law* and *promise* are without the definite article, indicating that Paul is speaking of them here in their character of two opposing principles.  
p. 102

v. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.

The NET Bible translates verse 19:

Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary.

Peterson paraphrases verse 19:

The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. Obviously this law was not a firsthand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles this next section, between verses 19 & 25, and then says:

BY THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW (3:19-25).

**3:19.** An indignant Judaizer was sure to respond with objections to Paul's insistence that the Law could not give the Holy Spirit . . . could not bring justification . . . could not alter the permanence of faith . . . but does bring a curse . . . **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.

There are **TWO QUESTIONS** in these remaining verses of Galatians 3.

**QUESTION #1** is here in verse 19:

**“WHY THEN THE LAW?”**

**QUESTION #2** follows up on that in verse 21:

**“IS THEREFORE THE LAW AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD?”**

I have chosen verse 19 as the **KEY VERSE** of Study #6:

**“You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions.”**

Many Christians fail in their pursuit of spiritual maturity and development by a misunderstanding of the part that the law plays in relationship to their spiritual growth. It is because of this that we have hypocrisy, or we have those who are endeavoring to be holy by their own personal performance. It is because of this that we have so many folks who are frustrated and depressed when they fail to accomplish that which they feel will equal spirituality.

Here in this verse the Apostle Paul gives us one of the clearest statements in Scripture as to the **PURPOSE OF THE LAW**. He does it by asking the **QUESTION**:

**“WHY THEN THE LAW?”**

Then he proceeds to **ANSWER** it with the statement of this purpose:

**“IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS UNTIL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE HAD BEEN MADE.”**

The law was given to **REVEAL SIN**, not to **REMOVE** it.

The law was given to **PROVE MEN SINNERS**, not to **MAKE THEM HOLY**.

It is a lot like a glass of water that looks pure to the eye but under the microscope it is seen to be full of all kinds of impurities. So man thinks he is pure unless he sees himself under the microscope of the law.

Romans 3:19-24 (DAV)

Now we are knowing that whatever the Law is saying, it is speaking to those who are under the Law, in order that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law there shall not be declared righteous any flesh in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who are believing; for there is no distinction; for all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God, being made righteous as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

Dwight L. Moody said:

The law is a good looking glass (mirror) in which to show a child how defiled his face is. But who would think of washing the child's face with the looking glass?  
(source unknown)

I will always remember when I was serving on the Young Life staff that one of the messages given in club would be a message on the 10 commandments. The purpose of the message was to convince kids of their sin and their need of a Savior. I would often tell them that there were going to be 10 questions on the test and that God does not grade on the curve. You miss one and you flunk.

**James 2:10** (DAV)

For whoever pays attention to the whole law and yet sins in one respect, he has become guilty of all.

(Hope Has Its Reasons: From the Search for Self to the Surprise of Faith by Rebecca Manley Pippert) San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers. Copyright - Rebecca Manley Pippert, 1989.

In other words, neither modern psychology at its best, nor modern writers like Camus, supports the superficial notion that all is well with us as human beings. Far from it; we only begin to view ourselves accurately if we confront our deceitfulness. We all have painful, hidden, unacceptable feelings that we do not want to acknowledge (jealousy, hatred, anger, competitiveness, inadequacy). We all try hard to avoid these inadmissible impulses because they threaten our preferred image of ourselves or our loved ones.

p. 18

How does the lie that we are OK get in the way of our pursuit of happiness and love? It blocks true intimacy in relationships—be they romantic, familial, or platonic. We can have no relationship of depth or authenticity if we insist there is nothing wrong with us, or that it is always the other person's fault. Our flaws make sustaining good relationships hard enough. But to refuse to take responsibility and admit our flaws makes the intimacy and love we seek in relationships an impossibility. We little realize that the truth which under one set of circumstances is painful becomes liberating under another.

p. 31

(Hope Has Its Reasons: From the Search for Self to the Surprise of Faith by Rebecca Manley Pippert) San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers. Copyright - Rebecca Manley Pippert, 1989.

The real scandal of the televangelists was the vaunting pride and self-absorption that issued in manipulating the lives and hopes of others.  
p. 40

The Apostle Paul in answer to his question “WHY THEN THE LAW?” first says:

“IT WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS UNTIL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE HAD BEEN MADE.”

It was a TEMPORARY THING.

The “SEED” has been identified for us in verse 16 in the phrase:

“who is Christ.”

It was to Christ that:

“THE PROMISE HAD BEEN MADE.”

The law was given to make us aware of our need for the “SEED.”

The FINAL PHRASE says:

“HAVING BEEN ARRANGED (ORDAINED) THROUGH ANGELS, BY THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR.”

The law was:

“(ORDAINED) THROUGH ANGELS, BY THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR.”

C. S. Lovett, speaking about the word “ADDED” in this verse, said:

This is the tricky word. The Judaizers said the Law was added to the promise; that men not only had to believe in Jesus, but also kept the Law if they were to come under the promise. Paul argues the Law was but a temporary addition, **not to the promise**, but to the overall plan of God. It was therefore incidental to the promise, not a part of it. Its purpose was to get men ready for the coming of Abraham’s heir. Men were getting too accustomed to sin, so the Law was added to reveal the extent of their evil and turn wrongdoing into legal offenses with strict penalties attached. The Law was like a mirror. It could show you how dirty you were, but it couldn’t make you clean. The intention was that men, seeing how sinful they were, would yearn for redemption.

p. 40

Vos points out:

The law was added until the seed should come and was therefore a preparatory dispensation ending with the coming of Christ. While the promise was given to Abraham, “the friend of God,” directly, the law was ordained or established by a mediator. In fact, a double mediator is mentioned: angels are representing God and Moses as representing the people. In his hand Moses received the tables of the law. No doubt Paul intends here to give an inferior place to the law by showing that it came through a mediator while God addressed Abraham directly. Moreover, the law was temporary, until the seed should come; and the function of the law was to convict of transgression, while the function of the promise was to remove the penalty of sin.

p. 64

The great significance of this verse is that before a Christian can begin to make real progress and continue in the race of running towards spiritual maturity, he must have a clear understanding of the law and the function of the law so that he does not get sidetracked in trying to perform for God the legalistic standards which are used to convict him of his sin initially to bring him to Christ. Whereas, on the other hand, once an understanding of the function of the law is obtained, it prepares the way for further spiritual growth and progress.

It is the purpose of our relationship with Christ to establish a basis for fellowship and not for performance.

Anders says:

### Argument from the Purpose of the Law (vv. 19-25)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The law's purpose was never to save. Its purpose has always been to be a standard that would show us the magnitude of our sin, our need for grace, and thus, lead us to Christ. The law was a temporary measure only until faith in Christ was inaugurated. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.*

p. 38

Anders says:

**3:19.** Now Paul reveals **the purpose of the law** answering the question, "Why was a change made at Sinai?" Paul answers this question by explaining the one purpose and the two characteristics of the law. **The law was added because of transgressions.** *Transgressions* means "a stepping aside from a right track." The law laid down a right track (perfect standard) and made people aware when they were deviating from that perfect path. Yet the law was temporary. Its end point was the coming of the Seed (Christ, the Messiah). It is also inferior to Abraham and faith because it needed a mediator (angels and Moses on Mount Sinai).

p. 38

Barclay says:

Why introduce the law at all? It was introduced, as Paul puts it, *for the sake of transgressions*. What he means is this—it is a favourite thought of Paul that where there is no law there is no sin. You cannot break a law that does not exist. Before a man can be branded as a sinner he must know the law. He cannot be condemned for doing a wrong thing if he did not know that it was the wrong thing. Therefore the function of the law is to *define sin*.  
p. 31

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

#### **4. Law versus covenant (3:19-22)**

Paul has proved, at least to his own satisfaction and perhaps even to that of the Galatians, that the only way of salvation is by means of the promise received through faith. But the legalizers might object that the approach he has taken has actually proved too much. If the way of salvation is by promise and the law brings a curse, it would seem to follow (1) that the law has no purpose at all in the scheme of salvation, or (2) that it is actually opposed to it. This would be an intolerable conclusion for most, particularly those Jews whose lives had been dominated by the law for centuries. Paul answers these charges by denying both conclusions and by establishing God's true purpose in giving the law; it was given not to save people but to reveal their sin, it was temporary, and it was inferior to the promise because, unlike the promise, it was given through a mediator.  
p. 725

Bartlett says:

This verse marks the law as supplementary and hence subordinate to the promise. In Weymouth's translation, we have the very lucid rendering, "It was imposed later on for the sake of defining sin." The law magnified Israel's sin and pressed upon them the need of a Saviour. The law was given to reveal sin, not to remove it. As someone has put it, the mirror which shows one that his face is dirty does not wash it for him.  
p. 64

Bickel & Jantz say:

### **So Why Was the Law Given? (3:19-25)**

Paul does us a big favor and answers the question that was probably on the mind of every Galatian (no doubt the question is on your mind, too): If it's so useless, why was the law given? If the law can't save us and make us right with God, what purpose does it serve? Great questions! (We thought you'd never ask.) Paul answers them by giving both the negative and the positive purposes of the law.

p. 77

De Haan says:

THE question in this verse is a natural one after the statements made by the Apostle Paul in the preceding verses. Paul anticipates in writing to the church that the question concerning the purpose of the law would be brought up, and so he answers the question before it could be asked. In the first three chapters of Galatians Paul had under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit proven that the Law of Moses was never given to make man better or to save him, much less to justify him. The law was given to condemn the sinner in order that he might realize the need of the grace of God. Paul had shown that the death of Christ is the final, conclusive argument that salvation cannot be by the law, for he says, "if righteousness come by the law then Christ is dead in vain." To teach salvation by the law is to deny both the necessity and the efficacy of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither can the law sanctify a man or make him better. All it could do was show him how bad he was, and how hopeless his condition without the grace of God.

p. 115

De Haan says:

Now three definite things are stated in this brief verse:

1. The law did have a beginning. Paul says “it was added”—added to something else which must have existed before the law itself came.
2. The law had a definite purpose, “because of transgressions,” or as we shall see, to reveal the true nature of sin by transgression.
3. The law also came to an end, just as it had a beginning—“it was added—TILL the seed should come.” It also came to an end when that seed did come.

p. 116

De Haan says:

#### THE LAW COULD NOT SAVE

This then is the purpose of the law. It was not designed to save men or to make them better. Prohibition could forbid men drinking, but it could not stop them from thirsting and it blossomed out in an age of bootlegging, blind pigs, and wide-spread violations.

Why then the law of God, we ask again? The answer is, to reveal to man his utter corruption, his terrible sinfulness, that when Christ should come to save by grace, man would turn forever from the works of the law, and plead only the grace of God. The law was given to make sin exceeding sinful, a wilful rebellion against plain restrictions. The law increases your condemnation. Sinner, will you turn to Christ, abandon all hope of keeping the law for your salvation, and come to Him who said:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

p. 122

Eadie says:

1. The law has no organic relation to the promise, was neither a new form of it nor a codicil to it, did not spring out of it, but was superadded as a foreign and unallied element. 2. The law has functional connection with sin; the promise regards an inheritance. 3. The law was provisional and temporary only; the promise has no limitation of time, and is not to be superseded. 4. The law was given by a species of double intervention—the instrumentality of angels and the mediation of Moses; the promise was given directly and immediately from God's own lips, no one stepping in between its Giver and its recipient—neither angel ordaining it nor man conveying it. 5. The promise, as resting solely on God, was unconditioned, and therefore permanent and unchanging; the law, interposed between two parties, and specially contingent on a human element, was liable to suspension or abolition. 6. This law, so necessitated by sin, so transient, so connected with angelic ordinance and human handling, was an institute later also far in its inauguration—was 430 years after the promise.  
p. 269

Gaebelein says:

If, then, the law cannot give the Spirit of God, if it cannot give righteousness, if the law has no blessing for man, but pronounces a curse upon him, if it cannot, in any way, affect the original grace-covenant made with Abraham, confirmed in Isaac, then the logical question which follows is “Why did God give the law?”—“Wherefore, then, serveth the law?” (verse 19). The answer is “It was added because of transgressions.” It was added not that sin might be curbed, or man might be saved by it, but that man might be constituted a transgressor and his hopeless and guilty condition fully demonstrated. It was introduced as a parenthetical thing, between the original promise and its fulfillment in Christ, in order that the moral condition of man might be manifested.  
p. 217

Hendriksen says:

Paul answers: **By reason of the transgression sit was added**; that is, it was given to man in addition to the promise in order to bring about within his heart and mind an awakened sense of guilt. A vague awareness of the fact that all is not right with him will not drive him to the Savior. Only when he realizes that his sins are transgressions of the law of that God who is also his Judge and whose holiness cannot brook such *digressions*, such constant *stepping aside* from the appointed path, will he, when this knowledge is applied to his heart by the Holy Spirit, cry out for deliverance.  
p. 140

Hogg & Vine say:

v. 19. **What then is the law?**—if the law cannot procure the gift of the Spirit, v. 2, if it does not give evidence of possessing any inherent power, v. 5, if no man is justified by it, if no man obtains life by its means, if no one is brought into the enjoyment by it, vv. 11, 12, 14, cp. v. 21, then what purpose was it intended to serve? with what object was it given? The question arises here naturally, for it cannot be supposed that God gave this law gratuitously, purposelessly, and yet the Apostle had denied to the law every advantage claimed for it, or that might be claimed, and left it without any ostensible reason for its existence.  
pp. 148-49

Ironside says:

I think perhaps we may understand it better if we read it, "It was added with a view to transgressions," in order that it might make men see the specific character of transgression, and thus deepen in each soul a sense of his sinfulness and his need.

We are all so ready to excuse our selves, to say if we had known better we would not have done the wrong thing. How often you hear people say, "I do the best I know, and endeavor to do the best I can." But where has a man or woman ever been found who could honestly utter those sentences? Have you always done the best you knew? Have you always done the best you could? If you are absolutely honest before God, you know that you have not. Again and again we have all sinned against light and knowledge, we have known far better than we have done. Thus we have failed to glorify God, and by going contrary to His revealed will we have proven ourselves not only sinners but transgressors.

pp. 118-19

Lenski says:

It is astonishing yet altogether true, the purpose of the law is transgressions. It is for sinners only; sinless persons need no law. But the moment the law meets a sinner, he reacts by transgression because of the sin in him. The law brings it out so that he and all men may see it.

p. 167

Lightfoot says:

'Had the law then no purpose? Yes: but its very purpose, its whole character and history, betray its inferiority to the dispensation of grace. In four points this inferiority is seen. *First*; Instead of justifying it condemns, instead of giving life it kills: it was added to reveal and multiply transgressions. *Secondly*; It was but temporary; when the seed came to whom the promise was given, it was annulled. *Thirdly*; It did not come direct from God to man. There was a double interposition, a twofold mediation, between the giver and the recipient. There were the angels, who administered it as God's instruments; there was Moses (or the high-priest) who delivered it to man. *Fourthly*; As follows from the idea of mediation, it was of the nature of a contract, depending for its fulfilment on the observance of its conditions by the two contracting parties. Not so the promise, which proceeding from the solo fiat of God, is unconditional and unchangeable.'

p. 144

Luther says:

The question naturally arises: If the Law was not given for righteousness or salvation, why was it given? Why did God give the Law in the first place if it cannot justify a person?

p. 126

Luther says:

All things differ. Let everything serve its unique purpose. Let the sun shine by day, the moon and the stars by night. Let the sea furnish fish, the earth grain, the woods trees, etc. Let the Law also serve its unique purpose. It must not step out of character and take the place of anything else. What is the function of the Law? "Transgression," answers the Apostle.

p. 129

Luther says:

This is the principal purpose of the Law and its most valuable contribution. As long as a person is not a murderer, adulterer, thief, he would swear that he is righteous. He is God going to humble such a person except by the Law? The Law is the hammer of death, the thunder of hell, and the lightning of God's wrath to bring down the proud and shameless hypocrites. When the Law was instituted on Mount Sinai it was accompanied by lightning, by storms, by the sound of trumpets, to tear to pieces that monster called self-righteousness. As long as a person thinks he is right he is going to be incomprehensibly proud and presumptuous. He is going to hate God, despise His grace and mercy, and ignore the promises in Christ. The Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins through Christ will never appeal to the self-righteous.  
p. 130

MacArthur says:

#### **E. The Purpose of the Law (3:19-29)**

**3:19-22** Having shown the superiority of the promise to Abraham (vv. 15-18), Paul described the inferiority of the law, and its purpose.  
p. 1667

MacArthur says:

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.  
p. 86

MacArthur says:

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.  
p. 86

MacArthur says:

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 violation of the will of God, who rules the universe and holds them accountable for their sin.  
p. 87

MacArthur says:

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.  
p. 87

Pinnock says:

"It was added because of transgressions." The law was given to awaken man's awareness of his sins. Though it had no power to make him holy, it could arouse him to perceive the reality of his transgressions. As such it would create in man a desire for deliverance. It teaches us our moral bankruptcy so well that we long for God's grace and the fulfillment of His promise. The age of law served as a kind of interlude until Christ came to deliver those under the law and to preach deliverance to the captives.  
p. 45

Ridderbos says:

This is to say more than that by means of the law sin should be *acknowledged* as transgression in its proper and terrible character: it is to say also that by means of the law sin should come out into the open and multiply itself. The law makes guilt and evil greater (Rom. 5:20). This had to take place so that the indispensability of Christ would come to be rightly understood (cf. verse 24). Hence the sequel in this connection: *till the seed should come*. That seed was Christ (verse 16). It was He to whom the promise pointed and in whom it was materialized. But, up to His coming, the law had to bring sin out more and more, and, by reason of human wickedness, call it into existence. Only in that way would the necessity of Christ's coming and work be properly understood. In contrast to what the Judaizers were teaching, therefore, the law was insufficient for salvation not only, but something which should be separated from it as far as the possible.

p. 138

Vos says:

#### TRUE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF THE LAW (3:19-29)

If the law is antithetical to promise and is not in force for the believers now that Christ has come, what good is it? What function did it serve? Paul hastens to explain: "It was added because of transgressions."

pp. 63-64

Wuest says:

What is then the significance of the law? For the sake of transgressions it was added until there should come the Descendant to whom the promise was made, having been promulgated by angels through the instrumentality of the hand of a mediator.

p. 205

Wuest says:

V. *If the law was never given as a means whereby a sinner might be saved, why was it given, and for what purpose? (3:19-4:7).*  
p. 103

Wuest says:

The crux of the whole assertion is found in the distinctive meaning of the word translated *transgressions*. It is *parabasis*. The simple verb means “to step,” the prefixed preposition, “beyond.” It refers to the act of a person stepping beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory. The word for *sin* is *hamartia* which meant in classical Greek “to miss the mark,” and was used of a person who failed to hit a target. The verb was used in connection with a direct object *hodos* (road), in a sentence where someone missed the road. Thus, the word implies a deviation from the right course of action. But the word in the classics never had the idea of a willful transgression or overstepping of limitations with reference to conduct imposed by the deity.  
p. 104

Verse 19 is the **KEY** to Paul’s whole argument here at the end of Galatians 3:

**“You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions.”**

**“WHY THEN THE LAW?”**

According to DeHaan:

The law can’t justify, it can’t sanctify, it can’t satisfy.  
(source unknown)

There are **TWO KEY THOUGHTS** within verse 19:

1. **“ADDED”** and
2. **“UNTIL.”**

It was **“ADDED”** onto and it is **TEMPORARY**. For it is in focus **“UNTIL.”**

(The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith by Timothy Keller) New York, NY: Penguin Group. Copyright– Timothy Keller, 2008.

Nearly everyone defines sin as breaking a list of rules. Jesus, though, shows us that a man who has violated virtually nothing on the list of moral misbehaviors can be every bit as spiritually lost as the most profligate, immoral person. Why? Because sin is not just breaking the rules, it is putting yourself in the place of God as Savior, Lord, and Judge just as each son sought to displace the authority of the father in his own life.  
p. 43

(Grace Notes: Daily Readings with a Fellow Pilgrim by Philip Yancey) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Someone Cares Charitable Trust, 2009.

Perfectionism keeps running aground on the barrier reef of original sin.

How can we in the church uphold the ideal of holiness, the proper striving for Life on the Highest Plane, while avoiding the consequences of disillusionment, prettiness, abuse of authority, spiritual pride, and exclusivism?  
p. 130

**v. 20 Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one.**

The NET Bible translates verse 20:

Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one.

Peterson paraphrases verse 20:

But if there is a middleman as there was at Sinai, then the people are not dealing directly with God, are they? But the original promise is the direct blessing of God, received by faith.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**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.

There are over **400 INTERPRETATIONS** of this particular verse.

C. S. Lovett points out:

The entrance of the Law into Israel's history was a business deal. First, God made definite proposals to the people. Then they formally accepted His conditions, vowing, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). Thus it was a binding agreement between two parties. A will, on the other hand, is executed solely by its maker and designed to carry out his wishes alone. His heirs receive the benefits simply because he is pleased to bestow them. God's will (promise) freely pledged the Spirit to all exhibiting the faith of Abraham. However it didn't become effective until the death of Christ (Heb. 9:16). Paul says there is as much difference between the Law and God's (3 fold) promise as there is between a will and a contract. The Law, an entirely separate instrument, was executed long after God's promises were made and has no effect on them whatsoever.

p. 40

A "MEDIATOR" is a representative of two. In this case Moses is the representative of God and the people.

But God, in giving "the promise" to Abraham, did it of Himself. Therefore, it is God's full responsibility to keep His promise.

Conybeare & Howson point out:

It is better to depend upon an unconditional promise of God than upon a conditional covenant made between God and man. For in the latter case, the conditions of the covenant might be broken by man and so the blessing is forfeited. Whereas in the former case, God being immutable, the blessings derived from his promise remain steadfast forever.

Any legal agreement depends on both sides keeping it. If we break the law, the whole agreement is undone. The promise, on the other hand, only depends on one person. The promise is given by God and nothing anyone can do can alter that promise. Now the way of grace depends entirely upon God. It is His promise, His provision, His love, His acceptance; nothing man can do can alter that.

In these promises and the fulfillment of them, God's reputation is at stake.

The purpose of the law is simply to drive us to see that we have to accept the promises of God. That apart from His grace we are hopelessly doomed. How quick we are to forget the promises of God to lapse back into a situation where we are walking in a legalistic arrangement with our Lord.

## 2 Peter 1:4 (DAV)

Through which [things] He has generously given to us His precious and exceedingly great promises, in order that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the destruction in the world caused by desire.

Go to the depths of God's promises,  
 And claim whatsoever you will.  
 The blessing of God will not fail thee;  
 His word He will surely fulfill.  
 (source unknown)

How can God say no to something He has promised?

C. S. Lovett goes on to say, with regard to the word "MEDIATOR":

God appeared to Abraham in Person (a theophany), making His promises directly. This is the way God likes to deal with people. But in giving the Law, which had to do with sin and punishment, He stayed in the background and worked through agents. Angels represented God and Moses represented man. That way the very giving of the Law dramatized the separation between God and man due to sin. God is not pleased to have mediators separating Him from His people. He prefers to bring them into immediate fellowship with Himself. But sin made it necessary, so Moses and the legal priesthood were used to keep man at a distance from God. The Gospel too has a Mediator (1st Tim. 2:5). Not one of separation, but of reconciliation. In Himself, Jesus represents both God and mankind, so that all parties can meet in Him. Yet, even His role as the Gospel Mediator is temporary, for when He has reconciled all things to God, He will vacate the Mediator's office (1 Cor. 15:24). Then we ourselves will be face to face with God, as He desires.  
 p. 41

Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Hebrews 13:5 (DAV)

Let your manner of life be free from the love of money, being satisfied with what you are having; for He Himself has said: “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,”

These are some of the “promises” that fill the Word of God. “Promises” of His:

**PRESENCE,**

**STRENGTH,**

**GRACE,**

**PROVISION,** and

**LOVE**—just to mention a few.

When we neglect the Word of God, we forget His promises. And thus when a difficult time comes with testing and temptation, we tend to forget that he has promised in His Word that:

1 Corinthians 10:13 (DAV)

No temptation has laid hold of you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted beyond that with which you are able to cope, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to bear up under mistreatment.

Anders says:

**3:20.** Because the law required mediation, it required each party to live up to the contract. The Abrahamic covenant, on the other hand, was dependent only on the commitment of **God**, who is **one**. Therefore, the law was inferior to the promise given to Abraham.

p. 38

Barclay says:

An agreement founded on law always involves *two* people. There is the person who gives it and the person who accepts it. That agreement is dependent on the action of *two* people. Let the one who receives the conditions break them and the whole agreement collapses. Any legal agreement depends on both sides keeping the agreement. That is the position those who put their trust in the law were in. Break that law, and the whole agreement is undone. But a promise only depends on *one* person; the promise is given by one, and nothing anyone else can do can break or alter that promise. Now the way of grace depends entirely on God; it is His promise, His grace, His love. Nothing man can do can alter that. He may sin, he may stray, but the love and the grace of God stand unaltered. To Paul it was the weakness of the law that it depended on *two* persons; it depended not only on the law-giver; it depended on man's keeping it. And man had wrecked it. But grace is entirely of God; nothing man can do can undo it; and surely, beyond all argument, it is better to depend on the grace of the unchanging God than on the doomed to failure efforts of helpless men.

p. 32

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Whatever the details of the interpretation, the general thought seems to be that the promise must be considered superior to the law because the law is bilateral. That is, it was mediated, and; humankind was a party to it. The promise, on the other hand, is unilateral; humankind is not a party to it. This thought reinforces what Paul has said earlier about the unconditional and unilateral nature of the promises.  
p. 725

Gaebelein says:

The statement “a mediator is not of one” means that mediatorship necessitates two parties. So there were God and Israel, Moses between as the mediator. But in the promise, the covenant made with Abraham and his seed, God was the only One who spoke. Its fulfillment is not (as in the law-covenant) dependent upon a faithful God and Israel’s obedience, but on God’s faithfulness alone; all depended upon God Himself.  
p. 218

Hendriksen says:

Instead of vexing the reader with the four hundred thirty different interpretations to which this passage has given rise, I shall immediately state the one which appears to me to be the most consistent with the context. It is this: Though a human intermediary may be ever so important, he is, after all, only a third party acting between two other parties. Moses served as a human link between God and the people. Such an intermediary lacks independent authority. God, however, is *One*. When he made his promise to Abraham—and through him to *all* believers, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 3:30!)—he did this on his own sovereign account, directly, personally. He was speaking from the heart to the heart.  
p. 143

Ironside says:

“Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” Two contracting parties suggests the thought of the need of a mediator, but when God gave His promise to Abraham there was only one. God gave the Word, and there was nothing to do on Abraham’s part but to receive it. He did not covenant with God that he would do thus and so in order that God’s promise might be fulfilled, but God spoke directly to him and committed Himself when He said, “In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8).  
pp. 121-2

Lightfoot says:

The number of interpretations of this passage is said to mount up to 250 or 300. Many of these arise out of an error as to the mediator, many more disregard the context, and not a few are quite arbitrary. Without attempting to discuss others which are not open to any of these objections, I shall give that which appears to me the most probable. The meaning of the first clause seems tolerably clear, and the range of possibility with regard to the second is not very great.

. . . ‘*no mediator can be a mediator of one.*’ The very idea of mediation supposes two persons at least, between whom the mediation is carried on. The law then is of the nature of a contract between two parties, God on the one hand, and the Jewish people on the other. It is only valid so long as both parties fulfil the terms of the contract. It is therefore contingent and not absolute. The definite article with . . . expresses the idea, the specific type, as 2 Cor. xii. 12 . . . Joh. x. 11 . . .

. . . ‘*but God (the giver of the promise) is one.*’ Unlike the law, the promise is absolute and unconditional. It depends on the sole decree of God. There are not two contracting parties. There is nothing of the nature of a *stipulation*. The giver is everything, the recipient nothing. Thus the primary sense of ‘one’ here is numerical. The further idea of unchangeableness may perhaps be suggested; but if so, it is rather accidental than inherent.  
pp. 146-7

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:19, 20** The **purpose of the law** of Moses was not to justify humankind in God's eyes (2:16). Rather, the law was **added** after God's promise to Abraham (vv. 16, 17) to clarify the issue of sin until Christ **the Seed** (v. 16) came. According to Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, the law was given **through angels** to Moses as the human **mediator** (Acts 7:38). This view was in line with Jewish teaching of the NT era. No mediator, or go-between, was needed with the Abrahamic covenant since it was a one-party, or unilateral, **promise**. God put Abraham into a "deep sleep" and consummated the ceremonial enactment of the covenant alone (Gen. 15:12-17).

p. 1522

Ridderbos says:

In the giving of the promise, however, no mediator intervened. God was at work alone: for He is not only the author of the promise; He fulfills it also. So it is that this mode of implementation also makes manifest the unconditional character of the promise, and its superiority to the law.

p. 140

Wuest says:

Thus a mediator is one who intervenes between two, either to make or restore peace and friendship, to form a compact, or ratify a covenant. The word in the Greek text is preceded by the definite article, making the word generic in character. That is, Paul is not referring here to any particular mediator as Moses, but to the office of a mediator, and to mediators in general looked upon as a class of individuals. However, this generic statement is intended to be applied to Moses, the mediator referred to in verse 19. The word *one* is masculine in gender, and therefore is personal, referring to a person. That is, a mediator does not act simply in behalf of one person. The very genius of the word implies that the mediator stands "in the midst" of two or more persons, thus acts as a go-between. It is not that the mediator acts in behalf of a plurality of persons that constitute one party, but that there is a plurality of parties between which he acts. Thus the law is a contract between two parties.

p. 106

(The Beautiful Fight: Surrendering to the Transforming Presence of God  
Every Day of Your Life by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI:  
Zondervan. Copyright– Gary L. Thomas, 2007.

*When man listens, God speaks . . . We are not out to tell God. We are out to let God tell us . . . The lesson the world most needs is the art of listening to God.*  
Frank Buchman

*God has spoken, and God speaks: by himself as well as through his heralds, prophets, and preachers. There is no doubt about this basic fact. The problem is that people, even God's own people, do not listen.*

Klaus Bockmuehl

*Invite God to interrupt you. If your heavenly Father wanted to, could he interrupt you at any time during your day to ask you to do something with him? I used to view interruptions in life as a nuisance and a hindrance. Now I see them as opportunities.*

Marilyn Hontz

*“The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out . . . His sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.”*

Jesus, in John 10:3-5

p. 87

v. 21 Is therefore the law against the promises of God. God forbid! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.

The NET Bible translates verse 21:

Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

Peterson paraphrases verse 21:

If such is the case, is the law, then, an anti-promise, a negation of God's will for us? Not at all. If such is the case, is the law, then, an anti-promise, a negation of God's will for us? Not at all. Its purpose was to make obvious to everyone that we are, in ourselves, out of right relationship with God,

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**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).

We come now to the **SECOND QUESTION** here in these verses.

**QUESTION #1** was back in verse 19:

**“WHY THEN THE LAW?”**

**QUESTION #2** is here in verse 21:

**“IS THEREFORE THE LAW AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD?”**

Paul’s answer to this question is an emphatic **NO!** or **“GOD FORBID!”**

The **REASON** given for this **NEGATIVE RESPONSE** is:

**“FOR IF A LAW HAD BEEN GIVEN WHICH WAS ABLE TO MAKE ALIVE, ACTUALLY RIGHTEOUSNESS WOULD HAVE BEEN FROM THE LAW.”**

What is really need is life, and all the law can do is bring death.

**2 Corinthians 3:6-7** (DAV)

Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter is killing, but the Spirit is giving life. But if the ministry of death, which has been engraved by means of letters on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,

Ezekiel 18:4 (NIV)

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

Genesis 2:17 (NIV)

but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Romans 5:12 (DAV)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and through this sin, death, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

## C. S. Lovett points out:

Are Law and grace opposite? Heaven forbid, says Paul, as though answering a Jewish Christian. But just suppose there could be a law which did give life. Then Law and grace would be competitors and hostile to each other, for each would offer a different way of salvation. They would then be like two gas stations offering different brands of gasoline. But this is not the case, for no law can give life. Besides, the Mosaic Law didn't even pretend to give life. It's purpose was to make people yearn for the promise. It was given to enhance God's promise, to make it more desirable. The sicker a man is, the better the doctor looks to him. Similarly, the Law, by revealing man's need, makes the promises of God (justification and peace) even more appealing. pp. 41-42

Paul is saying in verse 21 that if there was a law that could first make alive, that is give new life, and also a righteous standing, then righteousness would have been from that law.

We all stand condemned under the law's verdict because we have all sinned. We have broken the law, and to have broken the law is to become guilty of it all.

James 4:17 (DAV)

Therefore, to the one knowing how to do good, and is not doing it, to him it is sin.

John 3:19-21 (NASB)

And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

(You Don't Have to Quit by Ray & Anne Ortlund) Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson. Copyright - Anne and Ray Ortlund, 1988.

It's the old thing about shutting the barn door after the mule is out. Or as Charles E. Wilson puts it, "It's futile to talk too much about the past—something like trying to make birth control retroactive!"  
p. 28

(When Being Good Isn't Good Enough by Stephen Brown) Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright - Stephen Brown, 1990.

So many Christians live their lives like that. At one time I thought I'd discovered a revolutionary method of marriage counseling that would change the way everybody did marriage counseling. Marriage counselors know that most men are insensitive and that the number one complaint from wives is that their husbands neither share their own feelings nor listen to their wives' feelings.

Well, I decided to teach husbands to be sensitive to their wives. I would say, "On the way home from work today, I want you to think of a feeling you have that you can share with your wife. I want you to stop and buy flowers from one of those corner vendors even if they are Moonies. I want you to tell your wife you love her at least three times before dinner, and I want you to make a point of listening to everything she says after dinner."

Now, doesn't that sound like a great way to get a man to be sensitive to his wife? Wrong! In fact, I created more problems than I solved.

One woman complained, "Pastor, it is like trying to make love with a 'how to do it' sex manual. He comes home and says that he loves me three times. Once he has done that, he feels he has done his duty. I don't feel loved. I feel programmed!"

What I have learned to tell husbands is this: Ask God to give you a deep love for your wife. Think of how you felt when you were first dating. Remember all the ways she loves and supports you. Think of her love for your children and of the things she gives up for them and for you. Remember how she likes to dance and sing. When you have dwelt on that sufficiently, then go home and do what comes naturally.  
pp. 192-93

Anders says:

**3:21-22.** Another question is raised: Is there conflict between the law and the **promises of God**? Paul answers, **absolutely not!** The law was not given to impart life and a right standing with God. Its purpose was to reveal that **the whole world is a prisoner of sin** condemned under its judgment. Such condemnation created in mankind a need for forgiveness and release from the law's penalty—a need for forgiveness in Christ.  
p. 38

De Haan says:

If the law could have given life, says Paul, then Christ would never have needed to die. If a man can save himself, then why does he need a Saviour to die in his place? If a man can keep himself saved, then why does he need a High Priest to intercede daily for him at the right hand of God? No, indeed, says Paul, the law and the Gospel are not against each other, but they do have entirely different purposes. The law slays and kills the sinner, that he may turn from the law and his own works to the Christ who alone can give him life.

p. 119

Hendriksen says:

The law can never make a man spiritually alive, cannot regenerate him, or impart faith to him whereby he would be enabled to accept the righteousness of God in Christ. If a law had been given that could have done that, then, of course, righteousness would have come by law, but the law is not a vivifying power. It takes God's grace to function in that capacity.

p. 143

Lenski says:

In v. 15-18 Paul stresses the late date of the law and the fact that this excluded any modification of the testament by means of the law. In v. 19, 20 he shows the temporary nature of the law which was evidenced also by the way in which it was given. Now he adds the fact of the inability of the law to give life, which means that it could not possibly produce righteousness.

p. 172

Lightfoot says:

'Thus the law differs widely from the promise. But does this difference imply antagonism? Did the law interfere with the promise? Far otherwise. Indeed we might imagine such a law, that it would take the place of the promise, would justify and give life. This was not the effect of the law of Moses.'

p. 147

**Luther says:**

God never said to Abraham: "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because thou hast kept the Law." When Abraham was still uncircumcised and without the Law or any law, indeed, when he was still an idol worshiper, God said to him: "Get thee out of thy country, etc.; I am thy shield, etc.; In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are unconditional promises which God freely made to Abraham without respect to works.

p. 138

**MacArthur says:**

Paul uses the strongest Greek negative (*see note on 2:17*) to disdain the idea that the law and the promise are at opposite purposes. Since God gave them both and does not work against Himself, law and promise work in harmony; the law reveals man's sinfulness and need for the salvation freely offered in the promise. If the law could have provided righteousness and eternal life, there would be no gracious promise.

p. 1667

**Pinnock says:**

At the same time, the law is not in any way against the promises of God (v. 21). Promise and law complement one another. Both were divinely given, but for two different purposes. Law was not given to convey life. Even when operating perfectly the law was limited to the exposing of sin. That was the function it was meant to perform, and it does it well. God knows what He is doing. He did not give the law to undo what He had earlier planned to do. Promise and law fit into one coherent divine plan. Life is offered to man always and only on the basis of God's love and grace. The law, like a jailor, has locked us all up in the prison house of sin. Or to put it more plainly, the law reveals the universality of sin and shows us how intractable our plight is. It tells us, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

p. 45

(Cries from the Cross: A Journey Into the Heart of Jesus by Erwin W. Lutzer)  
Chicago, IL: Moody Press. Copyright – Erwin W. Lutzer, 2002.

The computer I'm using does not recognize the word *brokenness*. Unfortunately, many of us don't recognize the word either. We know what it is like to be broke; but we haven't experienced brokenness, a word that reminds us that at the cross all self-aggrandizement ends. Here we are introduced to the mystery of God's providential will for us. Here we come to the end of self-seeking and forever reject the notion that we are worthy to cooperate with God in His salvation.

p. 30

v. 22 But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The NET Bible translates verse 22:

But the scripture imprisoned everything and everyone under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.

Peterson paraphrases verse 22:

and therefore to show us the futility of devising some religious system for getting by our own efforts what we can only get by waiting in faith for God to complete his promise. For if any kind of rule-keeping had power to create life in us, we would certainly have gotten it by this time.

The picture in the first part of verse 22 is:

**“BUT THE SCRIPTURE SHUT UP [IN PRISON] ALL UNDER SIN.”**

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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 . . . 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**.

Here the Apostle Paul says that the function of the Scripture or the law is to **“SHUT UP ALL UNDER SIN”** with the **PURPOSE** in mind that:

**“THE PROMISE ON THE GROUND OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE.”**

Romans 3:19 (DAV)

Now we are knowing that whatever the Law is saying, it is speaking to those who are under the Law, in order that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God;

Romans 3:23 (DAV)

for all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23 (DAV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word for **“SHUT UP”** here is the word:

**“did shut together on all sides as a school of fish in a net.”**

To be kept under lock and key, the law has shut us in with no hope of release by ourselves.

Because we are all under sin, we are all dead. We are equally dead. It is not the degree but the fact of sin that makes us dead.

B. B. Sutcliffe illustrates this fact quite well:

Let's say there are three men on a very high building. They are warned of their danger of falling off. The first man jumps off and is killed because he thought the warning was false. The second accidentally slips off and is killed, and the third is seized and is thrown off by his enemies and is killed. Can it be said that the last man is less dead than the others or the first more dead? Can that which killed them give them life?  
(source unknown)

As there are no degrees of death, so likewise there are no degrees of salvation. No one is any more saved than anyone else.

The only place there are degrees is in the area of Christian maturity even as there is in physical age.

In our relationship to the Lord, it is a situation that is pretty cut-and-dry. Either you are in Him and alive, or you are not and you are dead.

1 John 5:10-12 (DAV)

The one who is believing in the Son of God is having the witness in himself; the one who is not believing God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness which God has witnessed concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who is having the Son is having the life; the one who is not having the Son of God is not having the life.

The **PURPOSE** for shutting us all up **"UNDER SIN"** is:

**"IN ORDER THAT THE PROMISE ON THE GROUND OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE."**

If you want to enter into the promises of God, it will be on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ and not by the works of the law.

We see this graphically illustrated in the account of the **THIEF ON THE CROSS** who turns to Christ and asks Him to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. The immediate response of the Savior is: "Today you will be with Me in paradise."

(Hope Has Its Reasons: From the Search for Self to the Surprise of Faith by Rebecca Manley Pippert) San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers. Copyright - Rebecca Manley Pippert, 1989.

The tragedy of sin is that it has ruined something that was created to be wonderful. God's image within us is a reminder that we have been created for something better than we are experiencing. Joe Cooke writes, "I am like a beast in the trap. I was created to roam free, but sin has snapped its jaw around me and imprisoned me. I am like an eagle with a broken wing. God intended that I should fly high up in His blue heaven. But sin has broken me, and I cannot even get off the ground. I'm like a priceless violin created by a master. But the strings are broken and the pegs slip, and the wood is cracked. When the master tries to play me, he gets nothing out of me but a cacophonous wail."  
pp. 145-46

Let's summarize verse 22:

**THE LAW SHUTS US UP ALL UNDER SIN AND THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IS FULFILLED AT THAT POINT.**

We then read in our verse that this is done:

**"IN ORDER THAT THE PROMISE ON THE GROUND OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE."**

Not to those who are trying to attain it by the works of the law.

Barclay says:

With one voice the NT writers witness to that which they themselves had over and over again experienced—the great truth that we can depend on God.

*Pistos* is indeed a great word. It describes the man on whose faithful service we may rely, on whose loyalty we may depend, whose word we can unreservedly accept. It describes the man in whom there is the unswerving and inflexible fidelity of Jesus Christ, and the utter dependability of God.  
p. 111

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Because it is impossible to find life through law, however, the law fulfills its actual function by shutting all people up within the bounds of acknowledged sin. It condemns them, with the result that they turn from trying to please God through legalism and instead receive the promise of God through faith in Jesus Christ.  
p. 726

Dunnam says:

By “*confined*” or “*consigned*,” Paul means that all persons, without exception, are shut up with no apparent possibility of escape. Though Scripture shows God forever active in His work of redemption, Scripture also shows that sin, too, is at work. Everything and everybody is brought under the inexorable power of sin. And if this is true, without exception, and we are hopeless within ourselves to escape, then this is a stage by which humanity comes to see the promise of God’s blessing realized in Jesus Christ. We remain locked in that prison of sin until through faith we experience the deliverance of Jesus Christ.  
p. 70

Harrison says:

This conclusion is definite and decisive, with no middle ground, sealed to us by this solemn, summary declaration: “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe” (3:22). So important is this statement that we wish the reader to consider it in several available renderings:

*“But Scripture has imprisoned all under sin,  
in order that the promise depending on faith  
in Jesus Christ may be given to those who believe”  
(Weymouth).*

*“But the scripture shut up all things under sin,  
that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might  
be given to them that believe” (R.V.).*

*“But Scripture has consigned all without exception  
to the custody of sin, in order that the promise  
due to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to  
those who have faith” (Moffatt).*

“But the Scripture has everything completely imprisoned under sin, so that the promise might be given the believers through faith in Jesus Christ” (Verkuy).

If the Bible speaks God’s mind, and it does, then all who think to commend themselves to God by their conduct, all who seek to come into His favor by trying to be good, are simply trying to get out of prison. They are guilty of attempted jail-break! They are making their condition worse, inviting a more severe sentence.  
pp. 59-60

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

**But**—as the law cannot give life or righteousness [ALFORD]. Or the “But” means, So far is *righteousness* from being of the law, that the *knowledge of sin* is rather what comes of the law [BENGEL]. **the scripture**—which began to be written after the time of the promise, at the time when the law was given. The *written* letter was needed so as PERMANENTLY to convict man of disobedience to God’s command.  
p. 1268

MacArthur says:

The Greek verb translated “confined” means “to enclose on all sides.” Paul portrays all mankind as hopelessly trapped in sin, like a school of fish caught in a net. That all people are sinners is the express teaching of Scripture . . .  
p. 1667

Spurgeon says:

### THE GREAT JAIL, AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT

p. 305

Spurgeon says:

You must proceed upon right principles, or disappointment awaits you. If a man in London believed that he would reach the city of York by travelling rapidly to the south, he would certainly fail, even though he had a special express attached to his carriage. If another should be sincerely of opinion that by drinking a strong poison he would restore himself to health, his friends and survivors would have to regret his infatuation. The earnestness of his belief will not alter the fact; the principles which make the deadly drug so murderous will not yield because the man was sincere, but he will certainly die for his obstinacy. Now, the greatest matter of concern for any one of us is the eternal salvation of our soul. We need to be saved, and, according to the Scriptures of truth, there is but one way of salvation; but that way does not happen to be in favour among the sons of men. The great popular principle, popular all over the world, no matter whether the people happen to be Protestant or Catholic, Parsee or Mahomedan, Brahminist or Buddhist, is *self-salvation*—they would reach eternal life by merit. There are differences about what is to be done, but the great universal principle of unregenerate man is that he is, somehow or other, to save himself. This is his principle; and the further he goes in it the less likely is he to be saved.  
p. 305

Spurgeon says:

The text divides itself into two parts, but my sermon will not end there, for I shall try to enforce its great truths. Upon two points we will speak at once. The first is *a crowded prison*,—"The Scripture hath shut up all under sin"; and the second is *a glorious jail delivery*,—"that is the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."  
p. 306

Spurgeon says:

It is our great happiness to know that we are not shut up in this way with a view to our hopeless destruction, but in order that the grace of God may come to us, and so we have to speak of a GLORIOUS JAIL-DELIVERY. The jail-delivery which I have to speak of is evidently *of those who are shut up in the prison*. "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Christ came into this world to save those who have broken the law, those whom the law curses, and those who have no means whatever of escaping from the curse, unless Jesus open the way. He has not come to save the righteous.  
p. 308

Spurgeon says:

The Lord Jesus Christ has come to bring to all those who believe in Him *a complete deliverance* from the bondage of the law. The man who believes in Jesus is forgiven; the very moment he believes, all his transgressions are blotted out, and from that moment he is just in the sight of God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Having believed, he becomes at once a child of God, a son of the Most High, and since God will never cast away His children, nor reject those whom He has loved, the man is there and then saved, and saved eternally.  
p. 308

Spurgeon says:

Now, there is the plan of salvation. I put it before you, and I pray through Jesus Christ that many may receive it, for it is not a matter of human opinion, but of divine ordinance. I am not setting up the dogma of a sect; I am preaching to you the very truth of God. If there be salvation by any other way than by Jesus Christ I am a false prophet among you, and this Bible also is false; but if there be salvation to believers in Jesus, I am a saved man, and all of you who have believed in Jesus are saved also, effectually and eternally saved.

p. 309

(A Treasury of Mark Twain edited by Edward Lewis and Robert Myers)  
 Kansas City, Missouri: Harper & Row, Publishers. Copyright –  
 Hallmark Cards. 1967.

There are many scapegoats for our sins, but the most popular is Providence.  
 p. 18

(Days of Grace Through the Year by Lewis B. Smedes) Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press. Copyright— InterVarsity Press, 2007.

### ***Grace That Covers Sin***

*I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions,  
for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.*

ISAIAH 43:25

God covers up our sin the way a woman applies makeup over an ugly scar—so that she can look at her beauty without being put off by the blemish. Or he bends over and picks the bad thing off our backs, carries it over to the ocean, and throws it away so he won't see us with sin on our backs. Out of sight, out of mind. Then again, he washes the dirt off our faces so that he can see us for what we *are* beneath the bad things we have *done*.

In the gospel, God covers our sin with the blood that Jesus shed on the cross so he won't see our sin. Then again, he washes us with the blood of the Lamb so that he can see the real us beneath our stains and can focus on the persons he made us and is remaking us to be. In short, he covers up the wrong we *did* so that he can rediscover the persons we *are*.

**JOURNAL:** *Write a list of your sins today or for the week. Confess them to God, and ask his forgiveness. Then, burn the list or tear it in pieces. Let it be an image to you of God's grace.*

p. 263

(The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You by John Ortberg)  
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— John Ortberg, 2010.

Nowhere does this inability to have an objective, accurate, reality-based view of our performance show itself more than in the spiritual realm. When it comes to moral character, the purity of heart, the duplicity in our actions, how many of us have given serious thought to how our lives would grade out—not by the standard of the neighborhood sandlot where we can always find a first-grader to outperform—but in the eyes of a holy, just, righteous, and truth-telling God? That is why the most dangerous force in the world is not sickness or injury or bankruptcy.

It is sin.

*Sin* is a word not often thought about seriously in our time. Neal Plantinga writes, “Nowadays, the accusation *you have sinned* is often said with a grin, and with a tone that signals an inside joke . . .” Sin has become a word for hot vacation spots (Las Vegas is Sin City) and dessert menus: “Peanut Butter Binge and Chocolate Challenge are sinful; lying is not. The new measure for sin is caloric.”

But sin is the deadliest force because it takes us out of the flow of the Spirit. Imagine the consequences if we did not have a word for cancer or depression. We must identify and understand that which threatens our ability to flourish, and only sin can keep us from becoming the person God want us to become. All other challenges face us from the outside. Sin works its way inside, strangling our soul.

p. 145

We deceive ourselves about our appearance. A grandpa friend of mine boarded an airport tram and noticed an attractive young woman sitting nearby who smiled at him. He thought to himself, *I've still got it*. “Excuse me, sir,” she said. “I can stand. Would you like to take my seat?”

p. 144

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press.  
Copyright— Fox River Press, 2005.

Is it not probably true that the selfishness of Christians is the main reason for the slow progress of Christianity? 1778.250

p. 64

(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings by Erwin Raphael McManus) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– Erwin Raphael McManus, 2005.

Most of us want God to fix every wrong choice we make without taking from us our right to choose wrongly. We want to make God into our own personal pooper-scooper following right behind us, cleaning up our mess. God lets us make our bed and makes us lie in it.  
p. (Entry #13)

v. 23 But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.

The NET Bible titles the last verses in our study (verses 23-29) and then translates verse 23:

Sons of God Are Heirs of Promise

Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed.

Peterson paraphrases verse 23:

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.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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 . . . 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.

In like manner, so the law became our prison until faith was revealed in Jesus Christ.

**“WE WERE BEING GUARDED, BEING SHUT UP UNTO THE FAITH ABOUT TO BE REVEALED.”**

In verse 22 we were:

**“shut up all under sin.”**

In verse 23 we are:

**“BEING SHUT UP UNTO THE FAITH ABOUT TO BE REVEALED.”**

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

While the law was here, however, it did serve a purpose: to hold us prisoner, locking us up until Christ should be revealed (cf. v.22). Paul is thinking here that the law, like a jailer, has kept people locked up and therefore out of trouble until Christ, the liberator, should come to set them free.

p. 726

**Lightfoot says:**

... ‘Before the dispensation of faith came, we were carefully guarded, that we might be ready for it, when at length it was revealed. Thus we see that the law was our tutor, who watched over us as children till we should attain our manhood in Christ and be justified by faith. But, when this new dispensation came, we were liberated from the restraints of the law.’

p. 148

Patrick & Lowth say:

The apostle having said in the foregoing verse . . . “The scripture hath shut up all, both Jew and gentile, under sin,” it seems most reasonable to interpret the word here, of men shut up as prisoners, condemned by the law to death, the punishment of sin, till that faith came to be revealed, by which we obtain a happy freedom from condemnation to death.  
p. 732

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:23-25** Paul gives two different illustrations concerning the function of **the law** until **Christ** came (4:4, 5). The law acted as a jail **guard** to hold humankind in custody until faith in Christ was **revealed**. But the law also served as a **tutor**. A tutor in ancient Greek culture would accompany the children in his care, instructing and disciplining them when necessary. The law was like a tutor because it both corrected and instructed the Israelites in God’s ways until Christ was revealed, and such a tutor was no longer needed (4:1, 2).  
p. 1522

Ridderbos says:

In this section the subject is no longer the difference between promise and law as means of salvation, but, quite in harmony with verse 22, the subject now becomes the bondage brought on by the law, in contrast to the redemption and freedom brought in Christ.  
p. 143

v. 24 So the law became our guardian unto Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.

The NET Bible translates verse 24:

Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith.

Peterson paraphrases verse 24:

The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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.

The word “SO” at the beginning of verse 24 gives us the **RESULT** of Paul’s argument:

**“SO THE LAW BECAME OUR GUARDIAN UNTO CHRIST.”**

Now the law is holy, just and good, but the law is only this way when it is used for the purpose God intended.

### 1 Timothy 1:8-11 (DAV)

Now we are knowing that the law is good if anyone is using it lawfully (for the purpose it was designed), knowing this, that the law is not laid down for a law-abiding person but for the lawless and rebellious (undisciplined, disobedient), for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane (godless), for those who murder fathers and those who murder mothers, for murderers (manslayers), for the (sexually) immoral, for homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers and whatever else is contrary to the correct (sound) teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted.

The law, when it is used out of place, brings confusion and frustration to those who are misusing it.

The law “was added because of transgressions,” to hold us in custody until faith should be revealed. Here we learn that “the law became our guardian unto Christ.”

The Greek word here does not mean schoolmaster but rather “GUARDIAN.” This guardian was usually an old and trusted slave who had been long in the family, and whose character was high. He was responsible for the child’s moral welfare. He was to see that the child acquired the qualities essential to manhood. He was also responsible to take the child to and from school and to deliver him in safety to the teacher.

### Findley points out:

In his food, his clothes, his play, his walk, at every point that pedagogue was required to wait upon his young charge and to control his movement.  
(source unknown)

Gutzke points out:

Until a person has Christ Jesus in the heart, he needs the law to define outwardly what is right and what is wrong. This is the meaning of the statement: "The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." When the law tells a person, "Do right . . . avoid wrong," he simply cannot do that unless he has been born again. But after he has been born again, he has a new nature and is given the Holy Spirit. This person can now realize that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" because the law showed him what was right and wrong, showed him that he was wrong, and then showed him that by believing in Christ Jesus he could be forgiven, and that God would work in him "to will and to do of his good pleasure."

p. 79

John 16:13 (NASB)

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Vos points out:

The King James translation of verse 24 does not give a clear idea of the intended meaning. In the Greek the law is called *paidagōgos*, not a *didaskalos*. In other words, the law was an inferior slave or servant (*paidagōgos*) committed with the task of bringing the master's son to school or to the schoolmaster (*didaskalos*). The pedagogue was charged with disciplining the child and giving him a moral training, with protecting him and regulating his outward habits. That was all the law could do; but when it led the son to Christ, its work was finished. In reality Christ was the schoolmaster (*didaskalos*); the translation has confused the picture or illustration, which would have been clear to a Roman of the day.

p. 67

Pinnock says:

. . . Paul talks of the law as a custodian (v. 24). This word was used in contemporary parlance for the attendant who escorted a child to and from school. He was not the child's teacher, though he had the power of discipline. The function of the law was to be the superintendent of human conduct, nothing more. It could rebuke and punish us for misbehavior, but do nothing to make us different. This custodial function ceased with the coming of Christ, who is able to justify and liberate sinners. The law prepared people to long for His coming.  
pp. 50-51

The **PURPOSE OF THE LAW** being **"OUR GUARDIAN"** is seen in the last phrase in verse 24:

**"IN ORDER THAT ON THE GROUNDS OF FAITH WE MIGHT BE MADE RIGHTEOUS."**

We are **"MADE RIGHTEOUS"** by **FAITH** plus **NOTHING**.

Guy King, in his book The Fellowship, said:

We are forced to acknowledge ourselves guilty before God and that is one of the three gracious purposes of the law which lie behind that great saying of Galatians 3:24: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Three great lessons it taught us: we ought, we haven't, we can't. So our very helplessness drives us to Christ who alone has Himself kept the law. Who alone can put us fully right with the law that we might be justified by faith as the Galatians word continues?  
p. (unknown)

How clear this verse is with regard to the condition of salvation. It is by faith and faith alone that we are made righteous in God's sight.

This in essence is what is written in the books of:

**HEBREWS,**

**ROMANS,** and

**HABAKKUK.**

**"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

Anders says:

A better translation is "custodian" or "strict nanny." In the Jewish culture a slave was assigned to each child to escort them to school and to assist in their supervision. This nanny was not a thirteen-year-old, sweet, little baby-sitter. This supervising nanny was more like a stern sergeant who had the bark of a German shepherd and the bite of a Doberman pincher. Every time the child took liberties without permission on the path to school (children like to play) or did something wrong, this authoritarian nanny pointed her finger at the child and in no uncertain terms told the child what it had done wrong and delivered the punishment. By correlating the law with this nanny image, we learn that the law was given to point out sin and to threaten a great punishment if God's people didn't straighten up. Man's very inability to obey this law perfectly, and thus earn God's approval, caused men and women to long for a better way to salvation and a relationship with God—by grace. God brought hope to mankind's hopelessness in the most amazing way by sending Jesus Christ into the world. The law led **us to Christ** for forgiveness and righteousness.

p. 39

Barclay says:

In the Greek world there was a household servant called the *paidagogos*. He was not the schoolmaster. He was usually an old and trusted slave who had been long in the family and whose character was high. He was in charge of the child's moral welfare. It was his duty to see that the child ran into no temptation or danger and that he acquired the qualities essential to true manhood. He had one particular duty; every day he had to take the child to and from school. He had nothing to do with the actual teaching of the child, but it was his duty to take him in safety to the school and to deliver him to the teacher. That—said Paul—was like the function of the law. The law was there to lead a man to Christ; it could not take him into Christ's presence; but it could take him into a position where the man himself might enter. It was the function of the law to bring a man to Christ by showing him that by himself he was utterly unable to keep the law. That very sense of failure and of inadequacy led a man to Christ. But once a man had come to Christ he no longer needed the law, for now he was dependent not on law but on grace. pp. 33-34

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The phrase “put in charge” is the Greek noun *paidagogos* (GK 4080), which means “a child-custodian” or “child-attendant.” The pedagogue was a slave employed by wealthy Greeks or Romans to have responsibility for one of the children of the family. He had charge of the child from about ages six to sixteen and was responsible for watching over his behavior wherever he went and for conducting him to and from school. Paul's point is that this responsibility ceased when the child entered into the fullness of his position as a son, becoming an acknowledged adult by the formal rite of adoption by his father (see on 4:1-7). The reference “to Christ” is temporal; it means “until we come of age at the time of the revelation of our full sonship through Christ's coming.” The final phrase (lit., “in order that by faith we might be justified”) gives the ultimate objective of the law in its role of pedagogue. The emphasis is on justification rather than faith, for Paul has already shown that faith is the only means to salvation. p. 726

Bartlett says:

The word “schoolmaster” is translated “tutor” in the American Standard Version. But neither word brings out the underlying illustration in the original. The “pedagogos” was a slave, usually of very superior caliber, who had charge of a boy in a wealthy home from the age of six up to about sixteen. He was charged with the responsibility of supervising the boy continually in all matters pertaining to his physical and moral well-being. As Findley put it, “In his food, his clothes, his play, his walk—at every point—the pedagogue was required to wait upon his young charge and to control his movement.” This figure of the pedagogue, then, represents the childish and undeveloped state of those living under the dispensation of the law as compared with those who were to become sons of God through faith after the ushering in of the age of grace.  
pp. 67-68

Henry says:

III. The law was designed for *a schoolmaster, to bring men to Christ*, v. 24. They were shut up, held under the terror and discipline of it, as prisoners in a state of confinement. Hereby they might be disposed more readily to accept Christ when he came into the world. It was proper to convince them of their lost and undone condition in themselves, and to let them see the weakness and insufficiency of their own righteousness. And thus it was their schoolmaster, to instruct and govern them in their state of minority, their *servant*, to lead and conduct them to Christ (as children were wont to be led to school by those servants who had the care of them); that they might be more fully instructed by him as their schoolmaster, in the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in him.  
p. 1841

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

*“So that the law hath been (i.e., hath turned out to be) our schoolmaster (or “tutor,” lit., “pedagogue”: this term, among the Geeks, meant a faithful servant entrusted with the care of the boy from childhood to puberty, to keep him from evil, physical and moral, and accompany him to his amusements and studies) to guide us unto Christ,”* with whom we are no longer “shut up” in bondage, but are freemen.  
p. 1268

Lovett says:

**GUARDIAN.** The Greek word is “pedagogue,” a term for a worthy slave who exercised complete charge over the sons of Greek and Roman nobility. The boys were supervised constantly, led to and from school and assisted with their education. It was the guardians’ task to break their rebellious spirits and curb their impetuosity. Responsible only to the father, the pedagogue was very strict, using the rod freely, so that often the lad’s lot was no better than that of a slave. The word of the guardian was law. This was Israel’s position, she was held in custody by the Law which had three aspects: (1) **MORAL**: showing a man what he ought to be, but couldn’t; (2) **CEREMONIAL**: showing that sin had to be put away by a sacrifice; (3) **JUDICIAL**: showing the doom sinners deserved. It was the Law’s task to guide the growth of Israel until she could secure righteousness through faith in Christ personally.  
pp. 42-43

MacArthur says:

The Greek word denotes a slave whose duty it was to take care of a child until adulthood. The tutor escorted the children to and from school and watched over their behavior at home. Tutors were often strict disciplinarians, causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from their tutor’s custody. The law was our tutor which, by showing us our sins, was escorting us to Christ.  
p. 1667

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**“tutor**

(Gk. *paidagogos*) (3:24, 25; 1 Cor. 4:15)

Strong’s #3807: The Greek term means “custodian” or a person who attends a child. In Greek households a faithful servant was given the responsibility of taking care of a boy from childhood to puberty. The servant kept him from both physical and moral evil, and went with him to his amusements and to school. Paul used the word to say that the law functioned as a child-custodian. The law acted as an outward check on desires, thus making the consciousness of sin more acute. And since none of us is able to deal with sin by ourselves, the law guides us to Christ, our only Rescuer and Savior.  
p. 1522

Simpson says:

The Greek word is *pedagogue*. Now the pedagogue was not a schoolmaster exactly, but the manservant who took the children to school and delivered them over to the schoolmaster who took charge of their studies. Christ is the real Teacher, and the law was just the servant to conduct us to Christ; and when Christ comes, the work of the law is accomplished: “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” The law never was intended to save men, but to convince them of their need of a Saviour and point forward to Him who was to be the Redeemer of men.  
p. 13

Spurgeon says:

Many transgressors argue, "Well, but I have not done worse than other people"; to which the law replies, "What hast thou to do on his own account before the law. The law is to *thee*. If another has broken it he shall be punished even as thou shalt, inasmuch as thou hast broken it." Then the man cries, "But I have been better than others." But says the law, "If thou hast not perfectly walked in all the ways of the Lord thy God to do them, I have nothing to do with comparing thee with others: for this is my sentence, 'Cursed is every man that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.'"

p. 312

Wuest says:

2. *The law was given in order that, by showing the sinner that sin was an actual transgression of God's laws, he might see the necessity of faith in a substitutionary sacrifice for sin, and thus be led to put his trust in the Christ of prophecy who would in the future die for him (3:24-29).*

p. 110

(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— Gary Thomas, 2009.

Chalmers would argue that an "old affection"—a sinful desire—is "almost never" overcome by the sheer force of "mental determination." That is, sin almost always eventually gets a young man or woman who is merely "determined" not to fall. The nineteenth-century preacher would say that mental reasoning ("I know I shouldn't"; "This could end badly"; "My parents would get so angry"; "This might affect my future") cannot possibly compete with the force of our passions. "But what cannot be thus *destroyed* may be *dispossessed*—and one taste may be made to give way to another, and to lose its power entirely as the reigning affection of the mind. It is thus that the boy ceases to be the slave of his appetite."

p. 16

**v. 25 But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.**

The NET Bible translates verse 25:

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

Peterson paraphrases verse 25:

But now you have arrived at your destination:

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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.

When once a person has received Christ, he has been born again and has received the Holy Spirit. He need not go by any external signs as to what is right or what is wrong. He will have that guidance in his own heart. Knowing this, a person would be wise to receive Jesus Christ who will save the soul.

**“BUT FAITH HAVING COME, WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE GUARDIAN”**

or

**“shut up under the law.”**

Paul, by his illustration, has made it clear that the purpose of the “GUARDIAN” is to bring the child to the teacher, or to the schoolmaster. Once his function is carried out, at that point his function ceases. And so it is that once “FAITH HAVING COME” in the person of Jesus Christ, “WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE GUARDIAN,” or the LAW.

Ephesians 2:1 (DAV)

And you He made alive when you were dead through your trespasses and sins,

John 3:30 (NASB)

He must increase, but I must decrease.

McGee says:

Now what Paul is saying here is that the Law is our *paidagōgos*. The Law said, “Little fellow, I can’t do any more for you. I now want to take you by the hand and bring you to the cross of Christ. You are lost. You need a Savior.” The purpose of the Law is to bring men to Christ—not to give them an expanded chest so they can walk around claiming they keep the Law. You *know* you don’t keep the Law; all you have to do is examine your own heart to know that.  
p. 173

(The Red Sea Rules: Ten God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times by Robert J. Morgan) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– Robert J. Morgan, 2001.

Faith is also a growing entity. God intends to develop us spiritually. How? Like any good teacher, He bestows truth, then devises tests to review and reinforce that truth, to transfer and translate it into lasting, life-changing experiences.

Like any good coach, He sits down with His players, using a game book of Scripture, gives us information, explains the rules, reviews the plays. Then comes the scrimmage. Then videotapes, chewing out, more data, and another scrimmage. It's a virtually endless cycle, but in the process good players become skilled professionals. Good people become growing disciples, and little faith grows into great faith.

That was how He worked with the children of Israel and with the disciples. With the Israelites, He gave instructions through Moses, then brought them to the edge of the Red Sea or, later, into a desert with no water. He said, "Now here's a test. Let's see if you can apply My promises to your problem."

pp. 101-102

## Thankful for Freedom

While I was attending graduate school in the early 1980s, I stopped for coffee in a Malibu, California, restaurant. Coming from a non-political family, I knew nothing of political activists—but I met one that day in that restaurant.

He told everyone what a mess the United States had become. He ridiculed our government and our educational, industrial, and banking systems. He was on such a roll that he had everyone on his side except for two people: an old man and me. The activist shied away from me, seeing my Pepperdine hat, Ronald Reagan tee shirt, and Wall Street Journal. So he went after the old man.

As he approached, the old man continued slurping his soup and turned his back. The activist sat down at the old man's table and offered, "Mister, if you can tell me just one thing the United States has ever done for you, just one measly thing, I will leave you alone."

Finally, the old man looked up. He licked his spoon clean and set it down on the table. His red face indicated years of laboring in the sun. With a heavy Russian accent, he replied, "Ve hold zees truz to be self-evident, dat all men created equal, life, liberty, perzuit of happiness." Then he went back to the soup. The activist, defeated, could not argue against what the old man had experienced on both sides of communism.

Michael Blakley, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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

The NET Bible translates verse 26:

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

Peterson paraphrases verse 26:

By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles the remaining four verses and then says:

BY THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT POSITION (3:26-29).

Paul's vindication of the doctrine of justification by faith reached a climax in this section as he contrasted the position of a justified sinner with what he had been under the Law. Three changes are noted.

**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?

Now the apostle offers some **REASONS** here to the statement that he made in verse 25:

**“But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.”**

**REASON #1:**

**“FOR YOU ARE ALL SONS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

Because of salvation through faith we have been brought into a **FAMILY RELATIONSHIP**.

In our family we have 5 children. They range in age from 35 to 25. Now am I going to say to any one of them that they are any less my child because of their age differential or their faithfulness or unfaithfulness in relationship to the family? Why, of course not, they are all equally children in the family.

In Luke 15, both sons were different in their faithfulness to their father but they were still sons. The youngest was no less a son while he was in the pigpen than when he was standing before his father in the best robe that the father had just given him.

The apostle will develop this idea of “SONS” a little more in the next chapter.

John 1:12 (NASB)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

Romans 8:14-16 (DAV)

For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery to cause you to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by which we are crying out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

(Healing Grace by David A. Seamands)

During World War II, a social worker helped evacuate children from London's dangerous bombing areas taking them by bus out to the safer countryside. One day, as she lifted a four-year-old boy from the bus, she asked him, “Son, tell me your name.” The lad looked up sadly and said, “Mum, I ain't nobody's nothin.”

p. 140

(Healing Grace by David A. Seamands)

I my book, *Putting Away Childish Things*, I dealt with these “I am’s” as childhood mottoes which cripple adult behavior, mottoes such as “Measure up,” “Brave boys don’t cry,” and “You’ll never make it.” Since then, people have given me many more of these put-downs which they say helped them form a low opinion of themselves.

You’ve no right to feel that way.  
 If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything.  
 Why do you always do things like that?  
 If there’s a wrong way to do it, you’ll find it.  
 What makes you so stupid? clumsy? dumb? slow? silly?  
 All you gotta’ do is use your head once in a while.  
 I can’t believe you did such a thing.  
 Why can’t you be more like your sister? brother?  
 I hate to think of how you’ll turn out.  
 You’re going to turn out to be just like \_\_\_\_\_.  
 What in the world is wrong with you?  
 What does Jesus think about you when you do that?  
 God can’t love naughty little boys/girls/kids.  
 Now you’ll have to be the man/woman of the house.  
 Don’t let anyone know what you’re really like.  
 Why couldn’t you have been a boy? a girl?  
 You were trouble before you were born.  
 You’ve been nothing but trouble since you were born.  
 I wish you’d never been born.  
 The only reason we stay together is because of you.  
 If I thought you were really sorry, I might forgive you.  
 I’m sick of you. or, You make me sick.  
 How could you do that after all we’ve done for you?  
 You shoulda’ known better than to trust a man/woman.  
 Can’t you do anything right?  
 No wonder you don’t have any friends!

Notice that most of these statements are not criticisms or corrections of doing, but of being. This is extremely important in relation to our self-esteem. Psychologists who have made special studies of affirmation have come up with a formula about positive and negative strokes.

A positive stroke enhances us as persons. If it was given for doing—what you did—it’s worth 1 point. If it was given for being—what you are—it’s worth 10 points.

A negative stroke diminishes us as persons. If it was given for doing, it counts 10 points. If it was given for being, it counts 100 points!

My counseling experience confirms this formula. People will remember a single hurtful criticism most vividly, while tending to forget a string of compliments. And they will feel a positive or a negative statement about what they are much more deeply than one concerning what they did. Thus it's easy to see why the put-downs of being can be so completely shattering to our self-esteem. They hurt us not simply on the outside, for our behavior; but they pierce right into the inside of us, where the concepts and feelings about ourselves originate.

If these were simply isolated statements, occasionally uttered by exhausted and exasperated parents who were normally fair and loving, they would not be so harmful. But when they represent the general attitude and atmosphere of the home, the effect on self-image can be serious. Every one of them is a basic message which in one way or another says, "You are worthless, you are bad, you are guilty, you are a failure, and you won't make it in life." These "You are's" can become a permanent part of our "I am's"--the inner voice of our self-image--which then says, "I am worthless, I am bad, I am guilty, I am a failure, and I won't make it in life."  
pp. 154-55

(When Being Good Isn't Good Enough by Stephen Brown) Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright - Stephen Brown, 1990.

Evangelical Christians debate about how we can be assured of salvation. Some say the only way we can be assured of our salvation is to persevere in obedience, and as we obey, we will know we belong to Christ. (Detractors of this particular view call it works salvation.) Others say we can rest on the promise Jesus gave when we were saved; that is, "I accepted the gift of salvation when it was freely offered, and God doesn't lie. Therefore, I am saved." (Detractors of this view call it easy believism.) Still others say we can't know we have salvation—all we can do is hope and keep on trucking. When the game is over God will tell us whether or not we are saved. (Detractors of this view call it daisy salvation: He loves me, He loves me not; He love me, He loves me not.)  
pp. 24-25

Vos says:

In verse 26 there is a sudden shift in person from the first to the second person plural. Emphasis in previous verses has been primarily on the relation of Jews to the law. With the coming of Christ, Abraham's seed in whom all families of the earth will be blessed, Gentiles have ready access to the spiritual blessings of God. Paul turns to his largely Gentile converts in Galatia with the assurance: "For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

p. 68

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson,  
2006.

*Father, I put all my wealth, my investments, my possessions in trust: you are my future and my confidence. Cure me of the possessiveness that holds tightly and will not let go. Amen.*

p. 71

*I want my life, O God, to be consciously and deliberately lived under your sovereign lordship; but I also want to live responsibly as a citizen, through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

p. 185

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

My hope lives not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died; my trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy, *He* is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am, or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me. On the lion of justice the fair maid of hope rides like a queen.

p. 538

(God's Sacrifice for You by Billy Graham & Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: J. Countryman / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Billy Graham & Max Lucado, 2006.

“Wait a minute. You don’t understand. You don’t adopt Johnny because of what he has; you adopt him because of what he needs. He needs a home.”

The same is true with God. He doesn’t adopt us because of what we have. He doesn’t give us his name because of our wit or wallet or good attitude. Paul states it twice because he is doubly concerned that we understand that adoption is something we receive, not something we earn.

God is no fair-weather Father. He’s not into this love-’em-and-leave-’em-stuff. I can count on him to be in my corner no matter how I perform. You can, too.

Your Father will never turn you away. It is right to call him Holy; we speak truth when we call him King. But if you want to touch his heart, use the name he loves to hear.

Call him Father.

MAX LUCADO, *The Great House of God*

pp. 32-33

(So, You Want To Be Like Christ? by Charles Swindoll) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group. Copyright – Charles R. Swindoll, 2005.

Distance from God is a frightening thing. God will never adjust His agenda to fit ours. He will not speed His pace to catch up with ours; we need to slow *our* pace in order to recover our walk with Him. God will not scream and shout over the noisy clamor; He expects us to seek quietness, where His still, small voice can be heard again. God will not work within the framework of our complicated schedules; we must adapt to His style. We need to conform to His way if our lives are to be characterized by the all-encompassing word *godliness*.

p. 9

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI:  
Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications  
Association, 1992.

Discouragement is disillusioned self-love, and self-love may be love for my devotion to Jesus—not love for Jesus Himself.  
(August 18)

**v. 27 For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.**

The NET Bible translates verse 27:

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Peterson paraphrases verse 27:

Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ's life, the fulfillment of God's original promise.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

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?

Romans 6:3-5 teaches the same truth:

Romans 6:3-5 (DAV)

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that in the same manner as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we too might walk in a new life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection;

1 Corinthians 12:13 (DAV)

For indeed by means of one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

**“BAPTIZED”** simply means **IDENTIFICATION**. This is not a reference to water baptism. This is a picture of what happens to us when we come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior. We are taken out of Adam and we are placed into Jesus Christ.

**“CLOTHED”**—**“PUT ON”**—has the idea of a **BADGE OR UNIFORM OF SERVICE** like a soldier wears.

There was a custom in the Roman family of putting on or clothing a child, who had come to age, with the **TOGA VIRILUS**.

Romans 13:14 (DAV)

But clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop making provision for the flesh in regard to its desires.

Colossians 3:12-14 (DAV)

Put on, therefore, as chosen ones of God, saints and beloved ones: a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone should have a complaint against anyone, even as also the Lord forgave you, in the same manner also you forgive. And upon all these put on love, which is the bond of completeness.

Chrysostom says:

If Christ is Son of God and you have put Him on, having the Son in thyself and being made likened to Him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature.

(source unknown)

Peterson does a beautiful job with:

Colossians 3:12-14 (MSG)

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it.

Anders says:

### Argument from the Believer's Present Position (vv. 26-29)

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *Grace appropriated through faith makes us adult children of God and unites us as brothers and sisters. The law never brought this vertical and horizontal oneness. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.*

**3:26-27.** By grace we are God's adult children. Paul calls us **sons of God**. Under the law we were children. In verse 27, Paul explains how this adult sonship occurred. We were united with him through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This placement into the body of Christ unites all believers. In addition you **have clothed yourselves with Christ**. In Roman society, when a youth became old enough to be considered an adult, he took off his children's clothes and put on an adult's toga. This switch indicated that he had adult citizenship and responsibilities. In the same way, the Galatians had laid aside the old clothes of the law and had put on Christ's new robes of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:23-24).  
p. 39

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Baptism signifies this transforming identification with Christ, so Paul refers to it here. Paul is not suggesting here that baptism now replaces circumcision as a saving sacrament. No one is saved by baptism. Indeed, Paul mentions baptism only once in the paragraph, but faith five times. Rather, baptism is an outward sign of the union that already exists through faith. To be "clothed with Christ" means to become like Christ.  
p. 727

Bickel & Jantz say:

### Clothed with Christ

In Roman society, when a young person came of age, he was given a special toga that symbolized he was a grown-up son. It also indicated he had full acceptance as a member of the family. The Galatian believers had put aside their old garments of the law and put on Christ's clothes of righteousness, giving them full acceptance as members of God's family. Now you know why Paul is so perplexed that the Galatians would want to put their crummy old clothing back on.

p. 81

Hogg & Vine say:

**did put on Christ.**—*enduō*,='to clothe oneself with', a word which, beside its frequent use for literal garments, Acts 12. 21, *e.g.*, is also used of the incorruptible body, wherein the dead in Christ shall be raised, and of the immortal body, which is to swallow up the mortal body of those who are alive at the Parousia, 1 Cor. 15. 53, 2 Cor. 5. 3.

It is the word used by the Lord Jesus to express the relationship between the promised Holy Spirit and those who were to receive Him, Luke 24. 49.

The believer is said to have put on 'the new man', Eph. 4. 24, Col. 3. 10; and "therefore", he is exhorted to "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, . . . and love", vv. 12, 14. Such is to be the ordinary apparel of the Christian; in this character he is to appear daily in the world. The same thought is expressed in the words, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ", Rom. 13. 14.

p. 174

**Ironside says:**

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” He probably has two thoughts in mind here. Outwardly we put on Christ in our baptism. That ordinance indicates that we professedly have received the Lord Jesus Christ, but I think also he has in view the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and by that we are actually made members of Christ and, in the fullest, deepest sense, we put on Christ.  
p. 129

**Lenski says:**

To put on Christ is to receive justification: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me in the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,” Isa. 61:10.  
p. 188

**Lovett says:**

**CLOTHED.** Paul says those IN CHRIST are clothed with Him. Today, as the great Baptizer, the Lord is building His church by baptizing people into Himself. He said He would build it. This is how He does it (Matt. 16:18). Inasmuch as we are IN Him, we wear Him just as the Holy Spirit wears us (1 Cor. 6:19). And if we wear Christ, we are also clothed with His righteousness. “Clothed” refers to the Roman custom of placing the “toga virilus” on a youth the day he reached manhood. On his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday he assumed the dress of adulthood in a public ceremony. When we are saved, we put on Christ as our “toga virilus,” showing we are no longer under a guardian, but on our own to follow Christ in an adult fashion. We are no longer regarded as spiritual minors. To add circumcision after one has put on Christ, would amount to free sons forfeiting their liberty and returning to slavery under the Law.  
p. 44

**Luther says:**

To put on Christ according to the Gospel means to clothe oneself with the righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and Spirit of Christ. By nature we are clad in the garb of Adam. This garb Paul likes to call “the old man.” Before we can become the children of God this old man must be put off, as Paul says, Ephesians 4:22. The garment of Adam must come off like soiled clothes.

p. 147

**MacArthur says:**

This is not water baptism, which cannot save (*see notes on Acts 2:38; 22:16*). Paul used the word *baptized* in a metaphorical manner to speak of being “immersed,” or “placed into” Christ (cf. 2:20) by the spiritual miracle of union with Him in His death and Resurrection.

p. 1668

**Vos says:**

The exalted position of the son of God by faith now becomes clearer. Those who have received Jesus Christ by faith “have been baptized into Christ.” They have been linked to Christ in a living union and made positionally to participate in His death, burial, and resurrection (Ro 6:3-4). In the process they have also “put on Christ” or “clothed yourselves in Christ.” Here is a reference to a highly significant ceremony that meant much to every young Roman man. When he came of age he was invested with the *toga virilis*, which signified that he was now a grownup son enjoying full citizenship with the rights and responsibilities pertaining thereto. He was no longer treated like a child in his father’s household. The figure helps to explain how one becomes an adult son in the divine family (v. 26). He is joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit and clothed upon with Christ’s robe of righteousness, by which means he can stand before God without fear of condemnation.

pp. 68-69

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

“*That He may dwell;*” not that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may *dwell*; that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant of your inmost being, never more to go out.

p. 473

(Signs of Life: Back to the Basics of Authentic Christianity by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– David Jeremiah, 2007.

While criminal profiling always focuses on others, in Christian profiling we can focus on ourselves as well. So, if you were to develop a profile of your life using the fruit of the Spirit or the characteristics of a church leader as an outline, how close would your profile come to the profile of Jesus? The goal of Christian Scene Profiling is not judgment or a guilt trip. Rather, we can let our profiles motivate us to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and to yield to the Spirit moment by moment so we can have the mind of Christ.

There’s nothing wrong with being predictable when it means showing up and acting like Jesus!

p. 143

(Brokenness: The Heart God Revives by Nancy Leigh DeMoss) Chicago, IL: Moody Press. Copyright – Nancy Leigh DeMoss, 2002.

True worship begins with *brokenness and humility* over whatever God reveals to us in His Word. Poverty of spirit and mourning over our sin lead to genuine *repentance*, which in turn leads to *forgiveness*. Forgiveness will produce *freedom*—freedom from guilt and bondage. When we have freedom that has been birthed out of brokenness, repentance, and forgiveness, we will have a greater capacity for *love*—supernatural ability to love God and to love those who are unlovable—and for *worship*. And of course, true love and worship will lead us back to a new level of brokenness, which leads to greater and deeper repentance, increased forgiveness, newfound freedom, and an even greater capacity for love and for worship.

pp. 119-120

(The Best of A. W. Tozer by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe)  
Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers. Copyright– Zur Ltd., 1978,  
2000.

If on the other hand the new experience tends to make Christ indispensable, if it takes our interest off our feeling and places it in Christ, we are on the right track. Whatever makes Christ dear to us is pretty sure to be from God.

p. 189

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging by Brennan Manning) Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress. Copyright - Brennan Manning, 1994.

Leadership in the church is not entrusted to successful fund-raisers, brilliant biblical scholars, administrative geniuses, or spellbinding preachers (though these assets may be helpful), but to those who have been laid waste by a consuming passion for Christ—passionate men and women for whom privilege and power are trivial compared to knowing and loving Jesus. Henri Nouwen elaborates on these qualifications for leadership:

Christian leaders cannot simply be persons who have well-informed opinions about the burning issues of our time. Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus, and they need to find there the source for their words, advice, and guidance. . . . Dealing with burning issues easily leads to divisiveness because, before we know it, our sense of self is caught up in our opinion about a given subject. But when we are securely rooted in personal intimacy with the source of life, it will be possible to remain flexible but not relativistic, convinced without being rigid, willing to confront without being offensive, gentle, and forgiving without being soft, and true witnesses without being manipulative.

pp. 129-30

(199 Treasures of Wisdom on Talking with God compiled from the writings of Andrew Murray) Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour. Copyright– Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2007.

God wills my holiness. I must not rest until my will is surrendered unconditionally to the will of God.  
(Quote 147)

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications Association, 1992.

Do I have a personal history with Jesus Christ? The one true sign of discipleship is intimate oneness with Him—a knowledge of Jesus that nothing can shake.  
(August 16)

(Day by Day with the English Puritans compiled and edited by Randall J. Pederson) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright– Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004.

So what pleasure should we have had even in the goodness and perfection of God in Christ, if we had been without the faculty and power of knowing, desiring, hoping, believing, loving, and enjoying? As the senses are to the body, so are these spiritual senses, powers, and affections to the soul the very way by which we must receive sweetness and strength from the Lord Jesus.  
p. 51

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson) San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*What I usually do, God, when I find that I am inadequate for a task, is to find some way to become more adequate; and you seem to be telling me that what I need to do is to deepen my dependence on you. Amen.*  
p. 153

(The Beautiful Fight: Surrendering to the Transforming Presence of God Every Day of Your Life by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Gary L. Thomas, 2007.

Incarnational spirituality—the living, reigning, and ascended Jesus living through us and transforming us into different people—does not exist to uphold a few rules but rather speaks of a process that creates an entirely new person who sees with new eyes, feels with a new heart, hears with renewed ears, and lives with a new passion. It is, I believe, the only life worth living.  
p. 19

v. 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.

The NET Bible translates verse 28:

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

Peterson paraphrases verse 28:

In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**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 . . . 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 . . . and that there are distinctions in the area of spiritual service . . .

Back in verse 25 Paul makes the statement:

**“But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.”**

Then he gives us **THREE REASONS** for that statement:

1. verse 26—**“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**
2. verse 27—**“For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.”**
3. verse 28—**“FOR YOU ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

Colossians 3:11 (DAV)

where there cannot be Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all and in all.

The Jew used to pray:

“Oh God, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.”

Paul reverses this order and says all these distinctions are erased in Christ.

This is an **ANSWER** to the prayer of the Lord Jesus in:

John 17:11 (NASB)

“And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.

John 17:21 (NASB)

that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

John 17:22 (NASB)

And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 (NASB)

I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

All the distinctions are obliterated and unnecessary in view of the fact that when we come to know Christ we are born again of the Spirit into one gigantic family and we all become one in Christ where:

**“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.”**

Anders says:

**3:28.** Having explained the vertical change that grace brought, now Paul shows its horizontal effect when he states **you are all one in Christ**. In Christ, human distinctions lose their significance. Regardless of race, profession, or gender, all who come to Christ must come the same way—through faith and repentance. As a result, with all distinctions erased, all believers are united in Christ. This does not mean that all distinctions are erased on the human level. A slave was still a slave in the eyes of Rome, but not in the eyes of God.  
pp. 39-40

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The second result of passing from law to grace through faith in Jesus Christ is that all who believe become one with each other so that there is now “neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female,” but all are “one in Christ Jesus.”  
p. 727

Parker says:

There is no change in Paul as to fundamentals in Jesus Christ; “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed.”  
p. 441

(In God We Still Trust by Dr. Richard G. Lee) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.  
Copyright – Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2009.

To her biographer, Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet Tubman stated:

*I had crossed de line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but dere was no one to welome to de land of freedom, I was astranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in de old cabin quarter, wid de ole folks, and my brudders and sisters. But to dis solemn resolution I came; I was free, and dey should be free also; I would make a home for dem in the North, and de Lord helping me, I would bring dem all dere. Oh, how I prayed den, lying all alone on de cold, damp ground; “Oh, dear Lord,” I said, “I haint got no friend but you. Come to my help, Lord, for I’m in trouble!”*

*‘Twant me, ‘twas the Lord. I always told Him, “I trust to You. I don’t know where to go or what to do, but I expect You to lead me,” and He always did.*

p. 82

(So, You Want To Be Like Christ? by Charles Swindoll) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group. Copyright – Charles R. Swindoll, 2005.

The words of Henry Thoreau haunt me on occasion: “Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify. Simplify.”<sup>2</sup>

2. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Hungary: Konemann Publishers, 1996), 82-83.  
p. 33

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*Lord, when I hear you praying as ardently for my unity with the other people you love as you do for my unity with you, I am jarred loose from my private piety. Fulfill your prayers for my oneness with others. Amen.*

p. 368

(Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)  
Grand Rapids, MI.:Moody Press. Copyright – Kregel Publications,  
1985.

. . . He prays, “that they also may be one even as we are one.” Only think of it! It must mean that they may evermore be found partaking of the same holiness, enjoying the same happiness, interested in the same honors, blessed in the same vision, dwelling in the same place, enjoying the same fullness. And this is the end of all His travail, the answer to all His prayer, and the result of all His imparted glory—“that they may be one, even as we are one.” pp. 413-14

(Come Thirsty: No Heart Too Dry for His Touch by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2004.

Can a person go equally deep into God’s love? Sink so deep that he or she sees nothing but? David Brainerd, the eighteenth-century missionary to American Indians, would say so. He journaled:

I withdrew to my usual place of retirement, in great tranquility. I knew only to breathe out my desire for a perfect conformity to Him in all things. God was so precious that the world with all its enjoyments seemed infinitely vile. I had no more desire for the favor of men than for pebbles.

At noon I had the most ardent longings after God which I ever felt in my life.

In my secret retirement, I could do nothing but tell my dear Lord in a sweet calmness that He knew I desired nothing but Him, nothing but holiness, that He had given me these desires and He only could give the thing desired.

I never seemed to be so unhinged from myself, and to be so wholly devoted to God.

My heart was swallowed up in God most of the day.<sup>2</sup>

For any desiring a descent into such love, Scripture offers an anchor. Grab hold of this verse and let it lower you down: “God is love” (I John 4:16).

2. David Brainerd, quoted in Cynthia Heald, “Becoming a Friend of God,” *Discipleship Journal*, no. 54 (1989):22.  
pp. 126-7

v. 29 Now if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

The NET Bible translates verse 29:

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

Peterson paraphrases verse 29:

Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**3:29.** Third, believers in Christ **are Abraham's seed**. As Paul previously stated, **Christ** is *the* Seed of Abraham . . . 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 . . . 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 . . . 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.

Now the Apostle Paul includes his argument along this line:

**“IF YOU ARE CHRIST’S, THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM’S SEED.”**

Back in verse 16 we read:

**“Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed.”**

And then in verse 18:

**“For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.”**

And now because of belonging to Christ as a result of our faith in the Lord Jesus, we have become **“ABRAHAM’S SEED.”** As a result of that, we are **“HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE.”**

Because you are Christ’s, then, you are **“HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE.”**

Romans 8:16-17 (DAV)

The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs; on the one hand heirs of God, on the other fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed, we are suffering with Him in order that we may also be glorified together.

“HEIRS ACCORDING TO PROMISE” takes us **BACK** to:

Galatians 3:18 (DAV)

For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise, God has bestowed it.

1 Peter 1:4 (DAV)

unto an inheritance imperishable and undefiled and unfading, which has been reserved in heaven for you,

Ephesians 1:11 (DAV)

In whom also our lot is cast, having been decided upon beforehand according to the design of the one who is working all things according to the purpose of His will,

C. S. Lovett points out:

Imagine a large circle. Label it “Christ, the Seed of Abraham.” Now think of a tiny dot inside that circle. See this as yourself along with all others trusting Jesus as Savior (1 Cor. 12:13). All Christians are spiritually baptized into Christ to become “joint-heirs” with Him (Rom. 8:17). The entire unit (Christ and His own) receives the inheritance. Jesus was the literal Seed and true Heir of Abraham. The physical line of David ended with Him, for Jesus died without any **human** posterity. Yet He has SPIRITUAL posterity, for He is the SIRE of all who are IN Him. See how this spiritual parenthood cancels the Jew’s claim to the inheritance because of physical descent from Abraham. The promise cannot be secured by physical birth, but by spiritual birth only. Paul has now proved the proposition he set forth in verse 7, i.e., those who are of faith are true sons of Abraham. You and I are the **spiritual seed** of Abraham because we are in Christ, the one true Heir.  
p. 45

With the hymn writer we can sing with gusto:

### **Standing on the Promises**

*Words & Music:* R. Kelso Carter,

Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring,  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I now can see  
Perfect, present cleansing in the blood for me;  
Standing in the liberty where Christ makes free,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,  
Bound to Him eternally by love's strong cord,  
Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword,  
Standing on the promises of God.

Standing on the promises I cannot fall,  
Listening every moment to the Spirit's call  
Resting in my Savior as my all in all,  
Standing on the promises of God.

#### *Refrain:*

Standing, standing,  
Standing on the promises of God my Savior;  
Standing, standing,  
I'm standing on the promises of God.

<http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/s/o/sotpogod.htm>

(If God is in Charge . . . by Stephen Brown) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright - Stephen W. Brown, 1983.

A man who had ordered the plans for a tree house from a mail-order catalogue received instead the plans for a sailboat. His letter of complaint to the company brought the apologetic reply: “While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, it is nothing compared with that of the man who is now trying to sail your tree house.”

A lot of Christians, like the man trying to sail the tree house, attempt to make their lives into something they were never meant to be. That is the reason so many Christians have never known the real joy and fulfillment God intended. God designed us so that we might praise Him.

During the 1980 Olympics, almost everyone expected that the Russian ice hockey team would defeat the United States team. Russia had won game after game against some of the finest professional teams in the world, and the amateurs from the United States didn’t seem to have a chance. The only thing uncertain was how big the Russian win would be. The United States’ victory is recalled by many as one of the most exciting in American sports history. But most people don’t know the words spoken to the United States team by Coach Herb Brooks just before the game—maybe one of the best pep talks in history. He simply said, “Gentlemen, you were born to play this game!”

The God who is in charge has said something similar to us: “You were born to praise Me. Do it well, because this is your function in the world.” pp. 137-38

Anders says:

Furthermore, in Christ, believers are **Abraham’s seed**. As the offspring of Abraham, we are **heirs** of the **promise** of righteousness through faith. Thus, grace is superior to the law because it unites us with God and one another in a way that the law could not.

p. 40

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

**29** The third result of passing from law to grace through faith in Jesus Christ is that all who believe become one with those who have been saved by faith throughout the long history of salvation. Thus, by union with Christ, believers become “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Here that which Paul had previously declared to be Christ’s—the inheritance of the promise made to Abraham (3:16)—he now applies to the entire Christian church by virtue of its actually being Christ’s body.  
p. 727

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The use of the word “seed” without the article is of great importance, for it keeps the necessity of a union with Christ constantly before the Galatians. The prize the legalizers had been holding before the eyes of the Galatian Christians in their hope to win them to the ceremonial aspects of Judaism was the possibility of becoming part of the physical seed of Abraham. Paul now replies that what the legalizers were offering through circumcision was actually already theirs in Christ. He is *the* seed to whom the promises were made. Believers enter into the promises by entering into him and become spiritual seed to God as well.  
p. 728

Pinnock says:

Into this argument Paul inserts a short caveat about the significance of the singular collective term “offspring” or “seed.” It is a kind of “extra” to his argument, and reflects rabbinic training. It may be that in his dialogue with the Judaizing false teachers, he finds it useful to employ a line of argument quite similar to their own style of reasoning. We know that Paul is not unaware that “offspring,” while singular in form, is plural in meaning. Later in this very chapter, he refers to believers as Abraham’s “seed” (v. 29). Rather, he finds it deeply appropriate that the singular is used. He sees a profound theological significance in that singular noun. The true fulfillment of the ancient promise to Abraham, in whom all the nations are to be blessed, is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. In Him the promise is embodied and mediated.  
pp. 43-44

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**3:29** To be **Christ's** through faith (3:26, 27) also means to be **Abraham's sons (seed)** (3:7) and blessed (**heirs**) with him (3:9), **according to God's promise** (Gen. 12:3).

p. 1523

(Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)  
Grand Rapids, MI.:Moody Press. Copyright – Kregel Publications,  
1985.

If we are to grow in Christian life we must live upon the food God has provided—the Bread of God. May He teach us to digest it, to appropriate it, to understand and enjoy it, that we may be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

p. 39

## Eating the Seed

When Beth Moore and her husband, Keith, spent time in war-torn Angola to draw attention to tens of thousands of malnourished people, they were changed forever. “I learned something in one of the rural villages that will mark my teaching and response to the Word of God,” Beth says. “As we stood there, trying to absorb the sights and smells of living death, our new friend, Isak Pretorius, said, ‘One of the most frustrating things is that in villages where they received seed, they often eat the seed rather than planting it and bringing forth the harvest.’ I couldn’t get the statement out of my mind and suddenly had an answer to the question I most often ask God: Why do some people see the results of the Word and others don’t?”

Beth continues: “Why have many of us read books on forgiving people, known the teachings were true and right, cried over them, marked them up with highlighters, yet remain in our bitterness? Because we ate the seed instead of sowing it.”

*Beth Moore, Stepping Up: A Journey Through the Psalms of Ascent (LifeWay Press, 2007); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky*

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(A Lifetime of Wisdom: Embracing the Way God Heals You by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— Joni Eareckson Tada, 2009.

The newly paralyzed Joni, for all her seething rage at the God-behind-the-ceiling-tiles, was aiming those emotions at *Him*. Whether she understood it at the time or not, she was moving toward Him in her despair, venting her disappointment, expressing hurt, and even questioning His goodness. But she wasn’t talking about God behind God’s back. She was angry enough to engage Him head-on. And then the anger melted into tears, and she was a scared little girl again, calling out to a daddy she couldn’t see.

*God, I can’t . . . I can’t live like this. If You won’t let me die, then please show me how to live.*

p. 28

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

In all works of faith we may count upon Jesu's fellowship. It is when we are in His work that we may reckon upon his smile. Ye unknown workers who are occupied for your Lord amid the dirt and wretchedness of the lowest of the law, be of good cheer, for jewels have been found upon dunghills ere now, earthen pots have been filled with heavenly treasure, and ill weeds have been transformed into precious flowers. Dwell ye with the king for his work, and when He writes His chronicles your name shall be recorded.  
p. 310

*"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."*—Lam. iii. 24.

IT is not "The Lord is *partly* my portion," nor "The Lord is *in* my portion;" but He Himself makes up the sum total of my soul's inheritance. Within the circumference of that circle lies all that we possess or desire. The *Lord* is my portion. Not His grace merely, nor His love, nor His covenant, but Jehovah Himself. He has chosen us for His portion, and we have chosen Him for ours.  
p. 642

(Christ/Life by Ruth Myers) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Ruth Myers, 2005.

Yet in our spirit, we've been impregnated with the life and righteousness of Christ because we've been born anew. We now share His worthiness. Although in the lower part of our being the "motions of sin" still stir, in the higher part we are righteous forever. Sin is no longer our nature or our master, and it no longer has any right to condemn us. Why? Because through trusting Christ we died out of the old life and were born into the new.

So we now can say, "In Christ, I'm all right as a person forever!"  
p. 139

(The Treasures of Fanny Crosby by Fanny Crosby) Uhrichsville, OH:  
Barbour. Copyright— Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Not for ease or worldly pleasure,  
     nor for fame my prayer shall be;  
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,  
     only let me walk with Thee.  
 Close to Thee, close to Thee,  
     close to Thee, close to Thee,  
 Gladly will I toil and suffer,  
     only let me walk with Thee.  
 p. 25

**CONCLUSION:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The covenant of Abraham is an unconditional covenant because God alone walks between the pieces.

LESSON #2: The Law was given to reveal sin, not to remove it.

LESSON #3: The giving of the Law did not affect the unconditional promises of God.

LESSON #4: Salvation is based on the unconditional promises of God.

LESSON #5: The Law cannot give life, nor declare us righteous in God's sight.

LESSON #6: "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:19-20 NASB).

LESSON #7: We are made righteous on the grounds of faith and not by the works of the Law.

LESSON #8: "Faith having come, we are no longer under the Law."

LESSON #9: We become sons and daughters in God's family when we receive Christ.

LESSON #10: “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom. 8:14-17 NASB).

LESSON #11: We are clothed with Christ when we receive Him as Savior. “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12 NASB).

LESSON #12: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:3-4 NASB). Our inheritance is secure and that’s a promise.

Anders says:

## PRINCIPLES

- Some people have mental barriers preventing them from believing in Christ. It is our responsibility to help distinguish between legalism and righteousness that comes by faith.
- Our inability to obey the Ten Commandments perfectly shows us that we need Jesus Christ as our Savior.
- If observing the law could have saved us, then God would never have sent Jesus to die on the cross.
- The law was a guardian personally taking us by the hand and leading us to Jesus Christ—our personal Lord and Savior.
- Christ breaks down the barriers that divide people (v. 28).

## APPLICATION

- Recognize that God's entrance requirement for heaven is perfection.
- Realize that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
- Allow your imperfections to humble you before God.
- Put your faith in Jesus Christ for forgiveness and eternal life.
- Thank God that his "grace way" is the best way.
- Rejoice that you now live under God's blessing and not sin's curse.
- Do not consider yourself as inferior to or better than anyone else. We are all equal in Christ.

p. 41

Lucado says:

Jesus, what a wonderful Savior you are! I thank you for putting yourself under the very curse meant for me. I praise you for blessing me with the gracious gift of eternal life. May I share this great promise and hope with all around me.

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### Anne Graham Lotz on Being a Child of the Father

Anne Graham Lotz, daughter of evangelist Billy Graham and his wife, Ruth, was interviewed on CNN in December of 2001. She was asked about those who died on September 11th. If they were not saved by accepting Christ, the reporters wanted to know, would they go to heaven? She replied:

In my little book, *Heaven: My Father's House* I tell about people who want to visit my father's home in western North Carolina. They drive up the long drive and come to the gate. They knock on the gate and say: "Billy Graham, let us in. We've read your books; we've watched you on TV; we've written to you; and we want to come to your house."

And my father says: "Depart from me, I don't know you. You're not a member of my family, and you've not made any arrangements to come."

But when I drive up that same driveway and knock on the gate, I say, "Daddy, this is Anne, and I've come home." The gate is thrown right open, and I go inside, because I'm the father's child.

Jesus said that heaven is his Father's house, speaking of God. Because heaven is God's house, he has the right to decide who comes in and who stays out. He says he will welcome anyone inside his home, anyone can come, but they have to be born again into his family through faith in Jesus Christ.

That gives us a wonderful hope, that when the time comes—whether death comes as a thief in the night as it did for those in the [World Trade Center] towers, or comes as an angel of mercy after a long illness—we can be assured that at the end of the journey, we'll step right into our Father's arms. We'll be welcomed there, because we're our Father's child.

*Anne Graham Lotz, "Finding Meaning in September 11," cnn.com (12-11-06);  
submitted by Ted de Haas, Bedford, Iowa*

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(The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You by John Ortberg)  
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— John Ortberg, 2010.

When our daughters were three and five years old, we took them to a hotel with a swimming pool. We had a long, stern talk about the importance of water safety and the risk of drowning.

My talk may have been a little too effective.

As Laura was jumping into my arms while I was in the water, three-year-old Mallory slipped from a sitting position on the edge of the pool. She was underwater for less than a second, but when I pulled her up, she was sobbing.

"I drowned!" she cried. "I drowned! I drowned!"

From her perspective, it was terrifying. From my perspective, however, it was actually kind of funny.

"No, honey," I replied sympathetically. "You didn't drown. You were only underwater for a second. You're fine . . . So let's not tell Mommy about this."

Mallory was never in danger. I knew that even though she didn't. Her father was always watching her, able to scoop her out of trouble at a moment's notice. I was what you might call "a non-anxious presence."

Jesus knew that no earthly situation has the power to put you outside God's care. You are always in the hand of your Father. So when death itself comes for us, it will be like Mallory dipping in the pool, and we will come up saying, "I drowned! I drowned! I drowned!" and the Father will say, "I had you the whole time."

pp. 114-115

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI:  
Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications  
Association, 1992.

This call has nothing to do with personal sanctification, but with being made broken bread and poured-out wine. Yet God can never make us into wine if we object to the fingers He chooses to use to crush us. We say, “If God would only use His own fingers, and make me broken bread and poured-out wine in a special way, then I wouldn’t object!” But when He uses someone we dislike, or some set of circumstances to which we said we would never submit, to crush us, then we object. Yet we must never try to choose the place of our own martyrdom. If we are ever going to be made into wine, we will have to be crushed—you cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed.

I wonder what finger and thumb God has been using to squeeze you? Have you been as hard as a marble and escaped? If you are not ripe yet, and if God *had* squeezed you anyway, the wine produced would have been remarkably bitter. To be a holy person means that the elements of our natural life experience the very presence of God as they are providentially broken in His service. We have to be placed into God and brought into agreement with Him before we can be broken bread in His hands. Stay right with God and let Him do as He likes, and you will find that He is producing the kind of bread and wine that will benefit His other children.  
(September 30)

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson,  
2006.

*Lord, Jesus, you couldn’t have made it any more clear; you couldn’t have said it more plainly. Why do I have so much difficulty following your example?—pride gets in the way. Overcome my selfishness and train me to devout service. Amen.*  
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