

**Galatians 3: 21-26; “The Law Was Our Tutor”, Message # 21 in the series –  
“Christ has Made us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

Is the law against the promises of God? This is a very good question. Because the Apostle Paul has shown all along in this letter that we, as sinners, cannot be saved by attempting to keep the works of the law. He says that we can be saved from our sins only by faith in the promise of God; that promise being completely fulfilled in, and by, the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.. Therefore, the obvious conclusion that would seem to follow is, that the law is intrinsically against the promises of God. But is this so? Well, Paul says, “certainly not”! The New American Standard translation says – “May it never be!” And in the King James Version says – “God forbid!”

So at this time I would like to open up for you the relationship between the law and the promises so you will see that God uses both the law, and His promises for very specific reasons. We need to see, 1<sup>st</sup> of all – That the law cannot give spiritual life, but the promises are given to show us the importance of faith in Jesus Christ. 2<sup>nd</sup> – That one of the law’s main purposes was to be a tutor to lead us to Christ. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – That once faith in the promise had come, we were no longer under a tutor, for we are sons of God.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – The law cannot give spiritual life, but the promises are given to show us the importance of faith in Jesus Christ.**

(verse 21)

“Is the law then against the promises of God?” “Certainly not!” “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.” So, we can plainly see here, the weakness of the law. It cannot give life to sinful people so that they would have the strength to keep the law on their own, and thus please God in that way. The commandments of God are those statements which we find in the Bible which are God’s righteous expectations of how we should think, and what we should do, in every situation of our lives. He expects us to be holy and to live to Him, and not ultimately to ourselves. “You shall have no other gods before Me”, He says in the first of the Ten Commandments. “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and mind, and soul and strength,” and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” That is the summary of the Ten Commandments.

And yet, we find the apostle Paul saying here, that the law does not have any life in itself to give to us, to help us to keep His commandments perfectly, and from right motives. He is saying that if there had been a law given which could have given us life, so that we could keep the commandments of God perfectly, then truly, our being able to attain to righteousness would have been by the law. We could then justify ourselves in the sight of the holy God. We could prove to Him that we were acceptable and perfect. But we need to understand that the law of the 10 commandments is a reiteration, a giving again, on a broader national scale, of the covenant of works which God gave to Adam, in the garden of Eden at the beginning of the world.

It was God saying over again, to His people, as a nation whom He had delivered from their Egyptian bondage, and who He was bringing into the Promised Land – “Remember My promises to the fathers, and keep my commandments.” “Do what I command you and you will be blessed.” “If you do not do it, you will be cursed.” Then He specifically lists the blessings and the curses that He would bring to them as a nation in Deuteronomy 27 and 28 if they failed to keep His law. Listen to Deuteronomy 28: 1 and 2 – “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.” “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God...”

But we read in Galatians 3: 19 that the law was added because of transgressions. Israel, His people, didn't keep His law. And so we see, that God thought, that the sins of men very much needed to be defined. But God did not give His law to the Jews, or to any man for that matter, to say to them that they could justify themselves by keeping it; that they could be declared righteous by God by keeping it. Rather, He gave it to them to show them that they needed God's grace to keep the least of His commandments. God knew that they would not be able to keep His commandments without Christ's life in their life. Without a New Heart being given to them, based upon a New Covenant of grace, which would come through Jesus Christ, people would not at all be able to keep His holy law.

Deuteronomy 5: 29 – “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” God said this right after He gave Israel His law in Deuteronomy 5: 1-22. But they should have known that they could only come to know God and please Him by faith in the promise of Christ. For that is what is mentioned specifically in Deuteronomy 18: 15 – “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren.” “Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore lest I die. ‘And the Lord said to me; ‘What they have spoken is good.’ “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

This refers to our Lord Jesus Christ. They were being instructed to look forward by faith to His coming and to believe in Him. They should have remembered that Adam was not able to keep the covenant of works in the beginning. And so, over and over again in the nation of Israel's history, we see that the people to whom the law was given, were not able to do and keep the commandments of God in a perfect way. Turn with me over to Hosea Chapter 6, and verse 4. “O Ephraim, what shall I do to you?” “O Judah, what shall I do to you?” “For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away.” “Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments are like light that goes forth.” “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” “But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with me.”

The words, “But like men”, can very legitimately be translated, “But like Adam” they had transgressed the covenant. If the people could have kept the law of God perfectly, they would have lived, but most certainly they could not keep it at all, as fallen men who were descended from Adam. They pursued keeping the law as though they had the strength in themselves to do it. When the law was first given, the children of Israel broke it before Moses could get down to the bottom of Mt. Sinai, where He had received it. God had written with His own finger, His law on two tablets of stone. And here in these verses we find that they were still being religious and offering sacrifices, but they were not keeping the moral duties of the 10 commandments.

What was God looking for? He was looking for them to show mercy. “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,” the Lord says in Hosea 6: 6. It was heart obedience that the Lord was looking for, leading to love God and other people more than sin. Micah 6: 8 – “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” He wanted them to show mercy to their neighbors in their truly caring for the spiritual and physical needs of the people around them. But, in order to do this, they would first have to trust in all of the promises of God for themselves. And when they did so, then their sins would be mercifully forgiven them, by God. They first of all needed to be shown mercy, from God Himself, in His mercifully forgiving them of all of their sins by their believing in the Promised Messiah, Jesus

Christ. And then, by this having faith in Him, they would be justified, accepted by God and forgiven of all their sins. And they would be spiritually healed in their hearts by God's sanctifying them.

He would set them apart to His working in them by the Holy Spirit so that they would be holy, and then by His grace, they would be able to keep His commandments in the right way; not a legalistic way, but an evangelical way; by faith in the promise of Christ. You see, spiritual life could only come to them through their believing the promise of God, not by their trying to be religious, or by trying to keep the commandments in their own strength. Look over at Hosea chapter 6, verses 1-3. "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up." "After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight." "Let us know, Let us pursue (or press on to) the knowledge of the Lord." "His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."

So, the law was given specifically to the nation of Israel. It was given on Mt. Sinai to the ethnic people of Israel. In verse 19 of the verses that we are studying in Galatians, Paul says that the law was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator; that is, Moses. But the children of Israel, and all people who would come to know God, they needed a greater mediator than Moses. Moses could tell them of their duty to God, but only Christ could pay the penalty for their sins and heal them of the disease of sin. It is only God alone who can take away our sins and declare us righteous through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is only God alone who is able to heal our hearts, and grant us the grace of repentance to return to Him through the sufferings of Jesus Christ. This is why Christ had to die for us. It was so that by His purchase of grace, we might spiritually live. This is shown forth in the wording of the verses that I just read to you in Hosea chapter 6. God had torn them; He had hewn them with the words of the prophets, by preaching to them His law. He had slain their self-righteousness, and He had brought them to conviction of sin through the preaching of the law. But then He would also heal them. And He would do this on the basis of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It is faith in God's promise that heals the sin-sick soul. Christ lay in the tomb on Friday and Saturday nights after He was crucified. He had fulfilled the law and had suffered for our sins. On the third day He arose, and thus all who believe in Him, whether they lived in Old Testament times or New, could find spiritual life; eternal and everlasting life.

In the context of these verses, we have to know God, before we can really serve Him in a way that pleases Him. "Let us know (Let us by faith in the promise of the Messiah, found here in the Old Testament), be justified by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. (This bring us into the New Testament where grace and truth were seen and found in Jesus Christ, from that time forward) And then, for all of us, both Old Testament and New – "Let us press on in the to know the Lord. Let us pray to be sanctified by the word of truth; that is, by receiving the knowledge of the Bible rightly; by reading it, and understanding its teaching. The truth is, that no one, Jew or Gentile, can be saved except through the grace of Christ, received by faith in Christ. We have to be given life through the promise of God.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – We need to see that one of the law's main purposes was to be a tutor to lead us to Christ.** (verses 22-24)

Galatians 3: 22 – "But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe." "But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed." "Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." This how the Lord intended the law to function; as a pedagogue to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Him. A pedagogue is one who teaches, but there are some things that he may not be able to

teach, and when that is the case, then he takes the child by the hand and brings him to the one who can. It is true that the law brings us to conviction of our sins, but it cannot bring us life. The whole Scripture, we are told here, has confined all men under sin, so that the promise by faith might be given to those who believe. Salvation is by none of our works; it is all of Christ's finished work. But the law does do a good work in this regard, according to God's holy purpose. It acts as a pedagogue, or a teacher who brings us to Christ. Now, many of us have often thought upon this verse as it is rendered in the King James translation. "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But the words, "to bring us" are not in the original. So, that it should read, "The law is our schoolmaster unto Christ".

I think what B.H. Carroll says about this, is very helpful: "The Greek word is a compound word – Pais, "a child", and agogos, "a conductor." Agogos is the verb agein, to lead or conduct." "To complete the analogy," he says, "we only need to refer to the heathen custom, of entrusting the care of a child *in the years before he became an adult*, to a slave." "This slave was not necessarily the teacher, in the modern sense of pedagogue, but he would lead the child to the school where the real teacher would instruct him." "So the law, a slave, leads to Christ, the great Teacher." "In this sense the law evidently was not *intended* to annul the previous covenant of grace, but was added to it in a subsidiary or helpful sense."

And so, in verse 23 we see the words, "Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed." In explaining this first phrase, "before faith came", we only need to think of Christ as the object of our faith, as the One who was revealed in the fullness of time. That is, in God's good time. It could read this way: "Before Christ, the object of faith came, we were kept garrisoned by the law. What verse 23 is saying is that this is what the law's purpose was. It could not give life, it could only condemn those under it before Christ came. And this is true also in the present New Testament time before we believe the promise and His mighty grace comes to us personally. We are kept in custody by the law. We are kept under guard, because we cannot please God until we believe in Jesus Christ, the One who fulfilled the Law and thus is the greater Teacher.

The law's only consolation to the Jews, was, that in many types and shadows it pointed forward to Christ; that His coming was to be looked forward to, as the fulfillment of all of God's righteous requirements. Only faith in the promise of Christ's coming to fulfill the law on their behalf would set the Hebrew people free, and justify them in the sight of God. But they were justified in the same way that we are now; by faith in Christ. The law keeps us as its prisoner until Christ comes to free us from the confinement of the law. The Jews were thus kept in this confinement before the coming of Christ, until the object of their faith came. And we can further say, concerning all unbelievers in New Testament times, that when they see the righteous requirements of God, in the moral law of the 10 commandments, they are also in this confinement until they are personally freed by faith in Jesus Christ.

The more that you look into the law and try to keep it, apart from the gracious help of the Holy Spirit, the more you will be brought into a spiritual confinement by the law, because it shows you your sins; both of omission and commission, all the more. But faith was clearly revealed, when Christ was revealed, as the One who bore our sins, and who gives grace to be righteous and to live godly by faith in Him. Faith in Christ is that which alone justifies the sinner. That is, when Christ would come, and live the perfect life of fulfilling the righteous requirements of the law, then faith finds its resting place when it is exercised in Him.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – Once faith in the promise of Christ had come, we are no longer under a tutor, for we are sons of God.**

This ought to be very encouraging to everyone who has tried so hard to keep the law of God and failed, which invariably will happen. The law is not against the promises of God. Although it cannot give us life, and although it can only keep us in confinement until Christ comes to our

heart, the law does willingly release you unto Christ, seeing as your Lord Jesus has perfectly fulfilled all of God's righteous requirements. The Law releases you to Christ when you believe in Him. You are in-lawed to Christ. You are only under law in relation to Christ. You have nothing more to do with the law anymore, in a way of confinement and bondage and condemnation. Listen to Romans 7, verse 4. "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you might be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God."

What great release this is! You are no longer married to the law, as you once were before you came to faith in Christ. Now listen to Romans 8: 3 – "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh (that is in the strength of what I can do myself, to please God and trying to fulfill His law on my own, trying my hardest to keep His commandments, but failing). "But according to the Spirit." (That is, according to His working and power helping us) What a blessed thing it is, that through His Spirit, Christ has given us life, where the law could not.