

“¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Now 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. ¹⁹ ¶ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. ²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. ²² But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” (Ga 3:13-23)

It is established, then, that Abraham’s true inheritance was eternal life and righteousness. He did not receive this by the law, for the law was given 430 years afterwards. Abraham received eternal life and righteousness by Promise, that is, by faith. Abraham was not a man of the earth, carnal, and grasping. Abraham was a spiritual man, who recognized that there are things that you cannot see with the senses. He saw them by faith, and laid hold on them as we read in Hebrews 11: 8-10:

8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

If this is true, and the inheritance of Abraham was received by Promise, that is, by faith, then what purpose was the law that was given by Moses. Paul now deals with this subject.

That being established, let us look to the use of the law.

19 ¶ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

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

Comment: The law had a definite purpose in the plan and purpose of God. It was added to the life of some of the children of Abraham—those to whom the Promise was given. Not to all the descendants of Abraham, for Ishmael, Esau, and the children of Keturah were

never under the law of Moses. That was reserved for the children of Jacob. It was added until the seed should come to whom the promise was made: that is, until Christ should come. It was a covenant ordained by angels in the hand of Jesus Christ, who spoke by Moses. It is Christ who gave the law at Sinai and Christ who was with Israel in the wilderness. Christ was with Israel in a way that He was not with all the other nations of the world, because there has never been any other mediator between God and man except Jesus Christ. But Christ is hidden in the law in a way that He is not hidden in the New Testament. Under the Gospel, Christ is set forth plainly and clearly, and not in shadows and figures.

God is One: This shows us that the Covenant God made with Israel through Moses is essentially the same that he makes with the whole world. It was for the purpose of bringing them to Christ, and God has never had any other purpose in anything that He has done than bringing men to faith in terms of the Promise of God. We see essential unity here, because God is one.

But it is important to note, that there is a definite time limit given: till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.

- 21 *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*
- 22 *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Comment: I commented on verse 21 last week, and this verse shows that Abraham’s inheritance was life and righteousness, for Abraham received these things, not by the law, but by promise—faith.

Verse 22: shows why the law cannot ever bring righteousness. We are all under sin—this means under the curse of sin. Sin devours the earth—the curse of sin and death falls upon all. Sin is a mighty tyrant that destroys all in its path, and no amount of law-keeping and duty can keep us from sin. Instead sin feeds upon the commandment and makes our state most miserable. The more we know about God’s law, the more miserable we become, because the precept does not teach its own use, but leaves us condemned and miserable.

- 23 *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*
- 24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Two figures are used here to show the use of the law.

Prison: Israel was held, as it were, in the prison of the law. Restraint was placed upon them until the time that Christ should come. Rules and regulations, to the most minute detail, were placed upon them so that the curse would be, as it were, kept at a distance, as far as its outward respects are concerned.

Schoolmaster: The word here is for the slave that accompanied students to school. To keep the youngsters from danger and to see that they did not stray away, fathers appointed a slave to take them by the hand and lead them to school. The slave was not their inheritance, nor could the slave ever make them children of their father, but the slave did have a very important and useful work—to protect them during their childhood, and make sure they made it to school. In this case, the school is Christ, and the law was given to the chosen seed to protect them in some part, and to lead them to Christ. Every part of the law of Moses was for this purpose. The slave did not do his own will, but did the will of the one God. All is of Christ, both Moses and Paul. This means that Christ was the savior of Abraham and any other who believed the promise, under the Old Testament, as well as the New.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Now the idea is clear. When we have come to faith in Jesus Christ, we need no one to lead us by the hand, for Christ is our teacher, and He alone is our Prophet, Priest, and King. We are no longer in prison, under the control of slaves. This is a historical application. The law of Moses, as a prison and as a slave, is no longer the rule for any man upon the earth.

What does this NOT mean.

1. That Christians have no rule of life. We do, and that rule is love for God and man, which the law sets forth in great detail. The end of the law is that we love one another, do no harm to God or to man. When the love of God rules our hearts and minds, it changes the way we treat the world and everything in it. Even the animals in our house will know the difference, because the righteous man regards the life of his beast, we read in proverbs, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

But this love is not taught by precept. Men do not love because they are commanded to love. They must have a right spirit and a right heart given to them. This is done only by the Holy Spirit, and He is received, not by the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. See verse 26. Only a man who is right with God can learn how to love truly.

2. That Christians do not have a conflict with the flesh. The law serves as a diagnostic—to reveal whether a work is done in the flesh, or in Christ. Paul will deal with this later in chapter 5. The flesh always brings forth the same works, and the law reveals whether the works are done in hatred and deceit [which is always the work of the flesh]

- or in love and truth, the work of the new man in Christ. So the law does serve as a diagnostic—but it is never the cure. The cure is Christ, even for Christians who sin.
3. That Christians are not lazy. The English had a favorite term: carnal security. The precept of the law can serve to stir us out of the sleep of the flesh. It shows the deadness of the flesh, and stirs us to seek Christ for life and righteousness, it reproves us for our lack of love, so that we might meditate on His sacrifice and love for us, so that we might love Him likewise. It is not God as the judge and lawgiver that evokes our love, but the forgiveness of sins that teaches us to love Him. There is a tract in the rack on the “Spring of Love,” which shows that love springs from forgiveness of sins. If you desire to love Christ more, face up to the reality of your sins. When you truly measure the multitude of your sins before God, then you will realize how much Christ loved you, and how much He saved you from through His sufferings on the Cross. We need to be stirred up. The law serves to drive us to Christ, if we are Christians. It is positive as well as negative, and the law shows us what we are to do, as well as what we are not to do. So it stirs us up to seek greater love for our neighbor and greater love for God, and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” that we might be instructed in every good work, as Paul told Timothy.

What is done away?

1. The curse of the law is removed. But the curse did not come with the law of Moses, but with the disobedience of Adam. What the law added was enlightenment, so that the chosen people could understand the nature of the curse, and how it permeated all of life. The Christian is not under the wrath of God, because of the sacrifice of Christ. He took the curse upon Himself—the wall of God’s wrath fell upon Him.
 2. The promise of life. But no commandment could have given life. But the promise was given so show how futile is was for man to think that he could attain righteousness through the law. Paul found out as an individual, what God taught historically: When the law came, sin revived, and I died.
 3. The law required the most exact obedience, in every detail, and punishments were exacted. There was not abatement, no pardon, and required the most severe punishments. No mercy was to be given to the transgressors, weakness and infirmity was no excuse. This rigor of the law is taken away.
 - a. With respect to ceremonies: They looked to Christ, and must be kept exactly.
 - b. With respect to morals: Hiding of the Talent: a severe man. How can we serve God, except in the context of His mercy and grace?
27. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
We have put on, not the garments of Moses, but the garments of Jesus Christ. We bear the name and the character of Christ, not the name and character of Moses. Moses did not die for me—as a figure of Christ, he was willing to give his life for the people, but Christ is the reality, of which Moses was the type.

How beautiful is baptism—representing the work of the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Christ. Let men corrupt it all they will, it remains a beautiful picture of the New Covenant—not the cutting off of sins, which can never make righteous, but the putting on of Christ, who was cut off in my place.

28 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.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

All those who are in Christ have the same righteousness and are heirs of the same promise. You and I, by faith in Jesus Christ, inherit what Abraham inherited—that for which the world had been created: eternal life and fellowship and communion with God forever.

May God bless you.