

Galatians 3:19-22

Introduction: Let's remember three important truths we have learned so far from Galatians 3. **First**, the Galatian believers are truly members of God's people because they have received the Spirit of God by faith, not self-effort (3:1-5). **Second**, they are sons of Abraham and had received the blessing Abraham through faith alone, not self-effort (3:6-9). **Third**, those who attempt to be acceptable to God through self-effort are under the curse of God (3:10-14).

A legitimate question—3:19 -20¹⁹ *Why then the law?*

- 1) The Law was not part of the original Promise and yet clearly identifies sin—*It was added* [aor. pass. ind. προστίθημι] *because of* [χάριν] *transgressions* [παράβασις] (crossing a clearly marked line),
 - a) i.e. that transgressions would be out into the open; to make people aware of their sin against God's will; “to make wrongdoing a legal offense” (cf. Romans 3:20; 4:15; 5:13, 20)
 - b) It was added to the promise (cf. 3:15). Yet the Law was a distinct covenant.
- 2) The Law was intended to be temporary—*until* [ἄχρι] *the descendent* (Christ, cf. 3:16) *should come* [aor. act. subj. ἔρχομαι] *to whom the promise had been made* [pf. pass. ind. ἐπαγγέλλω].
- 3) The Law was inferior to the promise because it was given indirectly through an intermediary, and not directly like the promise to Abraham—*It was carefully arranged* [aor. pass. ptc. διατάσσω] *through* διά] *angels* (cf. Acts 7:38, 53; Hebrews 2:2) *in the hand of an intermediary* [μεσίτης] (i.e. from God to angels to Moses to Israel).
 - a) Explained negatively—²⁰ *Now* [δέ] *an intermediary* [μεσίτης] *is not of one*,
 - i) i.e. The presence of an intermediary automatically assumes at least 2 parties. Thus, it is dependent on both parties for effectiveness.
 - b) Explained positively—*but God is one*.
 - i) God's direct promise to Abraham came from one party only. It is dependent on God alone for fulfillment.

A clarifying question—3:21-22²¹ *Is the law therefore against* [κατά] *the promises of God?*

- 1) Answered bluntly—*Absolutely not!*
 - a) God gave both the promise and the Law, but for different purposes
- 2) Explained carefully
 - a) If ... then ... argument—3:21b
 - i) If...—*For* [γάρ] *if* [εἰ 2nd class condition, presumed contrary to fact] *there had been a law given* [aor. pass. ind. δίδωμι] *that was able* [pres. dep. ptc. δύναμαι] *to give life* [aor. act. inf. ζωοποιέω],
 - ii) Then...—*then* [ἄν] *righteousness would actually* [ὄντως] *have been* [impf. act. ind. εἰμί] *of* [ἐκ] *the law*.

- iii) Remember Paul's argument in Romans 8:3. Human sinfulness prevented perfect obedience to the Law and the life such obedience promised.
- b) Strong contrasting clarification—3:22 ²² *But* [ἀλλά] ...
 - i) What did the Scripture do? *the Scripture* (i.e. God speaking in the Law) *confined* [aor. act. ind. συγκλείω] *everything under* [ὑπό] *sin* [ἁμαρτία],
(1) Think of a large fishing net (cf. Luke 5:6). We're all trapped in it. There is no possibility of escape. There are no exceptions. There are no excuses. Cf. Romans 3:9; 11:32
 - ii) Why? *so that* [ἵνα] *the promise of* [ἐκ] *faith in Jesus Christ might be given* [aor. pass. subj. δίδωμι] *to those who are trusting* [pres. act. ptc. πιστεύω].
(1) And not by self-effort
- 3) The Law was not given to Israel to make them alive, but rather to show Israel how to live in the Promised Land.
- 4) The Law was not given to replace or to replenish the promise; rather it was supposed to prepare men to receive the promise. ... When sinners stop trying to save themselves and start trusting in Christ to save them, the law has fulfilled its purpose in their lives. (Gromacki)
- 5) Consider Paul's own testimony to this in Romans 7:9. Not until a person smashes himself against the demands of the law and the accusations of conscience does he recognize his helplessness and see his need for a Savior. Not until the law has arrested and imprisoned him and sentenced him to death will he be driven to despair in himself and turn to Jesus Christ. (MacArthur)

Take-home truth: The law has fulfilled its God-intended purpose. Bring your rebellion and your sin to Christ and leave it with Him.