

15.

GALATIANS 3:21-29

I. REJECT THOSE WHO TEACH YOU A DIFFERENT DOCTRINE

C. Because of Teachings of the Scripture

4. Questions raised by these Scriptures

b. Does the law contradict God's promises?

Introduction

The second question Paul dealt with that was raised by the teachings of the Scripture that salvation comes by faith and not by keeping the law was, do the law and the promises of the covenant contradict each other? Are they opposed to each other? Paul answered emphatically, "No!" Rather than opposing each other, they complement each other. They cooperate together to bring people to faith in Jesus. The promises make people understand the great value of God's blessings and make them desire those blessings. The law makes people aware they are unable to gain those blessings by themselves because of their sins. It makes them long for Someone who can keep the requirements of the covenant and make its blessings available to them. Israel needed both the promises and the law to lead them to Jesus. The same is true of everyone in all the nations of the world. Without both, all people continue to wander in sin away from God.

The law played a vital role in preparing the Israelites for Jesus. It plays a vital role today in making us all aware of our need for Jesus. It shows us we are imprisoned in sin, and it makes us long to be free. It leads us to accept the One who fulfilled the requirements of the covenant and who now makes it possible for us to be set free. Therefore, the law is like a chaperone to guide us to Christ.

Then Paul pointed out that, once a chaperone has fulfilled his function, he is not longer needed. When a boy becomes a man or a girl a woman, neither needs a chaperone. He or she is able to exercise all the rights of maturity and no longer needs help to know what to do. In the same way, once we have accepted Christ, we are free to enjoy all the privileges of the covenant, and we do not need the forms, ceremonies, and symbols of the law to guide us to Him any more. That freedom applies to everyone who accepts Jesus, whether Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free. Once we have accepted Jesus, we are all Abraham's children by faith and full heirs of the promises through Christ.

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Comments

Verse 21a. **Then is the law against God’s promises? Absolutely not**

The second question raised by the Scriptures Paul quoted was, does the law contradict the promises of the covenant? At first glance, the law seems to conflict with the promises, because the covenant promises blessings that come by faith while the law offers life only to those who completely obey its statutes and commandments. In spite of the seeming contradiction, Paul answered the question with an absolute “No!” The two are not in opposition to each other. Instead, they work together to reveal God’s ways to people and to lead people to salvation in Christ.

Verses 21b-23. **21b. For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then out of that life would have come righteousness,**

22. But the Scripture has imprisoned everyone under sin, so that the promise [that was to come] from faith in Jesus Christ might be given to the believing ones.

23. And before the faith came, we were shut up under the law, imprisoned until the assured faith was revealed.

Paul said the law does not contradict the covenant because it does not offer a different way of salvation. If it offered a different way of salvation, then it would offer life and righteousness to people by a method different from the way faith offers it. It does not conflict, because the law does not offer salvation but only reveals the need for salvation. Instead of offering salvation, the law convicts people of sin and imprisons them under the

penalty of sin when they do not meet its demands. The penalty for not meeting its demands is always death. The good result that comes from the law is that it makes people aware of their need to be freed from that penalty by faith in Jesus Christ.

The law made the Israelites aware of their need for salvation. The law did make them look forward to the coming of the Messiah (Christ) to set them free from sin and give them the blessings of the covenant. It was intended to make them look forward to hearing about the message of salvation, so they would be glad to accept it once it was revealed.

The law works the same way for Gentiles. It makes us aware of our sinfulness. It reveals to us that we are condemned and without hope, so we will be eager to receive salvation once someone tells us how it can be obtained by faith in Jesus.

Verse 24. **So the law was our chaperone until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith.**

To the Israelites the law was like a chaperone leading them to faith. The word translated “chaperone” has no exact equivalent in English. It refers to a slave who supervised a young child, escorted him to his teacher, and then returned him back home safely. The King James Version’s translation “schoolmaster” is not accurate, because the slave did not teach the child but escorted him to the teacher. Other versions use a variety of translations.¹ Some of their translations are better

¹ RV, NASB, and ASV translate the word as “tutor”; BBE as “servant”; CEV as “teacher”; RSV and CJB as “custodian”;

than others, but none is an exact translation, because an equivalent word does not exist in English. The translation “chaperone” comes closer to its meaning than any of the words used in our published translations. The point is that the law led the Israelites to Christ because it revealed to them their need for Christ.

The law has the same significance for Gentiles. It makes us realize we are sinners and leads us to Christ for salvation. It does not oppose salvation by faith but leads us to salvation by faith. Therefore, Gentiles should not avoid the Mosaic law or consider it to be of no value to them. It does not need to be practiced any longer since Jesus has come, but studying it still has great value. It will lead us to Christ, just like it was designed to point the Israelites to Christ. Anything that helps us realize our need of Jesus to be our Savior should be treasured and studied with care.

Verses 25-26. **25 But faith having come. We are no more under a chaperone,**

26 For you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus

Paul emphasized that the law has achieved its purpose when a person comes to Jesus. When it has led a person to Christ, that person no longer needs a chaperone. All he needs to do is to practice the faith in Jesus to which the law has led him. Actually, since Jesus has come into the world and revealed salvation more clearly, no one needs the chaperone any longer. The ritual law has served its purpose and does not need to be practiced by anyone, Jew or Gentile.

When Paul said we are no longer under a chaperone, he certainly did not mean that we have nothing we can learn from the law. Its moral teachings still are valuable guides to help us understand right and wrong, good and evil. Also its symbolic ceremonies illustrate for us principles that should guide our lives and our service to God each day. For those reasons, the law will never cease to be valuable and useful to everyone who wants to trust God and to live for Him. However, we no

longer need to practice its rituals and ceremonies, because they have served their purpose, and now we have a clearer and better revelation of those principles in Jesus Christ.

Those who have trusted Jesus as Savior especially do not need to practice the ritual law, because they have achieved the purpose for which the law was given. They have faith, and it is a better guide to righteousness than the ritual law ever was. They no longer need a chaperone, because they are mature sons of God and have a spiritual relationship that enables them to act righteously without the constant guidance of the laws of Sinai.

Verses 27-28. **27 For as many as were baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ**

28 You are not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Now that Christ has satisfied the requirements of the covenant and believers receive its promises by faith in Him, everyone comes to salvation in the same way. No difference exists between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female when it comes to receiving salvation. When believers are baptized to show they have trusted Jesus as Savior, they clothe themselves with Christ. Every other distinction has no meaning when it comes to believers’ relationship with God. They all become Abraham’s seed by faith and inheritors of all the promises of God.

That statement does not mean that the distinctions Paul mentioned are non-existent. Differences of nature, inclinations, and culture related to gender, ethnicity, and nationality continue to be important and should not be ignored. It is not even desirable to try to eradicate those differences. But, when it comes to salvation and people’s relationship to God, they have no relevance. Everyone comes to God in the same way through faith in Christ

29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.

When people come to salvation through Christ, they all become children of God in the same

HCSB as “guardian”; LIV as “trainer”; and RSV as “disciplinarian.”

way. Jews and Gentiles receive salvation exactly alike; therefore, in God's family no distinction exists on the basis of who our Father is. We all have one Savior Jesus and one Father God. Everyone receives the same promises that God made to Abraham 4,000 years ago. Everyone becomes a part of the seed that God promised to Abraham. Gentiles are just as much children of

Abraham as people who have descended from Abraham biologically. Their faith relationship has become the important matter, not their blood line. They all become one body made up of many members, all united by Christ to accomplish His purposes in the world.