

The Guardian (Galatians 3:15-29)

Sermon Series: The Law of Christ and Continuity and Discontinuity between the Old and New Covenant.

- A. *Sermon #1:* There are various genres of law, including the Mosaic law, positive law, and natural law. The law of principle will be revisited in the future. In Scripture, there is law, the law, and the Law.
- B. *Sermon #2:* The Law or Prophets (Law) collectively speaks of the Old Testament. Jesus was not primarily addressing the Mosaic law in Matthew 5:17-20, but the general “flow” of redemptive history. While Jesus fulfilled many prophecies of His first coming, many still are to come. As a result, Jesus has not come to abolish the Law or Prophets but to fulfill them. All of them must be fulfilled (Lk. 24:44).

Context of Galatians 3: The Mosaic law cannot provide the Holy Spirit (3:1-5), righteousness (3:6-9), and justification (3:10-12).

1. The Abrahamic Covenant (v.15-16)

- Depending on the context, a covenant can refer to an agreement, obligation, mutual commitment, or solemn promise bound by an oath.
- Jews, who were largely the recipients of this letter, would be familiar with God's covenant with Abraham in Gen. 12:4, which promised to make him a great nation and a blessing to others. The covenant was officially ratified in a monergistic and unilateral manner in the context of a Suzerain covenant (Gen. 15), as Abram was “sleeping.” Fourteen provisions are given from Gen. 12-17.

2. The Addition of the Mosaic Law as Subsidiary to the Abrahamic Covenant (v. 17-23)

- The Mosaic law was given 430 years after the promise to Abraham (v.17) and was conditional. He published it through Moses at Mount Sinai, who mediated between God and Israel (Ex. 19-24). The context of the establishment of the covenant with its 613 laws (603 + 10 “Words” (Commandments)) was slavery in Egypt and their inheritance in the land of Canaan (Deut. 5:1-6).
- The law (Mosaic) did not change the promise made to Abraham that righteousness comes by faith in God (3:15-18).
 - Covenants cannot be annulled, ratified, or changed once enacted (v.17-18).

Why was the Mosaic Law given to the nation of Israel?

- It was added “because” of transgressions (v.19). There are two “schools” of thought:
 - It was “on account of,” which points to the grounds for which something is done (Eph. 3:1, 14). Since the nation was already living with no formal publication of law, the Mosaic law was provided as a “guardrail” to govern the nation.
 - It was “prospective,” which points forward (1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 1:5, 11; Jas. 1:16). It was not added *because* of sin but to *increase* transgression (Rom. 5:13).
- The law did not decrease transgressions; it increased them.
- The Mosaic law magnified Israel's sin and showed them the need for a Savior. It was published so that sin would take on the character of transgression since through the law comes knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20).
- Law enforces good behavior, not because of love for the law but because of the inconvenience or pain of violating it. Obedience, for sinners is inspired by fear, not love.
 - The law does not compel sin but impels it and demonstrates that man is not just a sinner but a willful sinner.
 - The law shows man his disease but offers no solution. Forgiveness is meaningless to the one without awareness of his depravity and lawlessness.

- The Mosaic law came next to the Abrahamic covenant (v.19) to protect and guide the nation until the promise (Gen. 12-17) was fulfilled. The Mosaic law did not make men sinners but instead transgressors.
- The Mosaic (Scriptures) imprisoned everything under sin (v.22), and before faith (Christ) came, we (Jews) were held captive and imprisoned (v.23).
 - Paul changed the tense to first person plural, addressing fellow Jews about the universality of sin and transgression and how sinful they are!
 - The law did not make the people holy because they were sinners.

Who was it mediated by (v.19-20)?

- The law was ordained through angels and delivered to Israel by the hand of a mediator. Moses was a mediator and intermediary between the LORD and Israel (Deut. 5:4-5). In some way, angels administered the law (Deut., 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2).
- The nature of the mediation demonstrates the inferiority of the Mosaic law; Abraham received it first-hand, while the nation of Israel received it third-hand.
 - God is one (v.20). This demonstrates the superiority of the Abrahamic covenant to the Mosaic covenant. It also indicates that God's intention of the promise given to Abraham has not been compromised in the publication of the Mosaic law.

The goal of the Mosaic law was not to bestow salvation by obedience but to do the opposite: to show their need for salvation. The law cannot provide what it demands. God gave the nation of Israel the law to show them their inability to keep it. The primary purpose of the law (judicially and forensically) was to show Israel their sin and, consequently, their need for a Savior.

3. The Arrival of the Faith and the Fulfilled Term of the Guardian (Mosaic Law) (v.23-29)

The Mosaic law is a “pedagogue”:

- There is no formal English equivalent for a pedagogue. Some translations use “tutor,” “guardian,” or “guide.” This “guardian” was often a slave in a family that was employed to take the child to school, ensure the child behaved with modesty and was permitted to discipline, using a whip or paddle.
 - Babies were often given to “wet nurses” who nursed the child until he/she was old enough to be watched/guided by this pedagogue.
- The guardian remained with the child until the child was of age and responsible for living out the principles the guardian instilled.
- The guardian (Mosaic law) remained with the child (Israel) until “maturity” (time):
 - The goal of the Abrahamic covenant, with the subsidiary nature of the Mosaic law, has been accomplished: the Seed has come, and by faith in Christ alone, there are many sons (v.25-28). The duration of the Mosaic law for righteousness by faith alone is Paul's point as he deals with justification apart from works of the law, not sanctification, considering the Mosaic Law.

4. The Assumptions that Must be Avoided from Paul's Treatment of the Guardian

- While the Mosaic law, as a covenant, has fulfilled its purpose, Paul is not implying that the Mosaic law has been abrogated (canceled), is no longer Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17), nor that those principles, including various commands of the Mosaic law, have no place in the life of the believer under the New Covenant.
- Paul is saying that the goal of the law has been reached: to demonstrate sinfulness and the need for a Savior. Now the Promised Seed has arrived (Gen. 12:1-4) and justified many through faith alone (v.27-29), one essential question remains:
 - *What is the role of the law of Moses for New Covenant believers?*
 - Paul does not answer this in his letter to the Galatians.