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Galatians

Lesson 33- Law and Mediators

“The person who can distinguish between the law and grace can thank God and know himself to be a true Christian.”- Martin Luther

Galatians 3:19-26, *What purpose then does the law serve? It 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.²⁰ Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.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.²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

The law has one more purpose.

By Law,

- ✓ The definition of sin,
- ✓ Law brings evil desire and it excite in our life,
- ✓ Law brings rebellion against the Holy God,
- ✓ Law brings us guilty before God, and
- ✓ Law cannot save you.

Now we can see that the law is our tutor.

V24: *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.*

The full work of the law drives you to the Redeemer, just pound your chest, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," to cry out for forgiveness as one unworthy to the God who justifies the ungodly, who know they're ungodly.

Romans 4:15, *for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.*

Satan would want you to prove yourself holy by the law whereas God gave to prove yourself unholy.

So, the law was temporary.

V16, *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.*

The seed is Christ.

V 19, *What purpose then does the law serve? It 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.*

Until the seed, Christ comes.

The seed is the one who is promised, and the seed is the one to whom the promise is made.

When we are in Christ, that all the blessings are ours.

The law was added because of the transgression until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. The law was temporary, that's why it all disappeared.

The law didn't have a lasting purpose, it proved at the most dramatic level that it can't save.

Hebrews 8:6, *But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.*

Better promises build a better covenant relationship between us and God. This relationship is what Christ obtains and takes care of as Mediator.

Hebrews 8:7-8, *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*

Notice carefully where does the fault lies in the first covenant? Verse 7 says that the first covenant was not faultless. But then verse 8 explains this by saying, "For in finding fault with THEM . The fault with the first covenant was with "them." Well, who was "them," and what was their fault, and what was this covenant anyway?

Hebrews 8:9, *Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.*

The old covenant was made with the people of God (Israel); it was made with them as they came out of Egypt.

After few months at Mount Sinai as Moses received the law. This was an arrangement of how God and man were to relate but that they failed to keep. So, God looked away from them and they suffered judgment again and again.

The faultiness of the first covenant—the Mosaic law—was not that God gave bad commands, but that the people had bad hearts.

There was divine forgiveness and patience in the first covenant **Exodus 34:6-7**, *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”*

There was the call for faith in the first covenant.

Numbers 14:11, *Then the Lord said to Moses: “How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?”*

Hebrews 3:19, *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

Hebrews 4:6, *Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,*

There were promises of God's love in the first covenant.

Exodus 34:7, *keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the*

guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

All these things did not get into the people's hearts. It was mainly,

- External rather than internal.
- Obedience by will-power rather than by reliance on the Spirit.
- Ritualistic rather than personal

What was wrong?

What was the flaw?

There are two ways to answer that question.

1. God's perspective
 2. Human perspective
- From God's side the problem was that God withheld the sovereign enablement of his Spirit.
 - From the human side the problem was unbelief and hard-heartedness (Hebrews 3:8,15,19; 4:7).

Moses is speaking as he looks back over forty years of rebellion in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy 29:4, *Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day.*

The ultimate reason why the old covenant was inadequate. God had lessons he meant to teach in the Old Testament, and they were generations of stubbornness and rebellion and hard-heartedness until the time the new covenant should come.

If that covenant, Mosaic covenant had been faultless there would have been no occasion for the second. But it was faulty.

Hebrews 8:11-13, *None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

¹³*In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

God has made the first obsolete.

The writer of Hebrews says, "In the first century all the elements of the old covenant are disappearing." The veil in the temple was torn top to bottom when Jesus was crucified. Holy of Holies was exposed.

The Romans came in 70 A.D. and destroyed the temple and smashed it to the ground. All the records were burnt, and they were lost.

Implications:

- People don't know, even to this day, what tribe they are in anymore.
- The priesthood is gone.
- The sacrificial system is gone.
- The whole old system abolished.

God's moral law has NOT changed.

Here it was demonstrated that no people, even the chosen people of God, can be saved by that law.

If there are people who call themselves Christians and they think salvation is by faith and works, they don't understand the difference between law and grace.

The law was only until Christ. Doesn't mean God's moral standards have changed, because everything that's true of God is reiterated in the New Testament.

Jesus made it deeper.

Jesus made it not to be just the outside in the Sermon on the Mount, it's the inside.

The law was for a time, and it was to point us to Christ. It was to make a people desperate for the Saviour.

Look at Israel. The law should have prepared them for Christ. They were living in such defiance of the law of God that they thought Christ was from hell. The law designed to point to a Saviour.

A small remnant of people believed God Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Anna, Simeon, the disciples – a hundred and twenty by the Day of Pentecost.

The rest of the nation, they had taken the law and used it to convince themselves they were holy. All the law will do is turn you into a damned hypocrite.

- ✓ The law is inferior because of its purpose.
- ✓ The law is inferior, because of its mediators.

V 19, *What purpose then does the law serve? It 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.*

God's holy law comes the following flow.

- God to angels,
- Angels to Moses,
- Moses to the people.

Moses comes down from the mountain, he got the law.

The mediators are inferior!

The mediators were created beings, Angels and Moses.

Look at the contrast:

The promise came directly from God.

Genesis 12:1, *Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you.*

Genesis 18, the Lord comes to dinner at Abram’s house.

He comes to dinner at Abram’s house, and He talks to him as to a friend, because this is promise. This is not a threat.

This is the promise, divine, eternal, and gracious.

But when it comes to the law, God is hidden in the distance.

Exodus 19:18-23, *Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and [G]the whole mountain quaked greatly. ¹⁹And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. ²⁰Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. ²¹And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish. ²²Also let the priests who come near the Lord consecrate themselves, lest*

the Lord break out against them.”²³ But Moses said to the Lord, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.’”

This is a frightening scene.

Deuteronomy 33:1-2, *Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. ² And he said: “The Lord came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand Came a fiery law for them.*

This is a picture of God coming down to give the law with thousands and thousands of angels, and flashing, terrifying lightning.

Moses wants to see God!

Exodus 33:18-23, *And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”¹⁹ Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”²⁰ But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”²¹ And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.²² So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.²³ Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”*

God is hidden in the giving of the law. Even Moses only sees God in these fearful terms.

Psalm 68:17, *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, Even thousands of thousands; The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place.*

We don't know what was going on in Sinai beyond that but when God came down to give the law there were ten thousand, ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels surrounding Him. God came down in a terrifying display, a display that was so blazing in its brilliance that it stayed on the face of Moses, even though he only saw a tiny portion of the glory of God.

In the New Testament in the book of Acts chapter 7, Stephen is preaching.

Acts 7:38, *“This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,*

So not only were there thousands and thousands of angels, but there was an angel in particular who spoke for God to Moses.

Acts 7:53, *who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”*

Stephen says you received the law ordained by angels, yet you didn't keep it.

Hebrews 2:2, *“If the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”*

Law had mediators they were all created beings.

Promise to Abram, God came and spoke to him face to face as to a friend.

God comes very personally even now in salvation!

The promise is direct from God.

The promise of salvation by faith is so precious to the heart of God that He came directly to Abram and God comes directly to every person who believes.

Now you know why we spoke so much about Roman Catholicism having gone away from the scripture, as there are mediators all over the place such as priests, saints, Mary, all kinds of fake and false mediators.

Moses was great but God was far greater.

V 20, *Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.*

God didn't need a mediator to bring His promise to us, because it's a covenant He made with Himself. It's an unconditional, divine, eternal, gracious promise of salvation.

You only need a mediator if it's a deal between two. The flow of the law was from God through the angels, to Moses, to the people. All these mediators being God's mouth piece saying that you had better keep this law or you will die.

V 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.*

The history of Israel and the history of the law proves that does not happen. The law was never able to impart spiritual life, eternal life. If it had been able, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. But the presence of the law over all those centuries proves the opposite. To the accomplishments the law can't bring life.

2 Corinthians 3:6, *"The law kills, the Spirit gives life. The law kills, the Spirit gives life."*

Is the law in conflict?

No.

No law can give life. If so, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

What comes out of law?

It is not righteousness, but unrighteousness.

Paul says it in **Romans 7:24**, *Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*

V 22, *But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

What did the law do?

Put us in prison!

V23, *But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.*

The law took us prisoner.

Sin is the jailer, it chained us.

Every sin that we commit tightens the chains, until at last they are completely crushed.

No, the law is not an alternate way of salvation in conflict with faith. The law took everybody prisoner.

Galatians 3:10, *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

Simple trust embraces all the promises of God when it embraces Christ.

Not until the law and conscience and the work of the Holy Spirit has bruised and crushed us do, we admit the need of the gospel to bind up our wounds.

Not until the law has arrested us and imprisoned us and put us in chains will we long for the Christ who will set us free.

Not until the law has sentenced us, condemned us, and executed us will we run to Christ to receive new life.

When the law has done all of that it becomes our tutor that leads us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Conclusion:

Three Lessons

1. God has devoted over a thousand years of history (from Moses to Christ) to help us see ourselves in the failures of Israel. He aims to make visible the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the depth and subtlety of our own pride and insubordination. Therefore, we should look and be appalled in the mirror of God's law. We should

admit that there are yet roots of independence and pride and distrust to be dug out.

2. We should cherish Christ and adore the grace that opened our hearts to receive him. The lesson of the law is that we are utterly dependent on grace to remove our heart of stone and give us a soft heart of faith and love. Contrition, humility, lowliness, gratitude—let your heart be filled with these as you recall, "Where sin abounded, grace much more abounded" (**Romans 5:20**).
3. Obedience and Faith: God thought it wise and helpful not to let the sediment of pride and rebellion and distrust lie quietly at the bottom of the human heart. But instead, stirred it up and made it visible by demanding the obedience which comes from faith.

More than ever everyone sees the need for preachers to preach that the sediment of sin in the lives of so-called "carnal Christians" be stirred up and come to a crisis.