

The Gospel in Galatians

The Road to Faith

Lesson #7 for November 12, 2011

Scriptures: Galatians 3:21-25; Leviticus 18:5; Romans 3:9-19; 1 Corinthians 9:20; Romans 3:1,2; 8:1-4.

1. This lesson focuses on the relationship between the law and the gospel. (Galatians 3:21-25) It is a crucial point for Christians. Some Christians believe that the law is no longer in effect. Others act almost as if the law is the whole story. Where is the truth?
2. Has God given us clear instructions about the plan of salvation? Historically, God's covenant or promise to Abraham preceded the giving of the law on Sinai by 430 years. We have already seen that the later giving of a law could never nullify or change the promise given many years earlier. God does not change. (1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6)
3. It is true that by taking some verses out of the Old Testament, it might seem like one could be saved by keeping the law. Read Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 6:24,25. Other passages suggest the same idea.
4. God is the only source of life—not only physically but also spiritually. (2 Kings 5:7; Nehemiah 9:6; John 5:21; Romans 4:17) The law was never intended to give life.
5. Several places in the Scriptures very clearly point out that we are all sinners. (1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1,9,10) One of the best summaries of that is found in Romans 3:9-19,23. Paul correctly stated that the sin problem begins in human hearts. So, how is the problem to be solved? (See Romans 8:3)
6. God has given us the law to spell out sin. From the days of Adam outside the gates of the Garden of Eden, the sacrificial system was intended to teach us that sin leads to death. The law helps us to identify those dangerous, death-dealing behaviors. Do we as human beings need such guidance?
7. After we are convinced that we are sinners, what is next? The death of Christ is proof of the fact that sin cannot be ignored. Sin has very serious consequences. The plan of salvation gives us an opportunity to have our sins forgiven, our lives changed, and eventually, to have a place with God in heaven.
8. How do we cooperate with God in this life-changing experience? Do we still need the law? By following the example of Christ, we can learn how life is to be lived. By doing that, we allow God to write the law in our hearts. Couldn't we just do right because it is right?
9. In Galatians 3:19-25, Paul was addressing the formerly-Jewish Christians in Galatia. He talked about conditions as they were before the coming of Christ. What does it mean to be kept under the law? (Galatians 3:22,23; Romans 6:14,15; 1 Corinthians 9:20; Galatians 4:4,5,21; 5:18)
10. One meaning of the expression *under the law* as suggested by Galatians 4:21 is the idea that, somehow, by keeping the law we can be saved. But, law-keeping was never intended by God as an alternative way of salvation. If we take that approach, we are really rejecting Christ. (Galatians 5:2-4)
11. Another meaning of *under the law* is to be under the condemnation of the law because we have broken it. As sinners we are all *under the law* in that sense. The law is a kind of mirror. If we look in the mirror and see that our face is dirty and then walk away and say that we do not need to do anything because we cannot see the dirt any more, does that make sense?

If by looking at the law we recognize our sinfulness, we should then turn to God for the gospel. By looking to Jesus and understanding His life and His death, we can find a way out. This is not to suggest that we somehow do away with the need for the law. God will help us leave our sinful lives behind. Are human beings able to keep the law in their own strength?

12. Read Galatians 3:23,24. What do these two verses suggest is the role of the law?
 - 1) It is to *keep* us or *guard* us.
 - 2) It *confines* us or *encloses* us in our sinful condition by pointing out where we have failed to keep the law. The law is very good at showing us—if we are honest in looking at it—that we are all sinners. This does not suggest that there is a problem with the law itself. Paul clearly believed that the law was good. (Romans 7:12,14; 8:3,4; 13:8)
 - 3) Thus, the law becomes a kind of babysitter, guard, protector, and even disciplinarian until we come to understand the purpose of the law and gospel.
13. Can good things be misused? Drugs that are intended to relieve pain can become addicting and can kill a person who abuses them. Sharp knives which are essential for many purposes can be used to kill. The law meant to point out sin and direct us to the Savior could cause us to become discouraged and give up completely.
14. Deuteronomy 27 and 28 spell out God's detailed instructions to the children of Israel describing blessings and curses associated with obedience and disobedience respectively.
15. As we know, many years later, the Pharisees—seeking ways to make sure that they kept the law in every detail—spelled these details out minutely, multiplying laws with almost innumerable do's and don'ts. Jesus clearly pointed out the errors of this approach. (Mark 7:1-8) It was essentially a full time job to be a Pharisee. One had to fast two days a week, and the ritual cleanings and other requirements took a great deal of time.
16. One of the effects of all these multiplied rules was to produce a huge wall or barrier between the Jewish nation and the nations around them to whom they were supposed to be reaching out. God's original promise to Abraham was supposed to be shared with the world. (Genesis 12:1-3) But, the Jewish people wanted to claim all the blessings without shouldering any of the responsibilities. They believed that God's blessings were exclusively for them.
17. In Galatians 3:24, Paul used a very interesting word to describe the law. The Greek word *paidagogos* has been translated as schoolmaster, disciplinarian, tutor, trainer, teacher, guide, the one in charge of us, a slave to look after us, even custodian, babysitter, child-conductor, or guardian.
18. The *paidagogos* was a slave in Roman society who was placed in a position of authority over his master's sons from the time they turned six or seven until they reached maturity. In addition to providing for his charges' physical needs, such as drawing their bath, providing them with food and clothes, and protecting them from any danger, the *paidagogos* also was responsible for making sure the master's sons went to school and did their homework. In addition, he was expected not only to teach and practice moral virtues but also to ensure that the boys learned and practiced the virtues themselves. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, November 9)
19. These *paidagogoi* tended to be very strict disciplinarians. They did not hesitate to whip or cane their subjects. Does this imply a negative picture of the law? Does the law rebuke and condemn us as sinners by pointing out our sins?

20. So, which law is primarily being spoken about? In the book *1SM* 233, 234, it is very clear that while all law serves this function to a certain degree, it is especially the moral law to which Paul was referring. Isn't it the moral law that points out our sins. The law has a function very similar to that of a mirror. It can even function as a magnifying glass. It makes our sins, trespasses, and mistakes very apparent.
21. But, it is not the purpose of the law to correct those errors. The plan of salvation given by God provides a way for us to leave those errors behind by following Christ. First of all, God wants to open our eyes, and then He encourages us to turn and run to Him for help and salvation. We need the law to help us clarify what is right and what is wrong. But, God never intended for us to stop there.
22. Even in the Old Testament, there are good examples of how the law should be used. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Why weren't they to have horses? Horses were often used, especially by kings, for waging war—as offensive weapons. While these instructions were given specifically for the future kings of Israel, they are excellent instructions for all of us as well. These predictions in Deuteronomy are so specific that many modern scholars believe that Deuteronomy could not have been written by Moses. They think it must have been written after the fact. They do not believe that God has the ability to foretell the future.
23. In light of all this, where do we find ourselves? Romans 8:1-3 and 6:14,15 point out that it is God's plan that we no longer live under the law but under grace. How do we do this? Doesn't that suggest that the law still has a function? By following the example of Jesus Christ, we eventually will learn that doing what is right is always the best plan. When we do what is right, we naturally keep the law. This is why James 1:25 and 2:12 call it the law of liberty.
24. It is God's plan that by studying the life of Christ, we may behold and become changed. (*Great Controversy* 555) As we spend time contemplating the life of Christ, we learn to practice good behaviors, and the Holy Spirit writing the law on our hearts transforms us into His image. (2 Corinthians 3:18)
25. This, of course, does not do away with the need for the law. If we get careless or wander into new territory in disobedience, the law will quickly point out what needs to happen and tell us to correct our error. The *paidagogos* was not a teacher at school. His job was to get the children safely to school, make sure they were safe while at school, and then to get them safely home. Why was that a problem? Sixty percent of the people living in the Mediterranean region in those days were “slaves.” Often, they became slaves because they could not pay their debts. If a slave could kidnap one of the children of a wealthy family and hold that child for ransom, he might be able to pay off his debt and go free. So, how does this fit with the function of the law? The law protects us by spelling out specifically what we are to do and not to do until by studying the life of Christ we learn to do what is right because it is right. Is there ever a time that we no longer need the *paidagogos*?
26. In His life on this earth, Jesus managed to draw a very careful balance between applying the law and applying grace. Read the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. (John 4:1-42) Jesus did not condemn her; He just showed her a better way. This was also true of the woman taken in adultery. (John 8:1-11) Did Jesus demand that those women straighten out their lives before He would talk to them or help them? Jesus does His best to attract us. If God could have accomplished what needed to be done in any way other than coming and dying, wouldn't He have done so?
27. In 1888, the delegates to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists meeting at

Minneapolis, Minnesota, struggled with the issues we are talking about in this lesson. Two small books had been written on the subject. One was written by G. I. Butler, the President of the General Conference. The other was written by E. J. Waggoner, a young physician/theologian and one of the coeditors of *The Signs of the Times*. Butler believed that the law referred to in Galatians 3 was the ceremonial law only. Dr. Waggoner believed that it referred primarily to the moral law. Ellen White pointed out that it means both. She had some very serious words about the consequences of that disagreement. It became very heated at that General Conference session. Those words are recorded in 1SM 234, 235.

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded [235] in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit [Is that the latter rain? Aren't we praying for that?] that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world. [Doesn't that suggest that if we had not opposed that message, we might now be in the kingdom of heaven?] {1SM 234.6}

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The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. [Does the law protect us?] Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. [How many people see God like this?] The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, [Is this a consequence or a punishment?] and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2} [Compare Romans 14:23]

28. How do we look at the law in our day? Do we see the law as full of mercy? Did our own General Conference brethren back in 1888 actually turn back the latter rain? Could the gospel have gone forward and been finished more than 100 years ago? Could the same thing happen now? Have we learned our lesson?

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