

Sunday, May 21, 2023—Galatians 3:21-22 Is The Law Against The Promises of God?

### Galatians 3:21

- **Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.**
- Please note that the first part of verse 21 is a question. Paul has been using this question-and-answer form of instruction (Socratic Method) throughout the duration of chapter 3.
  - Verses 1-5, 19, 21
- Paul’s answer to the question, “Is the law then against the promises of God?” is “God forbid.” This is an instance where the King James translators were more dynamic in their rendering of “God forbid” than literal. Modern version advocates are quick to point this out. They will say that the Greek literally says, “may it never be.” The King James translators opted for a dynamic rendering in this case to capture in English the force of the expression. Commentators such as Ernest R. Campbell tells us that the Greek expression equals the “strongest possible” rejection of a suggestion. (Campbell, 81)
  - Romans 6:1-2, 17
- If a law had been given which had the power to bestow life, then righteousness could have come by the Law than the seed the Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 16-17) would not have needed to come. Regarding this Dr. Ernest Campbell writes in his *A Verse by Verse Study of Galatians*:
  - “If the Law of Moses had the “power”, dynamic, and ability to make men spiritually alive; then the source of righteous would be the Law.” (Campbell, 82)
- Please recall that Moses, the great Law giver to Israel, could not lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land because he disobeyed God.
  - Acts 7:45—it took a guy named Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua is a type of Christ. It is only through the singular seed of Abraham that life can be had, and that seed is Christ. Righteousness cannot come through the Law.
- Regarding Paul’s argument in verse 21 Dr. Campbell writes,
  - “Paul’s argument is that if the Law had been able to make men spiritually alive; then the Law would be the source of righteousness. Paul and Peter both recognized that the Law of Moses never justified nor made any man righteous (cf. 2:16); therefore it never imparted life to any man. In other words, since the Law was not able to identify men with the life and rightness of God, and this was never the purpose for which the law was given

[3:19], there had to be another source of life and righteousness, namely, the faithful person of Jesus Christ who died on Calvary's Cross as our sin-substitute (cf. 2:16)." (Campbell, 82)

### **Galatians 3:22**

- **But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,**
- Note the similarity the first phrase of verse 22 has with verse 8. Again, God attributes His own attributes to His Word. Things God is able to do, are spoken of as being accomplished by the Scriptures. God has designed for the living and the written Word to be equal.
- The specific portion of Scripture that Paul is speaking about here is the Law.
  - Romans 3:19-20, 23
- The word "concluded" here means to "shut up" or to "enclose."
  - Galatians 3:23—"shut up"
  - Luke 5:6—"inclosed"
- The idea here is that the Mosaic Law completely "enclosed" and "shut up" all those who were under it in a sphere of guilt. The purpose of this in the context was to force recognition of the fact that they were disobedient sinners before God.
  - "Thus we see that the basic purpose of the Mosaic Law was not to produce life and righteousness in those under it, but to shut them up unto a consciousness of sin, in order that the faithfulness of Jesus Christ might be the basis for giving Abrahamic promise. The promises made to Abraham involved counting faith for rightness (3:6); the fact that the Gentiles would be blessed with him on a faith basis (3:8-9); and this was to be accomplished through his faithful seed, Jesus Christ (3:16, 19)." (Campbell, 83)
- **that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.**
- Once again, in verse 22, we see the subjective and objective forms of faith; the faith which belongs to Jesus Christ and our faith in him.
- Since Jesus Christ is the seed to whom the promise was made (v. 16) and the Law was temporary until the seed should come (v.19), the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant come to us through both the faithfulness of Christ and our faith in Him.
- The ability of anyone to inherit salvation in any age depends upon the cross work of Christ. Not only is Paul explaining how we get saved, he is also explaining how the saints from time past will receive their justification.

- Romans 3:25-28—part of the Pauline revelation was an explanation of how the sins of those living under the Law in time past were forgiven. God was able to “forbear” their sin knowing that the cross was coming.
  - Galatians 3:19
  - Galatians 4:4-5
  - Hebrews 10:1-14
- Once again consider the following from the pen of Dr. Campbell:
    - “In literally following what the Scripture says here we have two distinct thoughts: 1) that the source, the basis for giving the promise was the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, the summation of which is His obedience until death on the cross (cf. Phil. 2:8; Rom. 5:10), and 2) the promise is given to a specific group of people, namely, those believing, those trusting, i.e., to those identified with the Seed, Jesus Christ, through faith (cf. Acts 16:31).

The substitution death of the faithful Person of Jesus Christ is the source of our justification (cf. Rom. 3:24-25; 5:9). Exercising . . . faith in Jesus Christ is the means by which we are justified and made partakes of the Abrahamic promise (cf. John 6:44; Eph. 2:8; I Tim. 1:14).” (Campbell, 84)