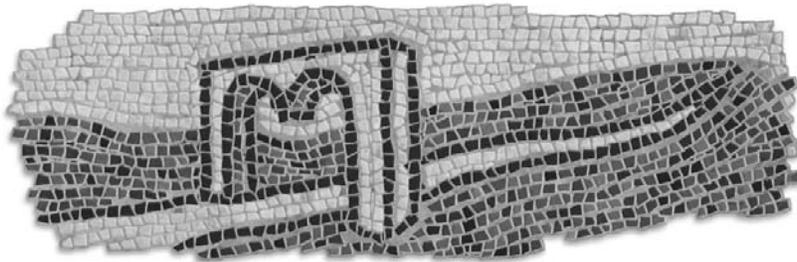


The Road to Faith



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Galatians 3:21–25; Leviticus 18:5; Romans 3:9–19; 1 Corinthians 9:20; Romans 3:1, 2; Romans 8:1–4.

MEMORY VERSE: “But Scripture [the Bible] announces that the whole world is a prisoner because of sin. It does so in order that what was promised might be given to those who believe. The promise comes through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 3:22, NlrV).

HOMING PIGEONS LONG HAVE BEEN FAMOUS FOR FLYING HUNDREDS OF MILES A DAY AND ARRIVING HOME WITHOUT GETTING LOST. But even the best homing pigeons sometimes have become lost, never returning to their starting point. The worst example happened in England. About 20,000 birds (valued at more than \$600,000) never came back home.

Most of us have experienced, in one way or another, being lost. This is not enjoyable. It fills us with fear and worry. It can lead us to moments of panic, as well.

The same is true in the spiritual world. Even after we accept Christ, we can get lost.

But the good news is that God has not left us to ourselves. He has mapped out the road to faith, as is shown in the gospel. And that path includes the law. Many people try to separate the law from the gospel. Some even think of them as separate ideas. But this view is wrong. It can have sad and serious results. Without the law, we would have no gospel. It is hard, really, to understand the gospel without the law.

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 6**THE LAW AND THE PROMISE
(Galatians 3:21)**

Paul knows that his comments might lead his enemies to think that God's promises did not make the law as important as it should be. So he asks the very question they were thinking, Are you saying that the law is opposed to the promises of God? To this Paul answers with a powerful No! Such thinking is not possible because God is not opposed to Himself. God gave both the promise and the law. The law is not opposed to the promise. The two just have different kinds of roles in God's plan of salvation.

What wrong ideas did Paul's enemies have about the role of the law? Compare¹ Galatians 3:21; Leviticus 18:5; and Deuteronomy 6:24.

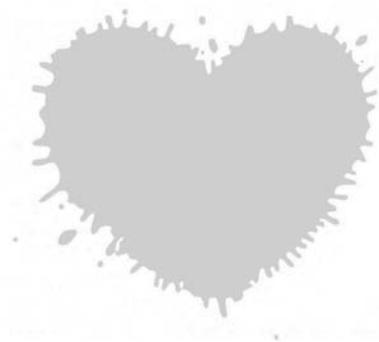
These people believed that the law was able to give them spiritual life. Their views probably came from a wrong interpretation of Old Testament verses, such as Leviticus 18:5 and Deuteronomy 6:24. These verses show that the law directs how life should be lived by those who remain in God's covenant. The law does show a person how to live his or her life within the covenant. But the people thought that the law was responsible for a person's relationship with God. The Bible is clear that the ability to "make alive" is a power given by God and His Spirit alone (2 Kings 5:7; Nehemiah 9:6;

John 5:21; and Romans 4:17). The law cannot make anyone alive spiritually. But this does not mean that the law is opposed to God's promise.

Paul tries to prove that the law cannot give life. So Paul writes in Galatians 3:22, "Scripture [the Bible] announces that the whole world is a prisoner because of sin" (NIRV). In Romans 3:9–19, Paul quotes verses from the Old Testament to show just how bad we are. The verses are joined together with a plan in mind. For example, he begins with the heart of the sin problem—the selfish attitude that pollutes (stains) human hearts. Then he moves to verses that state (describe) the fact that sin has invaded the heart of every person on earth.

Paul's point? Sin is widespread, and the law is limited in what it can do. So the promise of eternal life can come to us only through the faithfulness of Christ.

The law cannot save us. So, what can we gain from obeying it? What good have you experienced in your own life by obeying God's law?



Sin is the selfish attitude that stains human hearts.

1. compare—to show how two or more things are alike or different.

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 7**“KEPT UNDER LAW”
(Galatians 3:22, 23)**

In Galatians 3:23 (NirV), Paul writes that “before faith in Christ came, we were held prisoners by the law.” When Paul says “we,” he is talking about the Jewish believers in the Galatian churches. They are the ones who know the law well. Paul has been speaking to them since Galatians 2:15. This can be seen in the difference between the “we” in Galatians 3:23 and the “you” in Galatians 3:26 (ESV).

Galatians 3:23 reads, “Before faith came” (ESV). But in the Greek language it reads, “Before the faith” came. Paul is showing the difference between the place of the law before and after Christ (Galatians 3:24). So “the faith” most likely means Jesus Himself, not Christian faith.

Paul says the Jews were kept “under the law” before the coming of Christ. What does he mean by “under the law”? Compare Galatians 3:22, 23 with Romans 6:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9:20; Galatians 4:4, 5, 21; and Galatians 5:18.

Paul uses the wording “under the law” 12 times in his letters. It can have two different meanings.

1. “Under the law” as another way of salvation (Galatians 4:21). The

opponents in Galatia were trying to gain life-giving righteousness (holiness) by obedience. However, as Paul has already made clear, this is not possible (Galatians 3:21, 22). Paul will even point out later that, by desiring to be under the law, the Galatians were really refusing to accept Christ (Galatians 5:2–4).

2. “Under the law” as being judged to be guilty (Romans 6:14, 15). The law cannot forgive sin. For this reason, someone breaking this law leads him or her to being judged as guilty. All humans are in this condition. The law acts as a prison warden. The law locks up all who have broken the law and brought upon themselves the sentence of death. In tomorrow’s lesson, the use of the word *guard* (Galatians 3:23, NKJV) shows that this is what Paul means when he says “under the law” in this verse.

The Greek word *ennomos* is often translated “under the law.” But it really means “within the law.” In other words, it means following the rules of the law through union with Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). Instead, “the works of the law” means trying to keep the law apart from Christ. It is not possible to be justified (cleansed) in this way because only those who through faith are righteous (holy) will live (Galatians 3:11). This truth does not mean that the law is no good. It shows only that the law cannot give us eternal life. It is way too late for that.



The law acts as a prison warden, who locks up all who have broken the law and brought upon themselves a death sentence.

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 8

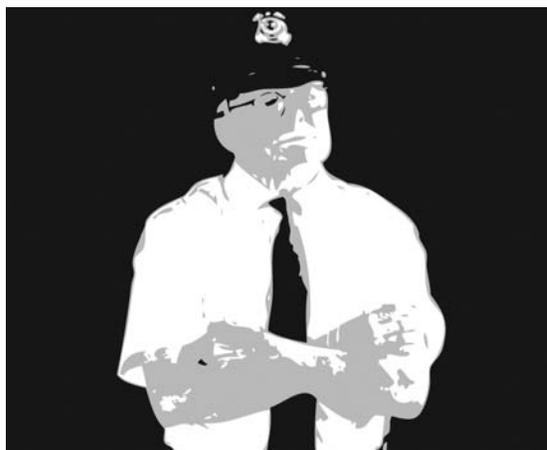
THE LAW AS OUR “GUARD” (Deuteronomy 7:12–24)

Paul gives two basic points about the law. The law does not remove God’s promise made to Abraham (Galatians 3:15–20). And the law is not opposed to the promise (Galatians 3:21, 22).

What role (part) does the law really play then? Paul writes that it was added “because of human sin” (Galatians 3:19, NIV). He makes this idea clearer by using three different words or wordings in connection to the law: *kept* (verse 23), *shut up* (verse 23), and *schoolmaster* (verse 24).

Read prayerfully and carefully Galatians 3:19–24. What is Paul saying about the law?

Most modern translations interpret (explain) Paul’s comments about the law in Galatians 3:19 in negative words. But the original Greek is not so negative. The Greek word translated as “kept” (verse 23) means “to guard.” It may be used in a negative way, as to “hold as hostage” or to “watch over” (2 Corinthians 11:32). But in the New Testament, the word has a more positive meaning, such as “protecting” or “keeping” (Philippians 4:7; 1 Peter 1:5). The same is true of the word translated as “shut up” (Galatians 3:23). It can be translated as: (1) “to close” (Genesis 20:18), (2) “to shut” (Exodus 14:3; Joshua 6:1; and Jeremiah 13:19), (3) “to enclose” (Luke 5:6), or (4) “to limit” (Romans 11:32). These examples show that this word can have positive or negative meanings.



The law also acts as a guard that watches over us.

How did the law (moral and ceremonial²) help the children of Israel?

2. moral and ceremonial (law)—God’s law had two parts: (1) the moral law is the Ten Commandments. They will continue forever. (2) The ceremonial law dealt with the animal sacrifices that represented Jesus’ future death. When Jesus died, the ceremonial law was not needed anymore.

Read Romans 3:1, 2; Deuteronomy 7:12–24; and Leviticus 18:20–30.

Paul can speak about the law in negative words (Romans 7:6; Galatians 2:19). But he also has many positive things to say about it (read Romans 7:12, 14; Romans 8:3, 4; and Romans 13:8). The law was not a curse that God put upon Israel. Instead, the law was to be a blessing. The Jewish system of sacrifice³ could not fully remove sin. But it pointed to the promised Messiah who could. Its laws also protected Israel from many of the sins of other civilizations in early Bible times. Paul's positive comments about the law in other parts of the Bible also show that it would be a mistake for us to understand his comments negatively.

Think of something good that is used the wrong way. For example, a drug created to heal a disease could be used by some people to get high. What examples have you seen in your own life of this principle (important rule)? How does our knowledge of this principle help us understand what Paul is saying here?

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 9

THE LAW AS OUR SCHOOLMASTER (Galatians 3:24)

In Galatians 3:23, Paul describes the law as a guard and protector. What example does Paul use in verse 24 to show this idea? What

does that mean?

The word translated as “schoolmaster” comes from the Greek word *paidagogos*. Some Bible versions translate it as “disciplinarian [a person who gives discipline]” (NRSV), “tutor [teacher]” (NKJV), or even “guardian” (ESV). But no single word fully can describe its meaning. The *paidagogos* was a slave in Roman society who was put in charge of his master's sons from the time they turned six or seven until they were grown up. The slave-turned-supervisor also was responsible for the sons' physical needs, such as preparing their baths, giving them food and clothes, and protecting them from any danger. He, too, was responsible for making sure the master's sons went to school and did their homework. He was expected to teach and practice principles of right living and to make sure that the boys learned and practiced them themselves as well.

Some slave-teachers must certainly have been kind as well as loved by the boys under them. But the common description of them in old-time books is that they were strict taskmasters. They made sure they had obedience through cruel threats and whipping.

Paul's description of the law as a strict teacher clearly shows his understanding of the role (work) of the law. The law was added to point out sin and to teach. The very nature of this task (work) means that the law also has a negative part. That is because it scolds and judges us as

3. system of sacrifice—the offering of the blood of animals by the Jewish priests for the sins of the people. The blood that was shed represented Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this system (set of beliefs and practices) was not needed.

sinner. But God uses the “negative” part of the law for our own good. This is because the negative part of the law brings us closer to Christ. In this way the law and the gospel both work together. God planned them to work together for our salvation.

“In this verse [Galatians 3:24], the Holy Spirit through Paul is speaking about the Ten Commandments. The law shows sin to us. And it causes us to feel our need of Christ and to turn to Him for pardon and peace by showing repentance⁴ toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 234.

When was the last time you compared your actions and words and thoughts to the law? Do it now. Compare them not just to the letter of the law but to the spirit too (Matthew 5:28; Romans 7:6). How well did you do? What does your answer tell you about Paul’s point in this letter?



Paul also described the law as a schoolmaster.

4. repentance—the act of feeling sorry for having sinned and then turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

5. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 10

THE LAW AND THE BELIEVER (Galatians 3:25)

Many have interpreted Paul’s comment in Galatians 3:25 as an excuse for not obeying the law. But this makes little sense because of Paul’s positive comments about the law in the other parts of the Bible.

What does Paul mean?

First, we are no longer under the law’s judgment (Romans 8:3). As believers, we are in Christ and enjoy the right of being under grace⁵ (Romans 6:14, 15). That gives us the freedom to serve Christ fully, without fear of being judged as guilty for mistakes we might make. This is what true freedom in the gospel is. This is very different from no longer having to obey the law. Some people claim that not obeying the law is “freedom” in Christ. But disobedience to the law is sin. And sin is anything but freedom (John 8:34).

According to Romans 8:1–3, what does it mean to be no longer judged as guilty by the law? How should this wonderful truth influence how we live?

When we are forgiven through Christ, our relationship to the law is now different. We are now called to live lives that are pleasing to God (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Paul compares this to walking in the Spirit (Galatians

5:18). This does not mean that God's law is no longer necessary for us. That was never the issue. How could it be when we have seen so clearly that the law describes sin?

Instead, the law is a copy of God's character.⁶ So, by obeying the law we just show His character. More than following just a set of rules, we follow the example of Jesus. He does for us what the law itself could never do. He writes the law on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). And He makes it possible for the righteous requirement of the law to be fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). So, through our relationship with Jesus, we have the power to obey the law as never before.

What is Paul saying in Romans 8:4? How have you seen this promise fulfilled in your own life? Why must salvation always be based on what Christ has done for us and nothing else?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 11

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "I am asked about the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial law and the Ten Commandments.

"Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish religion. The death of Abel was the result of Cain's refusing to accept God's plan in the school of obedience to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of slain lambs in the Jewish sanctuary [house of worship]

pointed to Christ. Now, Cain refused the shedding of blood, which symbolized [showed] the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was planned by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of the sanctuary's work as the schoolmaster to bring human sinners to look up to Christ as the Foundation of the whole Jewish religion.

"All who did service in connection with the sanctuary were being taught daily about the high-priestly work of Christ for all humans. This service was designed to create in every heart a love for the law of God, which is the law of His kingdom."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 233.

"The law of the Ten Commandments is not just a law that judges us as guilty. It also shows us God's mercy. It tells us not to do certain things, and it guarantees happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, the law develops in us pure character that will bring joy to us forever. To the people who obey, it is a wall of protection."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 235.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① We often struggle with the question of how we can overcome sin in our lives. What promises do we have in the Bible about victory over sin? How can we help make these promises real? At the same time, why must we be so careful to make sure

6. God's character—who God is; having and understanding the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.

that we put our full hope of salvation in Christ's victory for us?

② Many Christians claim that the law has been removed. These same

Christians will speak out against sin, which means that they really do not mean the law is not any good. So, what do they really mean when they say that the law is removed?