

LOSING MY RELIGION

"FOLLOW THE LEADER OF THE LAW" GALATIANS 3:15-25

This Week's Core Competency

Salvation by Grace – I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9, *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Legalism and *nomism* are two theological terms you should be familiar with, because Paul addresses both in his letter to the Galatians. Legalism maintains that salvation is gained, at least in part, by doing good works—more specifically, the works of the law. Nomism maintains that spiritual maturity is gained by doing good works—more specifically, the works of the law. Legalism pertains to justification; nomism to sanctification. Apparently Paul's opponents subscribed more or less to both. One commentator describes them this way: "Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians—or, more accurately, Christian Jews—who came from the Jerusalem church to Paul's churches in Galatia with a message stressing the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the rudiments of the cultic calendar, both for full acceptance by God [legalism] and as a proper Christian lifestyle [nomism]. Undoubtedly they presented their message as being theologically based and claimed to be only interested in Gentiles being fully integrated into the chosen people of Israel, and so full recipients of the blessing of the Abrahamic

Good works have always been valued more highly than faith.

— Martin Luther

covenant. Probably, as well, they claimed not to be opposing Paul but to be completing his message, and so bringing the Galatian Christians to perfection" (Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, *Galatians*, xcv). In a nutshell, Paul's opponents taught that Gentiles had to become Jews to be Christians, and then, once Christians, had to follow Jewish customs.

Paul alludes to both errors in Galatians 2. In verses 15-16 he rejects legalism, i.e., "that it was necessary to become a full proselyte to Judaism in order to stand justified before God at the final day of reckoning" (F. Thielman, "Law," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 538): "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." In verses 19-20 he rejects nomism, i.e., that it was necessary "to live under the yoke of the covenant at Sinai" (539): "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Paul goes on to debunk legalism in 3:1-18. In the first place, the Galatians received the Spirit by believing the gospel, not by observing the law (vv. 1-5). In the second place, scripture teaches that Abraham was justified by faith alone (vv. 6-9), and all those who rely on observing the law are under a curse (vv. 10-12). In fact, Christ redeemed them by dying on the cross, so that they might receive the

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promise of the Spirit, i.e., be justified, by faith (vv. 13-14). In the last place, the law was temporary. "Unlike the promise made to Abraham, which constituted a permanent covenant fulfilled in Christ, the Sinaitic covenant was established 'on account of transgressions' . . . Paul's purpose for comparing the Sinaitic covenant to a *pedagogue* in this passage is twofold: to emphasize its purpose of identifying and punishing sin and, at the same time to highlight its temporary nature" (538-39).

Then, the apostle goes on to debunk nomism in 3:19-4:7. His argument in 3:26-29, which is especially relevant, can be unpacked as follows: "Gal 3:26-29 focuses on being 'in Christ' and the new relationships that result from that status—new relationships spiritually ('sons of God,' 'clothed with Christ') and new relationships societally and culturally ('neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female'). Most importantly for this Galatians argument, Paul lays stress on the oneness that exists among 'all' who have responded to Christ 'through faith' and have been 'baptized into Christ.' For the ultimate answer to the Judaizers' call for Gentile Christians to observe Torah is not in setting out the God-intended purpose and functions of the Mosaic law, important as that discussion in 3:19-25 may be, but to assert that 'in Christ' God has done something new that puts an end to the old . . . Being 'under the law' (the theme of 3:19-25) has been replaced in the divine economy by being 'in Christ' (the theme of 3:26-29)" (Longenecker, 159).

There are many in the church today who speak against legalism, wholeheartedly proclaiming that salvation is by faith in Christ alone. However, at the same time, many of them hold firmly to nomism, wholeheartedly proclaiming that Christian maturity is attained by obeying commandments, perhaps related to the law, to requirements placed on disciples, or to their particular community's standards. They fail to fully appreciate the full import of what it means to be "in Christ."

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Galatians 3:15-25

15 Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. 17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. 18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into

effect through angels by a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "brothers" in v. 15.
- * Box "just as" and "so" indicating *comparison* in v. 15.
- * Circle "covenant" in vv. 15, 17.
- * Underline "promise/s/ed" in vv. 16, 18 (2x), 19, 21, 22.
- * Circle "seed/s" in vv. 16 (3x), 19.
- * Circle "inheritance" in v. 18.
- * Box "if" vv. 18, 21 and "then" in vv. 18, 21 indicating *conditions*.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 18, 22.
- * Bracket "because of transgressions" in v. 19.
- * Highlight v. 20.
- * Underline "absolutely not!" in v. 21.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 22.
- * Underline "put in charge" in v. 24.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul's *tone* with his readers changes in 3:15. How so?
2. Explain the use of *comparison* in verse 15.
3. God's promises to Abraham extend to Christ. So what? (See v. 17.)
4. Describe the relationship between "law" and "promise."
5. Why was the law "added" to the promise?
6. Verse 20 implies that the law is *inferior* to the promise. How so?
7. If the law cannot "impart life," what good is it?
8. Paul uses "prisoner/s" (vv. 22, 23) to describe "the whole world" before Christ came. Explain what that means.
9. **Discussion:** Paul calls the law "our guardian" (*paidagogos*, cf., Eng. "pedagogue"). The NIV renders the word "was put in charge." Talk about the sense in which that was true.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Galatians 3:15-25, is best divided into two parts: 1) verses 15-18, in which Paul argues that the bilateral Mosaic covenant did not "set aside" or "do away" (v. 17) with the unilateral Abrahamic covenant; and 2) verses 19-25, in which Paul explains that the law was "added because of transgressions" (v. 19) and to serve as our "guardian" to "lead us to Christ" (v. 24).

As for part one (vv. 1-18), Paul begins by comparing the Abrahamic covenant to a human covenant. It's difficult to know with any degree of certainty whether he is basing his analogy on Greek or Roman jurisprudence or more loosely on a combination of both (see note), but fortunately, it matters little as far as the point of the analogy is concerned. The apostle's point is this: "when two people agree on a matter and sign an agreement, no one can break it or add anything to it" (v. 15 GNT). In the same way, no one can "set aside" or "add to" the promises "spoken to Abraham." What's more, the promises made to Abraham extend to his singular "seed," Jesus Christ. Paul explains the significance of his somewhat surprising interpretation in verse 17, which begins: "What I mean is this." The bilateral Mosaic covenant introduced much later on Mt. Sinai did not do away with or add to the unilateral Abrahamic covenant established much earlier in Canaan. One commentator explains: "If the promises made to Abraham were made only to Abraham and his immediate descendants, they might well be considered fulfilled even before the giving of the law; the law would simply inaugurate a new era in God's dealings with mankind. But the promises were not fulfilled in the period before the giving of the law, Paul argues. They were embodied in the coming Redeemer through whom the fullness of blessing was to come. That Redeemer was Christ. Consequently, God's blessing of justification by grace through faith spans the ages; and the law, whatever else one might think of it, must be seen to have served only an interim function" (James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:462-63). Moreover, if the promise remains unaffected by the introduction of the law—and it does—then receiving the benefits stipulated in the promise depends on faith, not on works.

As for part two (vv. 19-25), Paul goes on to explain the purpose and function of the law.

According to another commentator, these verses can be divided into three parts. "Gal 3:19-25 is structured in three parts: a major question that asks regarding the purpose and function of the Mosaic law; a supplementary question that asks regarding the relation of the law to the promises of God; and then a final paragraph that speaks directly to the issue being debated within the churches of Galatia. The two questions are rhetorical in nature and similar in form: 'Why, then, the law?' (v. 19) and 'Is the law, then, opposed to the promises of God?' (v. 21). They arise from Paul's put-down of legalism in 3:1-18. More importantly, they are the questions that cry out for an answer, if the Judaizers' call for a nomistic Christian lifestyle is to be dealt with effectively" (Longnecker, 137). Paul answers the first question with a resounding, "Absolutely not!" (v. 21) explaining that while the law could not impart life, it could reveal sin *as sin*, which it did. And as a result, the whole world is a prisoner of sin, incarcerated with no way of escape until Christ comes.

Likewise, he answers the second using the same metaphor—prisoner. This time the whole world is a prisoner of the law until faith comes. Then he explains that during the time before Christ, the law served as "our guardian to lead us to Christ" (v. 24 ESV) or as the NIV puts it, the law "was *put in charge* to lead us to Christ." One commentator describes the role of the "guardian" this way: "The term is *paidagogos*, which means 'a child-custodian' or 'child-attendant. The pedagogue was a slave employed by wealthy Greeks or Romans to have responsibility for one of the children of the family. He had charge of the child from about the years six to sixteen and was responsible for watching over his behavior wherever he went and for conducting him to and from school. The pedagogue did not teach. . . . Paul's point is that *this responsibility ceased when the child entered into the fullness of his position as a son*, becoming an acknowledged adult by the formal rite of adoption by his father" (Boice, 10:467, italics added). The law functioned like a *paidagogos* for one specific purpose, "to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (v. 24). Now that the law has served its purpose and we are adult "sons" (v. 26), we are no longer under its supervision.

The Message of the Passage

Righteousness comes by faith not by works because the Abrahamic covenant was not set aside by the Mosaic covenant, which was added much later to serve as our "guardian," so that what God promised might be given through faith in Christ.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 15 **brothers** "Brothers' introduces a change of tone on the apostle's part, in contrast to the somewhat distant and formal beginning of chapter 3 (cf. 4:31; 6:1)" (Boice, 10:461).

v. 15 **just as, so** The adverb [*homos*] "should be understood as setting up a comparison between [*anthropou*] and what follows, and so understood to mean: as with a human covenant, 'so it is in this case' of God's covenant with Abraham" (Longenecker, 127).

v. 15 **covenant** The Gk. term *diatheke* commonly meant "testament" or "will," rather than "covenant," but the LXX regularly rendered the Heb. term *berit* ("covenant") by *diatheke* (270 of 286 occurrences), which likely influenced Paul's use of the term (128). What's more, since Paul is discussing the Abrahamic covenant in vv. 16-18, "covenant" seems preferable in this context (The NET Bible, 31^{tn} on Gal 3:15). Whether Paul has Greek or Roman jurisprudence in mind is debated (see discussion in F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGNT, 170-71; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT, 154-55; Longenecker, 128-30; W. M. Ramsay, *Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 349-75). "Whatever the precise background of the human analogy, Paul's point is plain: even a human legal settlement is irrevocable in nature" (Fung, 155).

v. 16 **seed** "Paul is simply pointing out that the singular word—'seed' rather than 'children,' 'descendants,' or some such plural word—is appropriate, inasmuch as Israel had always believed that the ultimate messianic blessing would come through a single individual" (Boice, 463). "It seems that Paul is here invoking a corporate solidarity understanding of the promise to Abraham wherein the Messiah, as the true descendant of Abraham and the true representative of the nation, is seen as the true 'seed' of Abraham—as are, of course, also the Messiah's own, as v. 29 insists" (Longenecker, 132).

v. 17 **430 years** "A third and perhaps best view is that the period began with the final confirmation of the covenant to Jacob (given in Gen. 46:1-4). Accordingly the 430 years went from the end of one era (the Age of Promise) [1875 B.C.] to the beginning of another (the Age of Law). [1446 B.C.] This seems to fit best with Exodus 12:40. (Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6, in referring to the sojourn in Egypt as 400 years, may be using rounded figures)" (Donald K. Campbell, "Galatians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 599).

v. 18 **inheritance** "The 'inheritance' (v. 18; cf. v. 29; 4:1, 7; 5:21) refers to what God promised to Abraham and his descendants, including justification by faith implicit in blessing. Reception of this did not depend on obedience to the Law, but God guaranteed to provide it nonetheless. The idea of inheritance dominates much of the discussion in the following chapters" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Galatians," 2015 ed., 41, www.soniclight.com).

v. 19 **transgressions** "The phrase 'because of transgressions' may mean either that the law was given to bring about a knowledge of sin (cf. Rom 3:20) by identifying it as transgression before God (cf. Rom 4:15; 5:13; 7:7), or that the law was given to increase and multiply sin (cf. Rom 5:20). Both the immediate context and Paul's usual way of speaking about the function of the law favor a cognitive interpretation, that the law was given to bring about a consciousness of sin in sin-hardened humanity" (Longenecker, 138). "The law reveals sin *as sin*. Hence, it may be said that it is the law that turns sin into transgression—transgression of law—and even accentuates it (Rom. 5:20). In this act, law performs the function showing man's need of a Savior" (Boice, 465).

v. 22, 23 **prisoner/s** Paul refers to people as prisoners of sin (v. 22) and prisoners of the law (v. 23). "The positive aspect of the law's function is stated with the help of the figure of a jail sentence, with Scripture as the magistrate, 'all men' (NASB) as the prisoners, and sin as the jailer who carries out the sentence . . . God, speaking through the Scriptures, locks up all men under the condemnation of sin, providing them with no possibility of escape; and his purpose in doing so is stated in v. 22b . . . The imagery of imprisonment, repeated from v. 22 and reinforced here [v. 23] by the synonymous figure of custody, emphasizes mankind's state of confinement under law: it was law which made all people prisoners, and it was in being under law that the confinement consisted. It is noteworthy that whereas in v. 22 all were prisoners of sin, here they are prisoners of law. That state of confinement under law was intended to last until the appointed time of the arrival of the faith that was to be revealed—until, that is, faith should 'appear on the scene . . . or become operative' as the newly opened way of salvation" (Fung, 164-65, 168).

v. 24 **put in charge** "The law was our guardian" (ESV). "The [*paidagogos*], though usually a slave, was an important figure in ancient patrician households, being charged with the supervision and conduct of one or more sons in the family. He was distinguished from the [*didaskalos*], for he gave no formal instruction but administered the directives of the father in a custodial manner, though, of course, indirectly he taught by the supervision he gave and the discipline he administered" (Longenecker, 148).

Family Time

Parents, our summer series in *PantegoKids* is called **True or False?** Like the adults, we will be studying the book of Galatians to discover how to live out true faith. *Our kids' lessons, however, will not textually align each week with adult teaching. Core competencies will also likely be different. We will be memorizing Galatians 5:22-26.*

This is the second week we will focus on the fruit of the Spirit. We will be discovering how to live out peace and patience. Summertime is a great time for us to be studying these fruit. The slow days of summer can be a breeding ground for bored and impatient kids! Here are a few ideas to cure summer boredom. (1) Have an A to Z scavenger hunt where you find an item that starts with each letter. (2) Make a giant slip and slide using a tarp and some shaving cream or liquid soap. (3) Create an obstacle course in the front yard. Turn on the sprinklers as you run through it! (4) Camp out in the backyard. Cook hotdogs over the fire pit, pop popcorn, make s'mores. Tell camp stories! Summer is a great time to instill spiritual truths and make memories that your kids will treasure for a lifetime. Kids will learn how to live out the fruit of the Spirit when they see important adults in their lives doing so. Have fun making disciples of your little ones!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ps 37:1-11

1. What does the Lord do when you delight yourself in Him?
2. Fill in the blanks. "But the _____ will inherit the land and enjoy great _____." v 11
3. What does it mean to be meek?

What Do You Think

Read verses 3 and 4 again. How can you delight yourself in the Lord?

What R U Going To Do

Choose to do a project this summer that requires patience. You can plant flowers from seeds or work a hard puzzle. Waiting for these projects to be done will help you practice patience, which is a valuable fruit to learn! As you work on your projects thank God for helping you grow in Him!

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Peace - I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

Memory Verse

Galatians 5:25 - *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-seven years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



8001 Anderson Blvd.
Ft. Worth, TX 76120
1-866-PANTEGO
Fax 817-275-6403
www.pantego.org

The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.