

Grace Didn't Die
The Purpose of the Mosaic Law
Galatians 3:19-29

Introduction: The Law that God gave the Jewish people after He rescued them from Egypt might very well be the most misunderstood and misapplied part of the entire Bible. Despite clear and obvious teachings in the New Testament on the Mosaic Law, church history is filled with testimonies of movements that repackaged the same misapplications of the law and recirculated them back into the life of the church.

For instance, in 2001, a judge in Alabama made news over his fight to display the Ten Commandments in his courthouse. No matter the level of actual obedience to the Ten Commandments the founding fathers of our nation had, suggesting that the teachings of the Bible did not heavily influence those who wrote the United States Constitution is as fundamentally false as suggesting West Africans were not originally brought to the United States and forced to suffer as slaves.

All the colleges in the United States during the colonial era were founded and run by different denominations of the Christian faith, and required a Biblical education to graduate. This was not only true of the colleges the founding fathers attended, but most every primary and secondary school they could have attended would have had Biblical education as a part of their curriculum, if in no other way, passages they were given from the Bible to practice their reading skills.

Therefore, some embraced the judge's effort to display the Ten Commandments because they wanted to push back against the dangerous ideology that historical displays of anything of a religious nature or context that influenced the writing of our nation's Constitution and laws should be forbidden from public acknowledgment and sight. I'm one who totally opposes that kind of thinking as well. As such, I totally agree with protecting the right of the government to display examples of what influenced its formation, no matter if that historical display is deemed religious or secular, offensive or non-offensive! History is what it is, and must be acknowledged and studied as such, or you end up with an insecure fascist society that turns the state and the head of state into a god.

However, a large portion of those who embraced the Alabama judge's effort to display the Ten Commandments in his courthouse did so because they felt a nation that obeyed the Ten Commandments would receive the blessings of God. The concept has been widely popularized over the last 100 years in conservative evangelical churches; that is, if a nation obeys the Law that God gave Moses for Israel, then that nation will also receive the blessings that God promised for Israel. Consequently, it is also suggested that nations that do not obey the laws God gave Moses for Israel will receive the punishment the Law promised Israel for its disobedience. Over the last 100 years, pastors, authors, and politicians have stated more times than could ever be counted that America's prosperity and prominence are because we obeyed the laws God gave Moses for Israel, or at least the spirit of those laws. As such, if America doesn't soon return to that effort, then our prosperity and prominence will be taken away.

Now as appealing as that may sound, it is both historically and Biblically incorrect on every level! Even the Bible itself confronts this idea. In the Book of Job, Job himself testifies to the people he knows who were prospering even though they were rejecting the Law of God. Ironically, the greatest centuries of prosperity and power for the Roman Empire were all while it was an officially pagan empire. But it wasn't just the Roman Empire, a basic study of world history demonstrates all kinds of empires like the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the list goes on and on, of totally pagan empires that dominated and prospered far more than anybody else in the world, and did so significantly longer than the United States has even existed.

Finally, the idea that the United States was at any time a nation of people that obeyed the summaries of the Mosaic Law known as the Ten Commandments, much less the totality of the Law given to Moses, especially as Jesus explained what that obedience actually looks like, is absurd. However, even if your historical perspective of the people of our nation has been romanticized into believing the majority of the citizens of the United States at some point in the past lived their lives in obedience to God's law, you still have the very real problem to solve of the clear teachings of the New Testament that true obedience to the Mosaic law was impossible, not to mention, the very clear teaching in the Bible that The Law and its promises were given to Moses for the Hebrew people and no one else! The Law makes no provision to be transferable; its only fulfillable. Attempting to apply the Law that God gave Moses for the Hebrew people to anything or anyone other than who and what it was given for, would be like purchasing a ticket for a seat on an American Airlines flight, then giving that ticket to a friend and telling him he can use it to get a cabin on a Cruise ship somewhere ... it doesn't apply!!

But, as I previously stated, the trend of using the Mosaic Law and its promises in a totally incorrect way is not new. People have been taking what God gave Moses for the Hebrew people and misapplying it for thousands of years, including a sizable group of people in the early church who were insisting that Gentiles (non-Jews) who committed their life to Christ needed to also commit themselves to being students and followers of the Law God gave Moses so that they could grow in their relationship with God, have spiritual power, be blessed by God with prosperity, and ultimately be a true blessing to God.

The book of the Bible we are studying is a letter Paul wrote to the churches in a Roman province called Galatia. Its central purpose is to keep those believers from making the very same mistake the Judaizers were making; a mistake so many evangelical Christian conservatives in America are confidently repeating in more and more creative ways still today. Whether it's in politics or church doctrine or practices, studying the Mosaic Law certainly informs the church about God and His story to redeem us through Jesus Christ, but it in no way should form the doctrines and practices of the church. As such, chapters three and four in the book of Galatians, are not the exclusive passages in the Bible that deal with the subject, but they are perhaps the most focused and thorough passages on the purpose of the Law that God gave to Moses for the Jewish people, and the error of ever trying to treat its laws, promises or purposes as anything other than what has been entirely fulfilled and completely replaced by Jesus.

So far in our study of chapter three, we saw in verses 1 through 6 that any religious approach to a relationship with God is foolish stupidity. In verses 7 through 18, we saw how Jesus and His Gospel are better than anything the Law offers. In verses 19-29, Paul makes it clear what the purpose of the Law was in the first place. After literally calling people fools for wanting to follow the Law, some might think Paul is saying the Law had no purpose, but that's not true. God gave the Law to the Hebrew people for precise reasons, a reason that helps us understand just how awesome it is that Christ fulfilled and replaced the Law with something better!

Proposition: Galatians 3:19-29 gives us three reasons God gave the Hebrew people the Mosaic Law.

Paul's first reason why God gave the Hebrew people the Mosaic law was ...

(1) The Hebrew people refused to live by faith. (3:19-20)

A. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

B. Let me work backwards through this passage. First, what does he mean that the Law, “was put in place through angels by an intermediary. 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one”?

1. “The New Testament refers three times to the interposition of angels in the giving of the law. In Acts 7:53 the fact is mentioned in order to enhance the authority of the law. In Hebrews 2:2 it is contrasted with God’s revelation in His Son. Here it is contrasted with God’s familiar intercourse with Abraham in which He spoke to Abraham, calling him His friend. At Sinai, the law was given through two intermediaries, angels and Moses. ... The promise was given direct to Abraham, the law through two intermediaries, angels and Moses.”¹

2. “A mediator implies a covenant between two parties both of whom have responsibilities, facts true of the Mosaic Covenant. On the other hand, God is One, that is, the “promise” (v. 19) was unilateral and was given to man directly without a mediator, God alone having responsibility for fulfilling it.”²

¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 3, pp. 103–106). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

² Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Galatians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 599). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. "In this verse Paul shows that the promise is superior to the law, for the former was given directly from God to Abraham, whereas the latter was given to Israel by God through a mediator. ... Thus the law is a contract between two parties. God gives the law through a mediator Moses, and man is obligated to obey it. God will bless man if he obeys, and will punish man if he disobeys. But the promise of free grace is not in the nature of a contract between two parties. God acts alone and directly when He promises salvation to anyone who will receive it by the out-stretched hand of faith. There are no good works to be done by the sinner in order that he might merit that salvation. Grace is unconditional. There are no strings tied to it. God is One, that is, He acts alone without a mediator in respect to the promise of grace. Therefore, grace is superior to law. In the case of the former, God spoke directly to Abraham. In the case of the latter, He spoke to Israel through a mediator, Moses. The dignity of the law is thus seen to be inferior to that of the promise."³

4. The point being that the Law, which was added to what God was doing with His people, was never equal to the promise, and as such it was inferior to the promise God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the promise that as such was handed down to every descendant of Jacob; which was that through them God would send one who would bless the world!
5. Whenever a promise is made, the ones receiving the promise must then decide whether they believe it or not; they must determine whether they believe the one making the promise is capable of fulfilling the promise (that is, they are capable of doing what they promised to do) and trustworthy enough to do it. Therefore, in Genesis 15:6 we see Abraham finally believe both about God, that God was capable and trustworthy, and as such Abraham finally came to faith. Faith is the response God expects of us!
6. Ok, what does this have to do with verse 19? Well, let's keep working backwards,

C. **"19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made"**

1. The promise is "the offspring," that is, Jesus, and that Abraham and his descendants would be the nation through which God would send His Son. As such, Galatians 3:19 makes it clear that the purpose of the law would be fulfilled when the promised offspring (Jesus) came through the promised people (the descendants of Abraham).

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 106–107). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

2. So, the purpose of the Law was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, but this still doesn't tell us why God gave the Law. So, let's go backward some more,

D. "19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions,

1. What transgression is Paul talking about? Well, it's what we've been discussing. God gave the Hebrew people a promise, which demands a response of faith, the only response God ever accepts. But the Hebrew people transgressed in that they constantly rebelled against God, not just in a moral and ethical sense, but first and foremost in their faith that God was capable of doing what He promised, and second, that God could be trusted to do what He promised!
2. Think about it for just a minute. After more than 400 years in captivity, God demonstrates His power and His wrath on those who oppose Him in such a way that it convinces Pharaoh to let the Hebrew people go from Egyptian slavery. But God's demonstration of His glory, His capability, and trustworthiness didn't end there.

Note: 21 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. (Exodus 13:21-22)

3. Later, after all that God had done, when Pharaoh showed up with his army, the people panicked and immediately questioned God's capability and trustworthiness. Nonetheless, God demonstrated His glory by parting the Red Sea, letting the Hebrews cross on dry land, and then swallowing up Pharaoh's army with the sea as they pursued the Hebrew people.

Note: 10 When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. 11 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." (Exodus 14:10-14)

4. Soon after, the people started questioning God's capability and trustworthiness to supply them with meat and bread. Once again, God provided.

Note: 2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." ... 8 And Moses said [to all the people of Israel], "... Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD." ... 10 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ... 13 In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. 14 And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat." (Exodus 16:2-15)

5. Now, you would think all that would lead the people of Israel to have faith in God's capability and trustworthiness, but in the next chapter, the people question God's capability and trustworthiness to supply water. And once again, God provided, proving yet again that He is both capable and trustworthy!

Note: 1 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" 4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the

people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the LORD by saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)

- E. The point I'm trying to make here is that the Hebrew people constantly quit trusting in God and instead want to just go back to Egypt! However, God promised to form a nation through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and through that nation He promised to send one who would bless the world (Jesus). Therefore, because the people refused to follow God by faith, he instead shackled them to the promise so that they couldn't go back to Egypt; that shackle was the Law God gave to Moses. In Exodus chapter 32, after Moses had already declared some of the Law to them, they still decided to build and worship a Golden Calf, but now the consequence was severe. The Levites were ordered to kill some of the Hebrew people, and as such, 3,000 men were killed. After that, the Lord sent a plague, and we have no idea how many died, but it was a lot! They could have walked with God by faith into the promise, but now they would be drug to it by the Law and its consequences and in this way the Law was added to their relationship. God was never not going to fulfill His promise, but because they refused to trust Him, he brought something into the relationship as a consequence, not a blessing; a curse, not a reward; something that, because of the human nature to sin, would result in inevitable suffering rather than rejoicing.
- F. This fact comes out even more in the next two reasons.

The second reason Paul gives us why God gave the Hebrew people the Mosaic law was ...

(2) The Law proved religion of any kind can never free you from sin. (3:21-23)

- A. **21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.**
 - 1. The "promise" is Jesus. Is the law then contrary to the promise, that is, did God do something that worked against the promise of Jesus? This is straightforward. If any law, not just the Mosaic Law ("The Law"), was capable of bringing salvation, then it could be said that God had offered two plans, only one of which was Christ, and as such, God would have competing ways to be saved. But there has never been a competing way for salvation; God's plan has always been BY GRACE through FAITH, and that GRACE is bestowed through the work of Christ in His death and resurrection.

2. Furthermore, the Law was never even the condition the Hebrew people had to meet for the promise of Christ to come to pass; if that were the case, the world would still be waiting for the birth of Christ! The Law was brought into God's plan to use the Hebrew people because of their refusal to follow Him by faith. Therefore, God had to drag them not just to the land of the promise but to the promise Himself—Jesus!
3. Remember, eternal life is knowing God (John 17). That was lost in the Garden, and nobody could get us back to it until the promise (Jesus) took us back in (GRACE!). The Law was NEVER intended to be that plan. It was something God "added" because of their sin as He took them down the road of His plan to bring us redemption! The Law was not a path to the Garden Adam got us all kicked out of, it was the tool by which God drug the Hebrew people into the promised land where the promised one, who is the way into the Garden, would come just as God promised!
4. Paul goes on ...

B. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin (to be under sin is to be incapable of living in fellowship with God), so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

1. When he writes of the coming of faith, he is not saying faith didn't exist before Jesus. He's already told us in Galatians 3:6 that when Abraham finally had faith in God in Genesis 15:6, God responded by declaring Abraham righteous. In Romans 4, Paul makes it clear that God has only ever saved by Grace through Faith.
2. However, what Paul is talking about here is that the curse of sin could not be overcome until the coming of Christ, and as such, the promise of a personal relationship with God, that is, being restored to what we had in the Garden, could not come. As such, no religion, including the one God ordered the people of Israel to follow, was capable of leading them out of the curse of sin and into a relationship with God and back into the Garden.
3. Therefore, because the purpose of the law was never salvation, it left the Hebrew people in the condition they were already in (sin), but did so in a more defined and transparent way. There was no hope in it, but rather for 1500 years it kept them bound to sin because their effort was in something that never had freedom from sin as its purpose or possibility! Thus, the Law imprisoned everything under sin. It demanded obedience to something without the intention of freeing them from that which inhibited their faithfulness to the Lord.

Paul's third reason why God gave the Hebrew people the Mosaic law builds on the previous two ...

(3) The Law kept the Hebrew people from abandoning God's promise to bring forth The Savior of the world! (3:24-29)

A. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

1. In the previous verses, he described the law as a prison that consequently kept them locked up in a hopeless religious cycle that could never provide them with freedom from sin. However, Paul then shows here that the Law was also a method of bringing them to the one who is salvation—Jesus!
2. **“The [guardian] here was not a “schoolmaster” (KJV) but a slave to whom a son was committed from age six or seven to puberty. These slaves were severe disciplinarians and were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. This was like the Law’s function until Christ came and people could be justified by faith in Him. It is better then to understand that the Law did not lead us to Christ but that it was the disciplinarian until Christ came. Thus the reign of Law has ended for faith in Christ has delivered believers from the protective custody of the prison and the harsh discipline of the [guardian].”⁴**

B. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

1. Going backwards again, Paul makes it clear through Christ, not the Law, that God has fulfilled the promise to Abraham that **“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3b).**
2. **““For all of you who were baptized into Christ”** This is not an emphasis on baptism as a means to salvation, for that is exactly the argument the Judaizers were using in connection with circumcision. Christian baptism is a sign of the work of the Spirit which is mentioned earlier in verses 2, 3, 5, 14 (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13). To be baptized in/by/with the Spirit was a biblical metaphor for becoming a Christian. Baptism was simply the opportunity for a public confession of faith in Christ and an accompanying symbol of an

⁴ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Galatians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 599–600). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

inner change. To make water baptism a precondition for salvation is to become a neo-Judaizer!”⁵

3. **“3:29 descendants of Abraham** Faith is what makes a person a descendant of Abraham—not ethnicity or circumcision. Those who have aligned themselves with Abrahamic faith are not obligated to become circumcised or to observe the law, both of which came later. Paul sees the work of Christ as the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham (vv. 7–9; Gen 12:1–3).”⁶
4. “The reference cannot be to water baptism, for that never put a believing sinner in Christ. The Greek word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) means “to put or place into.” The words *put on* are from *enduno* (ένδυνω). The latter is used in the LXX, of the act of clothing one’s self with strength, righteousness, glory, salvation. The word does not convey the idea of putting on a mask or playing the part of another. It refers to the act in which one enters into actual relationship with some one else. Chrysostom says, “If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put Him on, having the Son in thyself and being made like unto Him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature.”⁷
5. The Law separated Jews from Gentiles to form the clarity of an identifiable nation of Abraham’s descendants that God promised to send the one, the Messiah, the eternal Son of God, who would be the sacrificial lamb to satisfy the wrath of God on our sin. The law even gave privileges to men over women. In the Law, men received their father’s inheritance, in Christ, men and women receive the same inheritance—the Kingdom of GOD!
6. Therefore, when Christ fulfilled the promise, the door was opened for all to enter a relationship with God, one that the Law never provided. Christ also did what the Law by design did not; He united people from every tribe and tongue as one family! Ironically, the Judaizers were teaching the Gentile followers of Christ that they had to follow the Law to be one with them, even though the Law wasn’t capable of accomplishing that task. But here Paul makes it clear that the promise to Abraham was not fulfilled by The Law, nor could it ever be, but rather by Christ, and as such, all who are in Christ are the family of God regardless of their ethnicity, societal status, or gender.
7. Which then takes us back into verses 25 and 26.

C. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

⁵ Utey, R. J. (1997). [Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians](#) (Vol. Volume 11, p. 38). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

⁶ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Ga 3:28–29). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁷ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 111–112). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

1. The guardian was the Law of Moses that kept Israel intact as an identifiable nation of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob until the promised one, Jesus, came. As such, the purpose of the law has been fulfilled, and we can now be sons and daughters of God. The metaphor is huge. Those raised by a guardian had a much stronger relationship with the guardian than with their own parents. In some instances, they may not have even lived in the same house as their parents. However, the guardian is now gone; as such, we have moved from being sons and daughters living separated from their Father to sons and daughters who are in a full relationship with God!
2. Now, here is where we need to make something very clear. Notice Paul states very plainly that the relationship we have with God is as sons and daughters, meaning there is still an authority in the relationship, and that authority is God Himself. We are in a family relationship with God where He is the parent, and we are the children. Where am I going with that? Well, let's go right to the challenge.

Challenge: Faith doesn't contradict obedience; it runs to it. We are not saved to live according to the Mosaic Law; however, are you using faith as a justification to rebel against God and, as such, live in sin rather than obedience to your heavenly Father?

I have been criticized throughout my preaching ministry for giving people a reason to sin, that is, by teaching that Christ fulfilled and replaced the Mosaic Law; some suggest that I'm teaching that there is no law. However, I've always considered the criticism a compliment because Paul was accused of the same thing. The criticism stems from a lack of understanding of what the New Testament teaches about the Mosaic Law and what the New Testament teaches about the New Covenant in Christ! We are not saved from obeying God, but rather, saved to obey God! The Law could not do that, because it had no power to change our rebellious hearts, even with its consequences and rewards.

But Christ did what the Law was not intended to do. He satisfied the wrath of God on our sin, overcame the curse, and made us worthy of a relationship with God not as His neighbors, nor as His peers, but as His children; which necessarily means that we not only have access into a relationship with God but we are adopted into a relationship with Him as our Father and as such our supreme authority. The Gospel teaches us that we are even spiritually brought to life so that we now have a desire to love and obey God as our Father; that He plants within us a longing to bask in His love; a passion to live His life, something that was not present with us until Christ regenerated us (Romans 3).

We are going to talk more about this in chapter 5, so I just want to say at this point that nothing about our freedom from the Mosaic Law leads us into sin, but quite the opposite. His grace leads us to repentance and life with Him, to following Him, to knowing Him, and to obeying Him through faith—the very thing the Israelites constantly abandoned and the Law never resolved!

Therefore, if you are using grace as a reason to rebel from God like the Hebrew people did in Exodus, then you need to know the relationship you are in is with sin, and sin leads to death. Repent and run back to a relationship with your Father, and watch what only He can do as He assures you of His love and invites you into the joy of living in submission to Him. And listen, because of Jesus, you don't have to run far, He's right there with you!

APPENDIX

Interestingly, many of the commentators I read insist on making more of Galatians 3:19 than the verse itself does. Even some translations take the liberty to add answers to the text that the Greek text clearly doesn't contain.

The Bible translations committed to translation instead of interpretation are unanimous in how verse 19 should be read. Below are ten translations committed to a literal translation of the Greek text. They all agree that the law God gave Moses was **BECAUSE** of the already present sinful condition of the people. A sinful condition that proved itself over and over before the giving of The Law and even during the giving of The Law, in that while Moses was meeting with God, they were building a golden calf.

- (1) **19** Why, then, the law? on account of the transgressions it was added, till the seed might come to which the promise hath been made, having been set in order through messengers in the hand of a mediator – (Youngs Literal Translation)
- (2) **19** Wherefore then serveth ye lawe? The lawe was added because of transgression (tyll the seed cam to which ye promes was made) and it was ordeyned by angels in ye honde of a mediator. (Tyndale)
- (3) **19** Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary. (Revised Standard Version)
- (4) **19** Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. (New Revised Standard Version)
- (5) **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. (New King James Version)
- (6) **19** Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. (NIV)
- (7) **19** Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. (NASV)

- (8) **19** Why then the law? It was added on account of transgressions, until the descendant should come to whom it had been promised, having been ordered through angels by the hand of a mediator. (Lexham)
- (9) **19** Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (KJV)
- (10) **19** Why the law then? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. [The law] was ordered through angels by means of a mediator. (Holeman Christian Standard)

Yet somehow, paraphrased/commentator style interpretations of the Greek text take the passage somewhere the Greek text itself doesn't take us.

- (1) **19** What, then, was the purpose of the Law? It was added in order to show what wrongdoing is, and it was meant to last until the coming of Abraham's descendant, to whom the promise was made. The Law was handed down by angels, with a man acting as a go-between. (Good News Translation)
- (2) **19** The purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. Obviously this law was not a firsthand encounter with God. It was arranged by angelic messengers through a middleman, Moses. (The Message)

Note: This doesn't even align with what Paul clearly states elsewhere in chapter 3 in that The Law wasn't given for the purpose of salvation, yet, The Message still associates the law as a way of salvation.

- (3) **19** So what was the law for? It was given to show that the wrong things people do are against God's will. And it continued until the special descendant, who had been promised, came. The law was given through angels who used Moses for a mediator to give the law to people. (New Century Version)
- (4) **19** Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. (New Living Translation)

So, where in the world do commentators and Biblical paraphrases get this idea that 3:19 says the Law was given to inform the Hebrew people that they were sinners and that, as such, without it, they wouldn't know they were rebelling against God? It's not at all implied by the Greek text in Galatians 3:19, so why are they adding it to something that has nothing to do with it?

At the heart of the debate is Romans 7:7, which states, **“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”” (Romans 7:7)** From here people teach that a person cannot know they are a sinner apart from the Mosaic Law, and thus the Law must still be a key component in the teaching of the Gospel. However, this interpretation of Romans 7 doesn’t agree with Paul’s own assessment in the previous six verses of Romans 7, nor does it agree with what Paul very clearly stated in chapter two,

14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:14-16)

The fact of the matter is, we can know we are rebelling against God without the Law of Moses. However, the Law did increase that opportunity to sin, by not only increasing the quantity of what God called rebellion against Him (**“Now the law came in to increase the trespass” (Romans 3:20)**) but also the consequences. Things that once had no consequence now did! In speaking of Romans 7:7

“The *existence* of this it did not need the law to reveal to him; for even the heathens recognized and wrote of it. But the dreadful nature and desperate power of it the law alone discovered—in the way now to be described.”⁸

“This probably means both that he had come to recognize the gravity of sin, because the law unmask and exposes it as rebellion against God, and that he had been brought under conviction of sin by it. Second, the law provokes sin. Sin establishes within us a base or foothold by means of the commandments that provoke us. This provocative power of the law is a matter of everyday experience. Ever since Adam and Eve, human beings have always been enticed by forbidden fruit. The real culprit is not the law but sin, which is hostile to God’s law. We cannot blame the law for proclaiming God’s will. Sin twists the function of the law from revealing, exposing and condemning sin into encouraging and even provoking it. Third, the law condemns sin. To explain this further, Paul first repeats that “sin” seized “the opportunity afforded by the commandment” and adds that sin first “deceived me” (presumably by promising blessings it could not deliver) and then “through the commandment put me to death.”⁹

If you read Romans 3:20, you need to notice it's not **"since through the law comes THE knowledge of sin"** but rather **"since through the law comes knowledge of sin."** The

⁸ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 237). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁹ Stott, J., Larsen, D., & Larsen, S. (2016). [*Reading Romans with John Stott: With Questions for Groups or Individuals*](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 114–115). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Connect: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

point is that sin was known before The Law was given; however, the law increased transgressions in that it made more things wrong than previously existed, and, as such, made sin more knowledgeable; that is, the unwillingness of mankind to live in submission to God is brought into a unique targeted spot light by the fact that God promised prosperity to them if they would obey the Law, but they still wouldn't do it! It not only demonstrated the rebellion inherent in all mankind, but also the foolishness of our sinful hearts that even when there is a very real and tangible blessing for obedience, we still can't do it!

Furthermore, the idea that The Law is what God gave to ultimately and universally define sin means cooking a young goat in its mother's milk is fundamentally a sin (Exodus 23:19) as well as not upholding the sabbath laws. It means that everything in the Law is irrevocably and unchangeably a sin, so much so that no new covenant could replace it because it was something that had always been so. If the Law given to Moses is the quintessential definition of sin, then it cannot be replaced by Christ without Christ freeing us to sin. Christ then becomes a license to sin, not freedom from sin! However, if Christ fulfilled and replaced the law, and I can now, for instance, eat pork, then eating pork was never sin in and of itself, but rather something ADDED BECAUSE OF SIN and for A PURPOSE other than defining what is inherently rebellion against God.

This is precisely why, in Matthew 19, Jesus asked a rich young ruler if he obeyed the Law. When the ruler claimed he did, Jesus didn't debate him but rather went straight to the law that existed prior to the Mosaic Law, which was to live totally surrendered to God!

Therefore, going back to what we discussed from the book of Exodus about the Hebrew people after God freed them from Egypt, nothing in it ever suggests they didn't know they were rebelling against God; in fact, it's quite the opposite. They knew very well that what they were doing was rebellion against Yahweh; it was their overt intention because they believed Yahweh was abandoning them and that He was not capable and/or trustworthy despite all He had done.

The fact is that the idea that sin itself can only be known by the Law of Moses is never asserted in the Bible. God told Cain he was getting ready to be devoured by sin. God told Noah that the sin and rebellion of the people of the world were so bad that he was going to destroy them. Likewise, God told Abraham that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was so bad that He was going to destroy both of those cities as well. Sin wasn't a foreign word or concept to anybody prior to Moses. Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. all had a clear understanding of what it meant to rebel against God as well as what was right, fair, ethical, moral, etc.; so much so that not one time is there a single incident in the Bible of somebody saying, "what do you mean by sin?" or "how could God judge people if they don't know the law?" In every culture and every major religion in the world, there is a sense of right and wrong, a sense that we will be held accountable for what is wrong. Therefore, when it comes to the Jewish people who had just been freed from slavery by the supernatural works of Yahweh, it can only be said that they were knowingly rebelling against God, and they were doing so without any need of a law telling them they were doing it – it was intentional rebellion because they didn't believe He was cable or trustworthy! The Israelites were not obeying Him before, nor were they obeying Him after. Still, The Law

created a different scenario for their rebellion, a different reality that Paul will explain even more as we go through chapter 4. This reality was meant to leave them longing for what would save them from sin and its terrible curse—Jesus!