

WHY DID GOD GIVE THE LAW?

A Focused Expository Study on Galatians 3:15–29 | Teacher: Pastor Eric T. Lee

THE PRIORITY OF THE PROMISE

In Galatians 3:15–29, the Apostle Paul untangles the pivotal question of redemptive history to safeguard Christian freedom from legalistic distortion. Confronting young churches that were being tempted by false teachers to track external Mosaic checklists alongside faith in Christ, Paul sets forth the permanent priority of God's covenant over legal codes. His timeline reveals that the unconditional promise made to Abraham cannot be altered, nullified, or appended by a legal system introduced centuries later at Sinai.

“What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise... For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” — Galatians 3:17, 26

Paul draws a striking human legal analogy from contract law (**diathēkē**). Once an estate covenant or last will is officially validated, no subsequent party has the legal standing to change its conditions. Furthermore, Paul narrows the covenantal lens to an explicit Christological focus: the promise was made to Abraham and to his single Seed (**sperma**), which is Christ. Because Jesus is the true Heir, standing before God does not flow through external pedigree or a multi-party performance system; it belongs strictly to grace as an unearned gift (**kecharistai**).

THE FUNCTIONAL ROLES: DIAGNOSTIC DYE VS. CHILD GUARDIAN

If legal performance cannot justify or grant righteousness, the legalistic mind demands an immediate rationale: *“Why the Law then?”* Paul answers this by outlining the temporary, structural limits of legal codes. The law code lacks the internal mechanical power to impart life (**zōpoiēsai**). Instead, it was added alongside to serve two strategic purposes during humanity's spiritual minor status:

THE DIAGNOSTIC FUNCTION (EXPOSING THE DISEASE)

The law was added *“because of transgressions”* (**tōn parabaseōn charin**). It acts exactly like a medical diagnostic dye injected into a patient's system—it does not cure the heart, but it turns hidden sin into visible, measurable violations. Scripture locked up everyone completely inside a secure prison house of sin (**synekleisen**), shutting down every door of human self-justification to force complete reliance on the savior.

THE CUSTODIAL FUNCTION (THE HOUSEHOLD TUTOR)

The law code functioned as our harsh household guardian or child tutor (**paidagōgos**). In ancient households, this trusted slave was appointed to enforce strict boundaries, manage the minor minor, and safely escort him to his true teacher. The law boxed humanity in under guard, executing necessary discipline *“until Christ came”*, so that we might finally be justified by faith alone.

THE REALIZATION OF ADULT SONSHIP

The historical arrival of Jesus Christ marks the permanent end of minor restriction. Paul declares that “now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” It would be entirely backward for an adult heir who stands before his teacher to submit back to the custody and rules of the slave who managed his childhood. By trusting in Christ alone, every believer throws off minor limitations and is declared an adult son with direct, intimate access to the Father.

This dynamic metamorphosis is completed through our spiritual baptism into Christ, where we are fully wrapped and clothed in His perfect character and righteousness. When the Father looks at a believer, He sees the flawless profile of His beloved Son, making human rule-tracking entirely irrelevant for acceptance. This shared standing creates a radical equality that dismantles all social, cultural, and gender hierarchies—declaring that “you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Since you belong exclusively to Christ, you are recognized as Abraham's true seed and unshakeable heirs according to the promise.

STRATEGIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & CLASSROOM PROMPTS

1. How does understanding that the law functions as a diagnostic tool rather than a cure protect you from turning personal spiritual disciplines into a legalistic checklist for God's favor?
2. What is the practical difference in your prayer life and daily security when you transition from the anxiety of a household servant under guard to the freedom of an adult son?
3. In what ways does the radical declaration of equality in verse 28 challenge performance-based competitions, elite cliques, or social divisions within our modern church fellowships?