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Galatians

Chapter 3 - No Understanding with Man Unable to Grasp Offense (vs.19-20)

Galatians 3:19-20: 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. Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

Someone was counting the different ways in which this particular passage is interpreted. They counted 430 different ways. We believe that there's only one Spirit. There's only one truth. We come to this book of Galatians, what we're talking about is how man seems to gravitate towards what everybody else thinks. God came, sent His Son to give you freedom from that. The concerns about pleasing men are intense. Man is motivated by peer pressure. He is motivated by what everybody else thinks. God says, "You don't have to worry about that anymore, you just have to please Me by receiving My Son." It is what is called the gospel, the good news. There's actually only one good news. Paul emphasizes that in chapter 1 of Galatians, that there aren't many gospels. There's only one good news, and the good news is that God loves you. The good news is that He sent His Son to die in your place; that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, if you trust in Him, you will not perish, but you'll have everlasting life. It's all God's goodness; it's none of man's. Man just can't seem to live with the idea that he's not good. So, he constantly tries to prove his superiority over somebody else. Thus, the battle grows; whether it's in religion or whether it's in society, man is ever trying to prove himself better than somebody else. He forms cliques, and he forms groups to try to elevate himself as better than everybody else. In his so doing, he ultimately suppresses and oppresses other groups and other people. Paul writes to the Galatians, and he says, "Why are you going back into this particular way of life? You've allowed people to draw you back in and you know this isn't true." He says, "You know this isn't true. You know it has nothing to do with your performance. It has nothing to do with anything good that you've done, but your righteousness comes from the righteousness of Christ alone.

He states the obvious throughout the book, because the obvious has somehow been abandoned. The obvious is that there's none righteous, no, not one, as Romans would tell us.

In this particular book, if you look with me in Galatians 2:16,

“Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

Nobody can be perfect.

He emphasized that again in Galatians 3:11,

“Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, **“THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”**”

In other words, righteousness can't come by your works. Man just can't seem to drop that. He has to grab onto the law. He has to feel like he's in some way, competitive and superior in that competition. It is that which Paul begins to speak to in Galatians 3, and it's interesting that man loves and likes to use the law to show himself superior. The wonderful thing about the law is that it condemns people and if it condemns people and you're on the end of condemning, then you look superior to them. So, that's a wonderful thing, isn't it? The law? That's why man just embraces it to such a degree. You say, “Let it go.” “I can't let it go.”

It's an interesting passage in 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul is talking about brother taking a brother to court, and he goes, “Here's an idea, why not rather be wrong?” Yeah, whoever thinks about that? We don't think of that as an option because the thought is, “I may not get mad, but I'm going to get even.” So, the pursuit is through the law and through those things. Paul knows that he's talking to people that are struggling with these things. They're not thinking spiritually.

The way that he addresses them in Galatians 3:1, “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?” They're not thinking spiritually; they're thinking like mere men. Paul makes reference to that in 1 Corinthians 3:1, where he's talking to the Corinthians. He goes, “I wish I could talk to you basically like spiritual men, but I have to talk to you like mere men.” In other words, you're thinking is in the realm of selfishness and benefit to you. You can't think about things like kindness and generosity and benevolence and caring for people; you have to think of the terms of, “Yeah, what's in it for me?” And that's the way man thinks. It is because of that, he begins to address them in Chapter 3 in the way of man's thinking. So, he takes a particular thing that they're familiar with in the Law, and he starts off with that. It's sort of like Jesus, when He's talking in parables, He'll pick something that He sees in the fields, and He goes, “Consider the lilies in the field.” So, He immediately has this audience homing in on him, and then He begins

to talk about the spiritual truth. The same thing is true with men. I mean, you can't just walk up to somebody and say, "Do you know Genesis 1:3?" You can't just come up to them and talk to them about spiritual things. Believers maybe, but unbelievers are not on the same level. When somebody is not walking in the Spirit, it's very difficult for them to think in terms of the spiritual. So, you have to catch them where they are and then you move them into the realm of the spiritual. Jesus does that many times. Paul will do that many times.

So, we come into Galatians 3, he starts off in verse 15,

"Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations..."

That's the point. He's talking to them in terms of something that they know well. He's going to prove that man fundamentally knows what is right, though I think sometimes they'll argue with the fact that he doesn't.

Romans 2 tells us that God has given man a conscience, and that sense of right and wrong. I mean, as he will go on to say in Romans 2, that even though he may not have the Law, he's a law unto himself because he knows the sense of right and wrong. He can't argue. Ultimately, if in fact he doesn't believe the truth, he has to suppress it, which he states in Romans 1.

One of the statements that's made by Jesus in John 3:20 is that there are those who actually hate the light. You go, "Well, why would they hate the light? Why would they hate truth?" It actually says in the verse, because it exposes them. So, they don't like somebody exposing truth. It's a lot easier, if you can, to use the law, to manipulate the law to make it say whatever you want it to say than it is to deal with truth. It's one of the reasons why Jesus was so repelled, because He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." The light comes into the world, and the darkness could not comprehend it, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the power. So, we have this sense of, "No, I'm going to work it out myself and I'm going to show myself good and still allow myself to do the evil that I do." So, we use probably what would be perceived as legalese to do it.

There's a very enigmatic passage in Proverbs 18 that I've oftentimes thought about because I think one of the arguments that people have in doing the right thing is, they go, "Well, nobody's perfect." Which it's a great argument. It's a true statement. So, I'm glad they at least came to that point. Yet, that same person will tell you just how good they are, "I'm really a good person. Nobody's perfect." In Proverbs 18, if you look in this particular chapter, it starts off,

(Proverbs 18:1) "He who separates himself seeks his own desire..."

And fundamentally, that's basically everybody. We're all fundamentally selfish and desiring whatever we want. We're into self-gratification and self-ambition, and because of that we have many biases in that. If you look with me in Proverbs 18, one of the questions that's answered in

this is that though men might say, "Well, I don't know the right thing," we would give them Romans 2. "Well, even when I know the right thing, I just can't do it. I'm only human." That might be one of the other excuses that they give. The answer to this would be Proverbs 18:18,

"The cast lot puts an end to strife
And decides between the mighty ones."

I know on the surface that doesn't sound like a very deep verse, but it is extremely deep and it's extremely wonderful because it reveals that man has the willpower to do right. I've often times thought about how you see these big guys in the football field, and you're scratching your head and you're going, "Ok, so how am I going to tell these really big guys that they're going to have to receive the ball or they're going to have to kick the ball and not receive it? How am I going to tell them that? 'Sorry guys, the other team gets to receive the ball, you have to kick off.' How are you going to tell them that? I mean, I don't want to tell them." Just flip a coin. You flip a coin, and it goes on the ground, and it goes "heads." And you see these big guys going, "Alright, can't argue with that." And I'm going, "Ok. So, what is it that could cause somebody's will to change so instantaneously, to acquiesce to whatever the decision is made. Man says, "I can't change. I can't change." Well, you can with a flip of a coin. What do you mean, you can't change? Scripture is telling us that it's not that you don't have the willpower, it's that you don't want the willpower. You don't want to do it. So, the obvious truths of Scripture are there.

Paul begins in this particular passage to convey to them something that they're familiar with. I mean, when you talk to somebody, if their head's in law, if their head's in money, you talk to them about money and law. You bring it around to what the truth is. You find that which is honorable, as Paul would say, in the sight of all men. Sometimes that's a hard search, to find something that this person would find honorable, but you find something honorable in the sight of all men, and you go from there.

So, in this particular passage, in verse 15, Paul talks from human relations, and he talks to them about what is called a will and a testament. A will and testament are some things that are made by the will of the person leaving an inheritance. When they leave an inheritance, their desire is to give that inheritance to somebody that pleases them. In verse 15, it says that now this desire soon becomes ratified. The way that it's understood is "valid" or "confirmed" by virtue of legal documents or legal proclamations in this particular text. So, he makes mention of that. I'm sort of synopsisizing what it's saying, and hopefully explaining it appropriately. So, he says what happens is that you have initially a will or a promise, but it turns into a legal document. Once it turns into the legal document, people realize, "Ok, you can't break that. It's a legal document." And we talked about the ins and outs of this last week.

He then turns and he says, "Now, let me talk to you about the promises or the inheritance that was given to Abraham. So, at this juncture, they're going, "Ok, legal document made of a promise." In other words, something that initiated or began as a promise actually became legal, or law. Then he turns, and he says, "Now, let me talk to you about Abraham." So, he talks about Abraham, and he goes, "Now, in the Old Testament, Abraham was given a promise." If you remember in Genesis 15, the promise was that God said, "Because you trusted in Me, I want to leave you something, and I'm going to give you a blessing, that through your seed all the world will be blessed." In other words, "I'm leaving you an inheritance." Now he goes on to say that much of this became legal, and a document about 430 years later in the Law, but it wasn't the Law that made the document important, it was the promise. So, the passage is going to be dealing with this whole concept of the promise and the difference of the Law.

One of the reasons why man likes the law so much, he can manipulate it. That's the wonderful thing about the law. So, somebody can walk up, and they go, "Are you sure it says that? What does that mean in that particular phrase that everything will be given to Him? Who's 'Him'?" There are all kinds of interesting debates, and it's because man is prejudicial and bias, coming from his own point of view, and self-gratifying and selfishly ambitious. So, he begins to try to manipulate the law to say whatever he wants it to say; to make it do whatever he wants it to do. Man makes a promise; he makes it a law, but the nice thing about it being a law is it could be messed with. The question in this setting, when he goes a little bit further, "So, why would God have a Law? Why would God even bring Law into the mix?" The answer is, if you look in verse 19, "Why the law then?" That was the question you were asking, right? Yeah. So, why the Law? The answer is in the passage, "It was added because of transgressions." Somebody makes a will, they make a promise, they make a testament. They declare it. People start coming up because of selfish ambition and they say, "Maybe my name is in there." Or maybe they look for a way to fraudulently change the document to bring their name in it. So, now you've got to build laws to protect somebody from creating fraudulent documents. I mean, it just started off with a promise, and remember when you sold something, you just shook their hand? My grandfather, I remember him selling things. I said, "Grandpa, you didn't get anything in writing?" He said, "We don't need things in writing, but you shake hands. That man's word is good." And they walk away. Why do you need all the Law? Because people aren't honest. That's a real problem.

Actually, one of the interesting passages, if you look with me in 1 Timothy 1, it says it's not that the Law is bad enough itself.

The way it's put in 1 Timothy 1:8,

"But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully."

That's a big problem.

(1 Timothy 1:9) “realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person...”

You don't need a law if somebody's doing the right thing, but the law was made for the lawless and the rebellious. That's why you need the law, but wouldn't you know, the lawless and rebellious have found a way to use the law for their own good; their own desires?

“...for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

(1 Timothy 1:10) and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

(1 Timothy 1:11) according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.”

It's interesting that he puts right alongside of sound teaching the glorious gospel because it is the gospel of righteousness through Christ Jesus. Paul's point in the book of Timothy is that you're going to have people using the law in an unlawful way, and it's one of the big problems of embracing the law because it can be manipulated because the whole thing about the law is it's about man's performance; it's about man's ability, and he begins to use it.

If you look with me in Romans 7, it talks about this whole thing of the Law as well. I won't go too much into this, but one of the statements that Paul's making, one of the big problems of the Law in Romans Chapter 7 is that the Law, when it came in, unfortunately, though it was meant to in some way curtail my transgressions; somebody's doing something wrong, so the best thing to do is tell them, “Get your finger out. You can't do that.” Well, once you do that, then guess what? Now, they want to do it. If you hadn't said anything, but now you told them that they can't, now they want to.

So, his point is in Romans 7:8,

“But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting...”

In other words, “I wanted to do what I'm told I can't do.”

“... of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.”

He says this in verse 12,

“So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.”

But unfortunately, I'm not and the commandment actually created something in me that caused me to see just how rebellious I am. It actually made me utterly sinful.

In Romans 3, it says that the Law gives you the knowledge of the sin, and it reveals things that ok, maybe you had passed over, probably one of the things that make you mad and cause you to want to manipulate it.

When you go all the way back in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 29, you have this interesting picture of the Jews being really good at manipulating the Law. God is saying to His people, "The day is coming when I'm going to make everything right, and the innocent are not going to suffer anymore." I'm looking forward to that day, aren't you? So, he begins to show just how man comes in and distorts and twists and manipulates.

His statement is in Isaiah 29:20,

"For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished,
Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;

(Isaiah 29:21) Who cause a person to be indicted by a word,
And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate,
And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments."

You thought it was new stuff, but they've been doing it for years. There's nothing new under the sun. In fact, they crucified our Savior under false charges, but that's what man does. It's one of the reasons why he embraces the Law so much, because it's something that he feels that he can manipulate, and he can find himself looking superior. One of the big problems of the Law as well is that it creates an adversarial dialogue between two groups, and it's one of the statements that he makes in this, if you back up in the Galatians 3:19,

"Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions..."

It was added because of violations, would be another way of putting it. People choosing the wrong things willingly.

"... having been ordained through angels..."

Who are really guardians of what is right and what is wrong, the righteousness of God.

"... by the agency of a mediator..."

"You almost have to ask yourself, "Who was a mediator?" Most agree that the mediator that's understood within this particular text is Moses. The Law was given. Moses was the mediator that was there, and you have to ask yourself, "Well, how did that work out?" Well, a lot of people died under Moses being the mediator, because one thing a mediator can't do is change the mind of the judge, but he can appease in some way. The fact of the matter is, if you have a law, then you have to have a mediator. If you have a mediator, then you have two different points, and those two different points are adversarial. I mean, basically the whole legal system

is an adversarial system. It's extremely divisive. You have a defending attorney, you have a prosecuting attorney. What does that mean? They're on different sides, and that's the way it works. The way this particular passage reads is that this is the way that it's been until the promise comes.

Strange passage in Matthew 11. It's actually in a couple of the other Gospels as well, but Jesus makes mention of John the Baptist, who is really a proclaimer of the Law, and he's telling people they need to repent; as the prophets of old were proclaimers of the Law, "You have to obey." Obviously, sent by God because of their transgressions; because of their willful disobedience, you have to build walls to keep those from breaking in.

In Matthew 11, Jesus begins to talk, and they begin to ask questions about John the Baptist. Jesus makes this statement in verse 12,

(Matthew 11:12) "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."

What is He talking about? He's talking about the Law. In other words, the only thing that really could hold back evil before Christ came was the Law, but that's all it could do. It couldn't stop evil, it could only hold it at bay. It could minimize the damage. So, you have this forcing that is going on for the kingdom of God, but there's no freedom in that. Paul wants the Galatians to know that until you get back to the original, you're never going to have freedom. You're always going to be in this adversarial position, always going to need a mediator.

We read a passage such as Timothy and it says there's only one mediator between God and man, and that's the person of Jesus Christ. Hebrews will refer oftentimes to Christ being the mediator, but I want you to understand, that's in the context of the Law; that Christ is the mediator in that sense, but ultimately, God is one, and this is the statement that He's making in this particular passage. Jesus will actually make this statement, "I and My Father are one." If you're one with Christ, do you need a mediator? He has become, you have become, Christ in you the hope of glory. So, the wonderful thing about this is, as long as you continue in your way, yeah, you're going to need a sense of somebody appeasing and God beginning to work through that. There's only one that can do that, but that ultimate salvation, is only through the person of Christ; thus, the only mediator. However, if you understand that Christ is God, then who is the mediator?

(Galatians 3:20) "Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one."

The passage is telling us that with God and with Christ, we're on the same team. There is no adversary going on. With the Law, there is, but not with Christ. I don't want us to get too bogged down into the details of the text, but the point of all of this is that we're trying to get to

the real crime. It's sort of like you have this thing called marriage. Most of us are familiar with that. You come together, and I think from what we understand is there are actual legal documents with this. That marriage becomes an institution of sorts, in which matrimony, i.e. the coming together of two people, oftentimes is actually perceived by some people, a legal document. Matrimony is not the legal document. Matrimony is the promise that is made between two people. It's easy for people to get into the whole argument of "This is yours. This is mine" when divorce comes into the picture, and it gets into a whole legalese. Man starts fighting and the adversarial way in those kind of things. But what was marriage about? It was about a promise. It's not like man to think spiritually. We don't think about what the most important thing is. Paul wants them to see the lunacy of making everything legal; of making everything about a law; making everything about "You have to do this," "You can't do that, "You can do this." He says, "You'll not only never find freedom in that, but you will also not find salvation in that, because you're never good enough if in fact you begin to perceive that. But if you go back to the original sin. Now, you have to ask yourself, "What is really the offense?" Well, you can go down law. "Well, the offense is I remember telling a lie when I was, you know, or maybe this past week, I don't know, but I remember doing certain things." You go down all the different things that maybe you did wrong. You can list them, but is that the crime? Scripture will tell you, "No. The crime is you didn't trust Me." It's just like in marriage. Is the crime the different things that you did wrong that caused the divorce? Nah, it's when you stopped loving. That was the crime.

So, if you look in the passage, it says in verse 16,

(Galatians 3:16) "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."

What is he wanting to focus on? The promise that was made, right?

You keep dropping down,

(Galatians 3:18) "For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise."

He's wanting them to get back to the fundamentals. So the question is, why did He promise this to Abraham? We've read it before, so I'm just going to refer to it. The answer is found in Genesis 15. Scripture says that Abraham believed God. Now, Paul will quote that in Galatians Chapter 3, if you look with me.

(Galatians 3:6) "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

At that moment, God then promised him that He was now going to make sure that he was going to heaven, that he was going to be made righteous. The promise was through his seed. He made the promise that the Christ would come to save. Now, of course, that promise had been made to Adam and Eve, but he wanted to solidify it with Abraham.

Abraham believed to such a degree that in Genesis 22, when God says, "I just want to make sure that we're on the same page. Take your son, your only son, put him on the altar and sacrifice him to Me." I mean, I'd be thinking, "Ok. All the heathens sacrifice their kids. We don't do that God." But he took his son, his only son, and he puts him on the altar. Then, God goes, "Ok. I just want to let you know I'm going to provide the sacrifice. Take the son off. I'm going to provide." He has the lamb, and the thicket already prepared, and He says, "It's on this mountain," Moriah, which is where we believe the cross was actually put up, "that I'm going to bring the sacrifice. It's going to be My Son, not yours. I'm going to give you a promise, and the promise is that through Him you'll be saved." The point of the text is that it's the promise that brings the salvation, not the works. A promise is like an inheritance. I guess you could sit around and maybe beg your rich uncle or whatever, "Put me in the inheritance," dance a jig, sing a song, anyway, somehow entertain him to put you in the inheritance, but the bottom line is he's only going to put in the inheritance who he wants to put in the inheritance. So, God's only going to put in the inheritance only who He wants in the inheritance, and there's only one that pleases Him. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So, then He turns to us, and He goes, "If you'll accept Him, I'll accept you, but that's the only way." It wipes out all of that sense of, "You know what, I'm going to earn my way. I'm going to work my way. I'm going to compete. I'm going to fight, claw, scratch." And you begin to realize there's only one thing that pleases Him. There's nothing that I could fundamentally do that would be so pleasing to God, that God would go, "Wow. That guy's really holy." There's nothing that I could do, but I could please Him by believing His Son really is, and we begin to identify.

You know what the crime is? The crime is that man didn't trust God. It begins in the garden. God says, "OK, now everything else, not that." The serpent goes, "I don't think you can trust Him. I think He's lying to you." And everything down the road has been that whole argument. I mean, why is it we don't do what God tells us to do? You don't trust Him. He tells you, "If you do, you'll have life." You think you have life another way. You don't trust Him. We've got to get back to the heart of the crime. Take all the legalese out of it, and ask ourselves, "What's the real crime?" God is asking us to put our trust in Him.

There's an interesting hymn that we oftentimes sing and it kind of has this phrase, "I have no other argument, I have no other plea, it is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me." The song is telling us that I'm standing before the Judge of the universe. There's nothing that I could say, no debate that I could give Him, no great mediator proclamation that I could give to

Him that would some way convince Him that I was wholly alright But I could declare His Son is. Scripture is wanting us to get back to the fundamentals of the heart. This is why, in Galatians, it will talk about the Spirit of God. The Law just kills you. If you start thinking about lists and you start thinking about things that you have to do, immediately you've gotten out of the realm of "Why was this promise given to begin with?" And the fundamental answer is because He wanted to. Why do you go into a marital relationship? Because you want to. It has nothing to do with the legal document. Yeah, you might have to get a legal document in the world today, but it has nothing to do with that. Don't get lost in those things. Paul is very concerned that the Galatians are getting lost in the things that are not important, and he's missing the point that God is one.

Scripture tells us in Romans 3 that Christ became both the just and the justifier. So, not only is God holy and pure and righteous, but He's the one that gave Himself for us, that we would become wholly and pure and righteous. He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He has actually, as One, made these things happen. Our salvation is not an adversarial, debatable thing. We do not come to God and somehow make a deal with Him. We don't argue with Him over our way to heaven. We don't try to prove ourselves good enough to get into heaven. It would never work. We would never get audience with Him. But we tell Him, "You made a promise, and Your promise was that if I would accept Your Son, You promised that You would give so that Abraham would be righteous; I'd be righteous too." And God says, "Done, because son, you've gone back to the heart of the matter; why I made the promise to begin with. Son, all I'm asking you to do is trust Me. It's something that Adam wouldn't do, but you can do it. Trust Me." And that's why we use the word "believe." The words "believe," "trust," and "have confidence in," are all the same words in Scripture. God wants you to trust Him, and when you do that, you will be saved. How complicated is that?

Closing Payer:

Father, we come before You today, and we give You thanks for Your salvation. How wonderful it is that You take us out of the realm of trying to prove ourselves; of trying to win by means of human agency. There's a realization that there's none righteous, no, not one. We understand that all have sinned and fall short of Your glory. We come to You just as we are, without one plea, but that Your blood was shed for us; that You bid us come to You. Oh, Lamb of God, we come.

God is asking you to come back to the heart of the matter. Stop thinking like mere men and let the Spirit of God tug on your heart. God's asking you to do one thing, "Trust Me. Do you believe I'm the righteous One?" "Yes." "Do you believe I'll save you?" "Yes." Do you believe I sent My Son, so you might have everlasting life?" "Yes." "Do you believe that He has conquered death forever?" "Yes." "Do you believe that all of your sins have taken have been taken away, removed as far as the East is from the West to be remembered no more?" "Yes. I trust You. You said it. I believe You." Scripture says it will be accounted unto you as righteousness.