

KEY

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Parsing Verbs and Declining Nouns

Verbs:

ποιμανατε (ποιμαινω = to tend, shepherd || Verb: Aorist Active Imperative, Second Person Plural).

ἀποκαλυπτεσθαι (ἀποκαλύπτω = to reveal, disclose || Verb: Present Passive Infinitive).

Nouns (gender before case):

πατηματων (παθημα = suffering || Noun: Neuter Genitive Plural).

Participles (gender before case):

μελλουσης (μελλω = to be about to || Participle: Feminine Genitive Singular Present Active).

Adjectives (gender before case):

(ἐπιεικης = gentle, kind || Adjective: Masculine Dative Plural).

Independent Personal Pronouns:

ἡμιν (ἐγώ = I || First Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

ὑμιν (σύ = you || Second Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Dative Plural).

αὐτῷ (αὐτός = He, Him || Third Person Independent Personal Pronoun: Masculine Dative Singular).

Near Demonstrative Pronoun (gender before case):

(τοῦτο = this || Near Demonstrative Pronoun: Neuter Nominative Singular).

Far Demonstrative Pronoun (gender before case):

(οὗτος = those || Far Demonstrative Pronoun: Masculine Nominative Singular).

Reflexive Pronouns (only masculine and feminine - the genitive is the lexical form as there is no nominative case):

(ἐμαυτου = myself || First Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

(σεαυτου = yourself || Second Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

(ἐαυτου = himself, herself, oneself || Third Person Reflexive Pronoun: Masculine Genitive Singular).

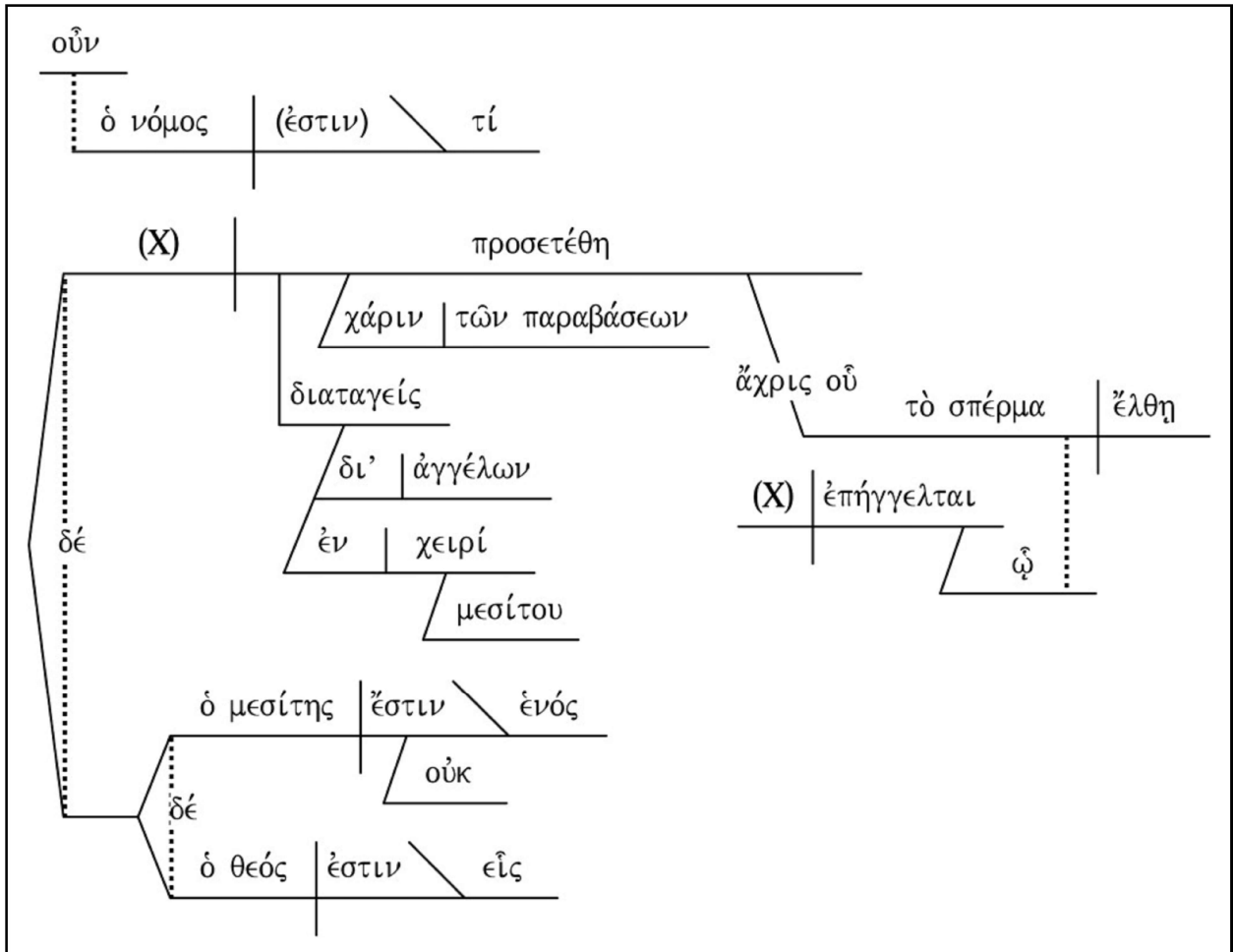
Relative Pronouns:

(ὅς = who/that, of whom, to whom, whom [referring to people]; that/which, of which, to which, which [referring to things] – Translation depends on case || Relative Pronoun: Masculine Nominative Singular)

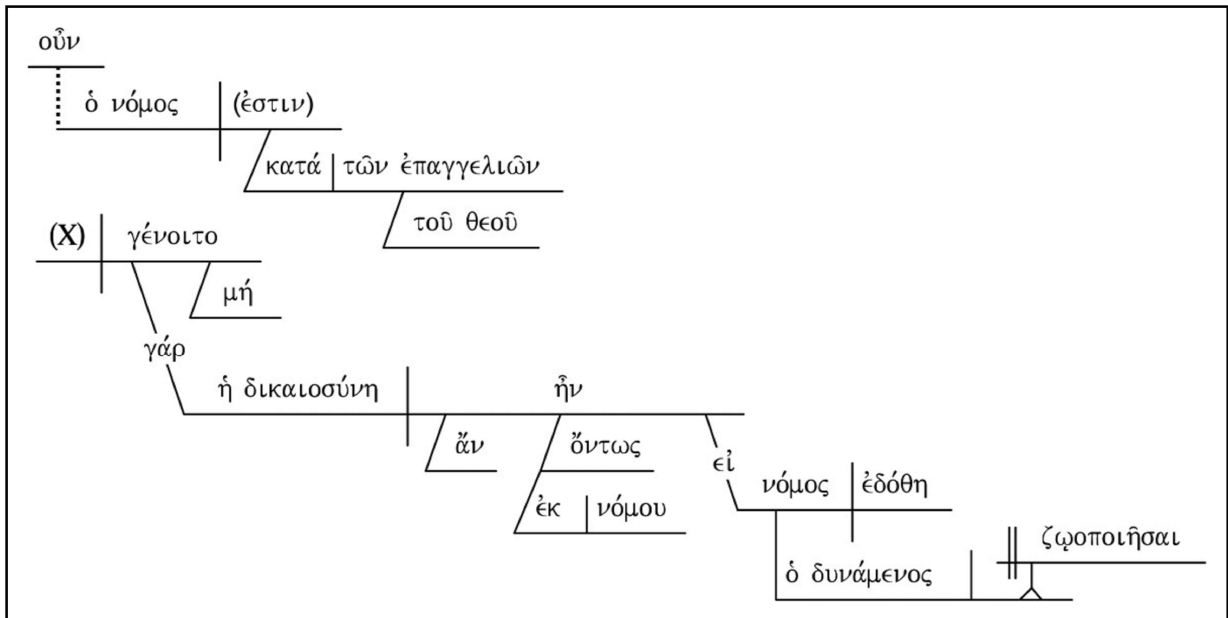
Sentence Structure

Leedy, Randy A. 2020. *SBL Greek New Testament Sentence Diagrams*. Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

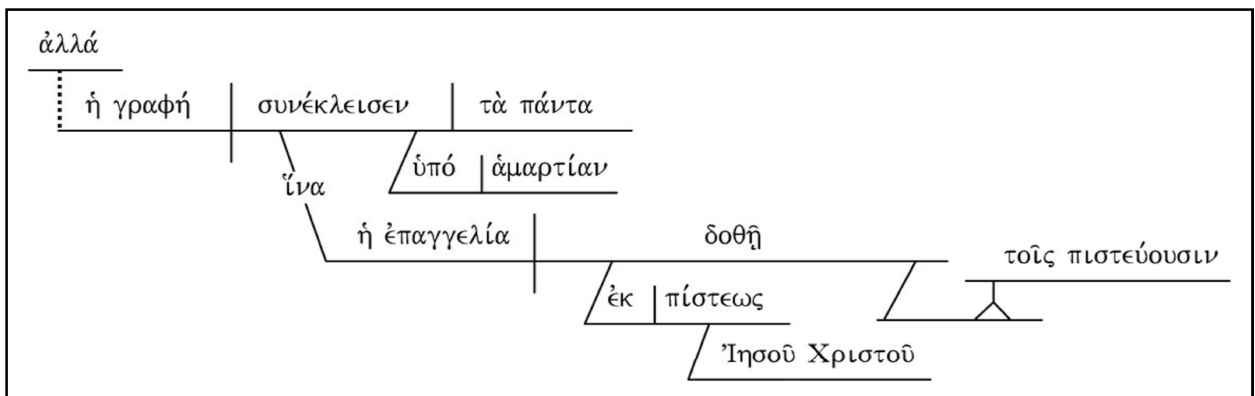
Verses 19-20:



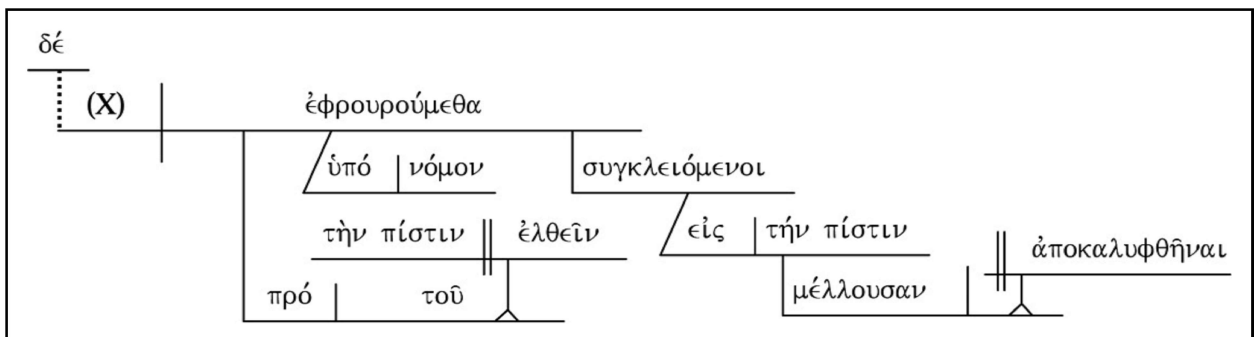
Verse 21:



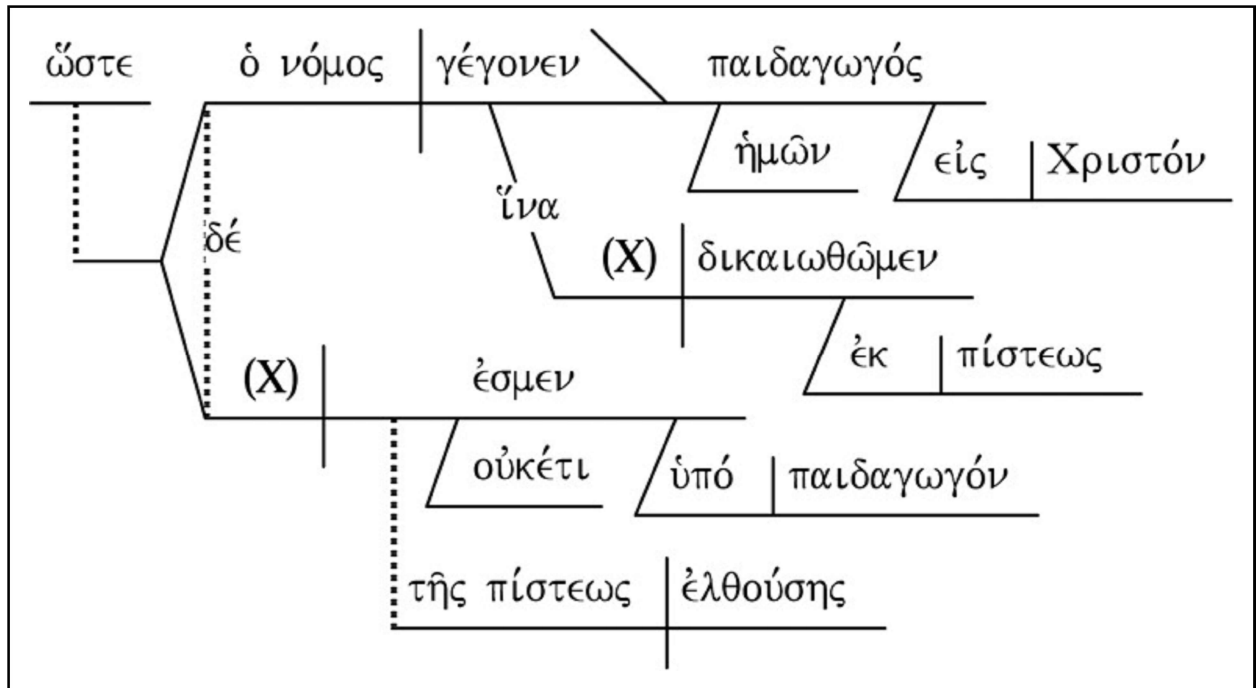
Verse 22:



Verse 23:



Verses 24-25:



TRANSLATION, OUTLINE AND CENTRAL PROPOSITION

GREEK TEXT:

Galatians 3:19–25 (UBS4)

19 Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελλται, διαταγείς δι' ἁγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. 20 ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἐνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἐστιν. 21 Ὁ οὖν νόμος κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ]; μὴ γένοιτο. εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζῶοποιῆσαι, ὄντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη· 22 ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. 23 Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἔλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, 24 ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν· 25 ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed had come to whom the promise had been made, having been put into place through angels by the agency of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not for one [person], but God is one. 21 Now is the Law against the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law was given that was able to give life, righteousness would indeed have been by the Law. 22 But the Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before the faith came we were confined under law, having been imprisoned until the coming faith was later to be revealed. 24 Therefore, the Law has become our guardian until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

PASSAGE SUBJECT/THEME (what's t/passage talking about): The purpose of the Law

PASSAGE COMPLEMENT/THRUST (what's the passage saying about what it's talking about): Was temporary until the time of Christ

PASSAGE MAIN IDEA (central proposition of the text): The purpose of the Law was temporary until the time of Christ

CENTRAL PROPOSITION OF THE SERMON: The Law expired in Christ

SERMONIC IDEA/TITLE: The Law's Expiration Date: Paul's Fifth Defense of Justification by Faith

SERMON OUTLINE:

I. The Purpose and Duration of the Law (3:19–25)

- A. The Law was Given on Account of Sin (3:19a)
- B. The Law was Given Until Christ (3:19b)
- C. The Law was Secondary to the Promise (3:19c-20)
- D. The Law was not Contrary to the Promises (3:21a)
- E. The Law Could not Give Life (3:21b)
- F. The Law Imprisons Everything Under Sin (3:22)
- G. The Law was a Temporary Guardian (3:23-25)

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL/GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

This is part of a larger parenthetical section:

On one level the passage can be analyzed in terms of four major propositions, each of which is confirmed and elucidated by a citation from the Old Testament. Thus (1) those who rely on observing the law are under a curse. Why so? The Bible says that those who do not continue to do everything written in the book of the law are cursed (Deut 27:26); (2) no one can be justified by means of the law anyway. Why not? The Scripture declares that the righteous ones live by faith (Hab 2:4); (3) law and faith are not mutually compatible ways to God. How can you be so sure? Because the law itself says that those who keep the commandments will live by them (Lev 18:5); (4) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. How did this happen? He became a curse for us by hanging on a tree (Deut 21:23). A closer examination of these propositions will show that (1) and (4) are closely related as problem and solution, while the two scriptural texts cited in support of (2) and (3) stand in apparent contradiction to each other. The entire passage is brought to a concluding crescendo in v. 14, which reaffirms the key element in proposition (4), Christ redeemed us, and then adds two purpose clauses—in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles and that by faith we might receive the promised Spirit.

Before looking at these verses in greater detail, it is important to recognize that, from another perspective, 3:10–25 constitutes a long parenthesis in the overall structure of Paul's argument concerning the true children of Abraham. As we saw earlier, Paul had been arguing from the continuity of the covenant of grace with Abraham cited as the paradigm of justification by faith. The blessing he received was not only for the Jews but for "all nations" (*ethnē*, "Gentiles"). Thus today those who believe as Abraham believed are declared righteous before God just as he was. From a strictly logical point of view, it would have made good sense for Paul to move directly from 3:9 to 3:26—"Those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham.... You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Paul deliberately did not do this but rather indulged in an intricate digression on the law, a passage that, as N. T. Wright has observed, must surely rank high on any list of "the most complicated and controverted passages in Paul." [Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 227–228]

Paul could not ignore the law because it was crucial for his understanding of salvation and Christ—not, however, as the source of obtaining righteousness but rather as the gauge of damnation. The law tells us what we are being saved from—the curse. This takes us to the heart of Pauline soteriology. "The faith that justifies comes only through deliverance from the curse. Those who know nothing of the curse also know nothing of the blessing. Only the Christ who bears the curse can be the bearer of the blessing."^{fn}

^{fn}. Ebeling, *Truth of the Gospel*, 171. Ebeling's reading of Galatians reflects Luther's interpretation. For example, Luther referred to "the chief and proper use

of the law” as the revelation of “sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God.... The law is a hammer that crushes rocks, a fire, a wind, and a great and mighty earthquake that overturns mountains.” Nonetheless, “this use of the law is extremely beneficial and very necessary” [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994).

The Law with its function does contribute to justification—not because it justifies, but because it impels one to the promise of grace and makes it sweet and desirable. Therefore we do not abolish the Law; but we show its true function and use, namely, that it is a most useful servant impelling us to Christ ...; for its function and use is not only to disclose the sin and wrath of God but also to drive us to Christ.... Therefore the principal purpose of the Law in theology is to make men not better but worse; that is, it shows them their sin, so that by the recognition of sin they may be humbled, frightened, and worn down, and so may long for grace and for the Blessed Offspring. [Luther, Galatians, 26:315, 327]

At this point one may wonder why the Law was given in the first place. That is addressed in this section.

Paul’s take on salvation history raises two key questions, which set the agenda for verses 19–25.² The broad, overarching question is obvious: if the law did not materially add anything to the promise, then why did God give the law to his people? After asking just this question in verse 19a, Paul devotes verses 19b–25 to answering it. He makes two basic points. First, the law and the promise serve distinct purposes: the law was given to exacerbate and reveal sin (vv. 19b, 22a) and was not intended to, or able to, give the life that only the promise and faith could achieve (v. 21). Second, all along the law was intended to last only until the promised Messiah came (vv. 19b, 23–25). [Douglas J. Moo, Galatians, 225]

In the next few verses, Paul states clearly the function and purpose of the Law. He has already stated that the Galatians had received God’s Spirit not by doing what the Law requires, but by believing the gospel (verses 2–5). Furthermore, he has contended that those who depend on the Law are under a curse, the curse of the Law (verses 10–14), and that God’s blessings are given not because of the Law but because of God’s promise. If all this is true, then why does one bother with the Law at all? Has the Law not lost its reason for being? [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1976), 73]

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. [Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 137]

3:19-20 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

19 Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ ἐπήγγελλται, διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου. 20 ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἐστιν.

Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος; (— || Noun: M.N.S.).

τῶν παραβάσεων (παράβασις, εως, ἡ = transgression || Noun: F.G.P.).

χάριν (χάριν = because of, on account of || Preposition). Preposition of causation.

προσετέθη, (προστίθημι = to add | Verb: Aorist, Passive, Indicative, 3S). Divine passive.

ἄχρις (ἄχρι = until | Preposition).

οὗ (ὅς, ἥ, ὅ = which || Relative Pronoun: N.G.S.).

ἔλθῃ (ἔρχομαι = to come, go || Verb: Aorist, Active, Subjunctive, 3S).

τὸ σπέρμα (σπέρμα || Noun: N.N.S.). Subject Nominative.

ᾧ (ὅς, ἥ, ὅ = who || Relative Pronoun: N.D.S.).

ἐπήγγελλται, (ἐπαγγέλλομαι = to promise || Verb: Perfect, Middle/Passive, Indicative, 3S).

διαταγείς (διατάσσω = to order, put in proper arrangement || Participle: Aorist, Passive, N.M.S.).

δι' ἀγγέλων (— || Noun: M.G.P.). Genitive of agency.

ἐν χειρὶ (χείρ, χειρός, ἡ = hand || Noun: F.D.S.).

μεσίτου. (μεσίτης, ου, ὁ = mediator || Noun: M.G.S.). Gen. of possession.

ὁ δὲ μεσίτης (μεσίτης, ου, ὁ = mediator || Noun: M.N.S.).

ἑνὸς (εἷς, μία, ἓν, || Adj: M.G.S.). Genitive of association.

οὐκ ἔστιν, (— || Verb: Pres. Active Ind. 3S).

ὁ δὲ θεός (— || Noun: M.N.S.).

εἷς (εἷς, μία, ἓν, || Adj: M.N.S.).

ἐστιν. (— || Verb: Pres. Active Ind. 3S).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed had come to whom the promise had been made, having been put into place through angels by the agency of a mediator. 20 Now a mediator is not for one [person], but God is one.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Verse 19:

Why the Law then? (Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος;)

I.e. in light of what Paul just wrote.

If we are not justified by law, if our receiving the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with the law, if Christ was cursed because of the law, if our very inheritance depends on grace and promise not on works and law, then “wherefore then serveth the law?” Has Paul painted himself into a theological corner? Has Paul so totally dismissed the law that it no longer has any place within God’s overall redemptive scheme? [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 252]

ὁ νόμος is certainly the Mosaic law, the article specifying that law which has repeatedly been referred to in the immediate context and earlier: “the law that appeared 430 years” after the Abrahamic covenant (3:17); the law whose curse “Christ redeemed us from” (3:13); and that law which was the focus of the Judaizers’ message (1.6ff.). [Richard N. Longenecker, 138]

Paul’s answer to the question “Why the law?” is expressed in terms of five emphases: (1) “it was added”; (2) “because of transgressions”; (3) “until the Seed to whom the promise was given should come”; (4) “it was ordained through angels”; and (5) “by the hand of a mediator.” Each feature or clause needs to be treated separately, though with an eye always to their cumulative impact. [Richard N. Longenecker, 138]

It was added because of transgressions, (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη,)

We already know that the law was added. God gave it 430 years after he gave Abraham the promise (v. 17).

The prepositional use of χάριν, which almost always appears after the word it governs, may be understood as either cognitive in function (i.e., “to bring about a knowledge of” or “point out” transgressions) or causative in function (i.e., “to cause” or “increase” transgressions). The noun παράβασις has the sense of “deviation from a standard or norm,” or of “neglecting an obligation.” Thus 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. [Richard N. Longenecker, 138]

Was the purpose of the Law to make sin known or to increase or multiply sin? Here several comments are in order. Firstly, in view of Paul’s consistent use of the term ‘transgressions’ the meaning here is unlikely to be ‘because of already existing transgressions’, or ‘to multiply transgressions’ because no transgressions against the Mosaic Law existed before it was ‘added’. It is well to ask, as Longenecker does, why God would wish to increase the number of transgressions leading up to the time of Christ.¹⁷ Furthermore, our interpretation of the purpose and role of the Law here must

comport with the role predicated of the Law in the ‘guardian’ analogy (cf. below), and it is unlikely that that analogy is meant to portray an entirely negative view of the Law. I would suggest that what Paul means is that the Law turns sin, which certainly already existed before and apart from the Law, into transgression.¹⁸ That is, the Law makes quite clear that every sin is a sin against God. Lull is on the right track when he says “the Law identifies sin for what it is, imputes sinful deeds to those who do them, and in that sense increases the trespass”.¹⁹ This is an increase not in number, but in responsibility, because sin has been identified for what it is and shown plainly and in writing to be against God’s will (cf., e.g., the NEB ‘to make wrong-doing a legal offence’). It should also be added that this is not a negative function of the Law, for from God’s point of view it is a positive thing for humans to be made aware that they have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. [Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 255–256]

The next phrase, “because of transgressions,” can mean one of two things depending on whether the postpositive preposition *charin*, “because,” “on account of,” is given a causal (looking backward) or telic (looking forward) force.⁹⁴ In the former case the law would have primarily a preventive function: the law was promulgated to curb or hold in check misdeeds that were already being done, in other words, to keep a bad situation from getting even worse. But if “because” is given a telic meaning, the opposite would hold true. The law would have a provocative purpose, its function being not to prevent sins but actually to increase them, in other words, to make an already bad situation much, much worse. [Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 253]

τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν. The preposition *χάριν* indicates cause or goal/purpose (BDAG, 1078–79; Burton, 188). Its precise meaning here is unclear, and Paul does not clarify. It could signify any of the following: (1) The Torah exercises a limiting or restraining force against transgressions (Lull; Belleville; Brawley, 106–8). (2) The Torah provides a means of dealing with transgressions (e.g., punishing offenders against God’s righteousness and/or making amends by means of the sacrificial system; Dunn 1993, 188–90), though perhaps not eliminating transgression. (3) The Torah provokes transgressions (Betz 1979, 165–66; Martyn, 354–55; BDAG, 1079.a). (4) The Torah brings an awareness of transgressions and, thus, the distance between human behavior and God’s righteousness (Longenecker 1990, 138; Matera, 128; Witherington, 256). The latter two options are most in line with Paul’s later statements about the Torah in Romans (e.g., 3:20; 5:20; 7:7–8, where, however, the Torah does not itself provoke sin, but sin takes advantage of the Torah). [David A. deSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Martin M. Culy, *Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 70]

First, *χάρτιν* may mean “because of,” and the phrase could refer to the law’s function in revealing sin, in giving people a realization of their sinfulness: “the law was added because of the need to reveal to people their sins” (Calvin 1854: 64; cf. NLT: “[The law] was given alongside the promise to show people their sins”). This may be what Paul has in view in Rom. 3:20b, where he claims that “through the law we become conscious of our sin.” A second view, sometimes not distinguished from the first, also takes *χάρτιν* to mean “because of,” but understands the relationship between the law and sins more generally: “The law was given because of the need to deal with sins” (R. Longenecker 1990: 138). This “dealing with” sins could have either a negative sense, providing the mechanism to punish sins (Thielman 1989: 74–75)—or a positive sense, providing a means of keeping those sins in check or even a remedy for them (in the sacrificial system; Dunn 1993a: 189–90; cf. also B. Longenecker 1998: 122–28; Burchard 1998: 189–91; Garlington 2003: 161). [Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 233–234]

The law has a way of making people want to break it. Paul explained this effect of the law to the Romans. “If it had not been for the law,” he wrote, “I would not have known sin” (Rom. 7:7). And as soon as Paul found out what sin was, he wanted to try it: “The law came in to increase the trespass” (Rom. 5:20). Or, to paraphrase what Paul said to the Galatians, the law was given “in order that there might be transgressions.”² Sometimes the law serves as a stimulus to sin.

One purpose of the law, then, is not preventive but provocative.³ Rather than preventing transgression, the law actually provokes people to sin. By doing so, it does not make things better, but makes a bad situation even worse: “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). God did not give the law to reveal the way to be justified; he gave it to disclose the evil power of sin. “Therefore,” wrote Martin Luther, “the true function and the chief and proper use of the Law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God. [Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 131–132]

“Added” does not mean added to the Abrahamic covt. “The Law was not of the essence of God’s redemptive activity” [Longenecker]

As the context makes clear, the law in question is the law of Moses, which was “added” 430 years after the Abrahamic covenant, added not as a codicil is appended to a will in order to alter its provisions but added in order to accomplish some other subordinate and supplementary purpose. This meaning is further clarified when we look at the parallel verse in Rom 5:20: “The law was added so that the trespass might increase.” In Romans the word for “added” (*pareisēlthen*) means literally “came in by a side road.”⁹³ The main road is the covenant of promise—inviolable, irrevocable. The law has the character of something additional, a side road intended to carry extra traffic and excess baggage and,

if we may anticipate Paul's argument, designed not to lead to a separate destination but to point its travelers back to the main road. [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 253]

Israel's failures resulted in more laws being added. Perhaps the decalogue would have been sufficient. "Every new addition to the law code follows an event of disobedience in the narrative describing Israel's history at this point. So 'transgressions' led to or caused the addition of the law." [Murphy, 135] This is true generally, cf. Rom. 7:7-8. Also 4:8.

Our first parents had one law which they broke resulting in many more.

2 Corinthians 3:7–9 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.

As Paul would explain more fully in 2 Cor 3:7–18, the ministry or covenant negotiated by Moses is characterized by death, condemnation, and evanescence—it is "fading away." On the other hand, the new covenant that Christ has ushered in is marked by life, justification, and a radiance of "ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 257–258]

Romans 5:20–21 20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The "chief and proper use of the law," Luther said, is its provocative function, actually to increase transgressions, to make a terrible situation even more desperate, and thus to reveal to human beings their "sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate and contempt of God, death, hell, judgment, and the well-deserved wrath of God." [LW 26.309]

until the seed had come to whom the promise had been made, (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ᾧ)

"Until" clause in Galatians. The until is Christ / the NC which deems the old obsolete.

ἄχρις οὗ. Introduces a temporal clause ("until"). If Paul's answer to the opening question is unclear, he is clear that the Torah was "added" as a temporary measure, to serve some function for the limited time between God making promises to Abraham and the "fullness of time" when the promised blessings would be delivered in Christ (τὸ σπέρμα . . . [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 70]

Paul's view here, of course, deviates widely from that of Judaism. Wis 18:4, for example, speaks of the "imperishable light of the law"; Josephus states that if not their wealth and their cities, at least the law given the Jews remains immortal (Ag.Ap. 2.277); and Philo echoes this sentiment in speaking of the changelessness of the law for as long as sun, moon, heavens, and the earth continue to exist (Vit. Mos. 2.14). The apocalyptic writings also emphasize the eternal and immutable character of the law (e.g., Jub. 1.27; 3.31; 6.17). It would, in fact, be difficult to find any Jew who thought otherwise. Certainly the Judaizers of Galatia argued along these lines. Viewing matters from a Christocentric perspective, however, Paul thought otherwise, and here he makes his point as to the law's intended duration. [Richard N. Longenecker, 139]

Just as it had a point of origin on Mount Sinai, so also it had a point of termination—Mount Calvary.

Many 1st c. "Jews believed that the Law had a permanent, eternal purpose and significance for the life of Israel (cf. 2 Bar. 4.1; 1 En. 99.2; Wis. 18:4; Jub. 1.27; 3.31; Josephus Ap. 2.277). Others saw it as being fulfilled when Messiah comes and that it would be changed or, perhaps, abrogated.

The temporary nature of the Law is emphasized five times in 3:19–25 (vv. 19c, 23a and c, 24a, 25).

having been put into place through angels by the agency of a mediator. (ἐπήγγελται, διαταγείς δι' ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου.)

Not "demons" as some claim (cf. Hübner quoted by Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 252). Or that Paul's view on the Law changed from the time he wrote Galatians to that of Romans (same citation). Paul is not down on the Law, *per se*.

That the angels played a part in the giving of the Law is part of Jewish tradition, and recorded in Scripture (Deut 33:2 [LXX]; Heb 2:2; Acts 7:38, 52 f.).

"Angels" — Deuteronomy 33:2 He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.

And it was such an understanding of angels as being present at the giving of the Mosaic law that seems to have been the dominant tradition in Paul's day, as in Jub. 1.27–29; Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2; Philo, *Somn.* 1.140–44; and Josephus, *Ant.* 15.136 . . . Such a mediatorial role for angels in the giving of the law seems to have been part of the widespread attempt in early Judaism to assign a role for angels in all the major revelatory and redemptive events of Scripture. . . . It was probably the case that the Judaizers were citing the angels' presence at Sinai as evidence of the law's glory and God's approval. Paul, however, turns this tradition in *ad hominem* fashion against them. [Richard N. Longenecker, 140]

The preposition διὰ (dia), while it can signify origin, much more commonly refers to instrumentality (e.g., Wallace 1996: 434). In other words, Paul is claiming not that “the law was put in place by angels” but that “the law was ordained through angels.” The idea that angels were involved in the giving of the law is not taught anywhere in the OT (though see Deut. 33:2 LXX), but it is a common Jewish tradition (Jub. 1.27–2.1; Philo, Somn. 1.143; Josephus, Ant. 15.136) that has left its mark on the NT elsewhere (Acts 7:38, 53; Heb. 2:2). [Douglas J. Moo, Galatians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 235]

Mediator = Moses. “In the Judaism of Paul’s day, however, the title μεσίτης (“mediator”) was commonly assigned to Moses.” [Richard N. Longenecker, 140]

The subject of the aorist participle translated “ordained” (diatageis) can only be God: God ordained the law through angels by the hand of a mediator. Put otherwise, God used angels in passing on the law to Moses. [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 257]

Exodus 34:29 It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses’ hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him.

Leviticus 26:46 These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.

Verse 20:

“This verse,” Terrance Callan tells us, “is one of the most obscure in the letters of Paul” (JBL 99 [1980] 549). Lightfoot reports that in his day “the number of interpretations of this passage is said to mount up to 250 or 300” (Galatians, 146), though he gives us none but his own; and Albrecht Oepke continues the hyperbole in speaking of 430 interpretations (Galater, 117), though obviously that number is taken from Gal 3:17 and not based on research. [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, 141]

In v 20 Paul tells us what it is about mediation that reflects negatively on the law: that the presence of a mediator implies a plurality that stands in contrast to the oneness of God. But how this plurality is to be defined is problematic. Of all the claimed hundreds of interpretations, three are most likely:

1. That the plurality signaled in ἐνὸς οὐκ (“not one”) has to do with a duality of parties involved in a mediated arrangement, God on the one hand and the Jewish people on the other (so J. B. Lightfoot, Galatians, 146–47; E. deW. Burton, Galatians, 191–92);

2. That the plurality signaled in ἐνός οὐκ has to do with a plurality of persons, though with the persons understood as being groups rather than individuals, and that since a whole group cannot easily engage in a transaction with another group, a mediator is required to act as a go-between—in this case between the angels, through whom the law was ordained, and the Jewish people (so H. Lietzmann, *Galater* [1923], 21–22; A. Oepke, “μεσίτης,” *TDNT* 4:619);

3. That the concept of a mediator itself implies a plurality, which stands in contrast to the oneness of God—the assumption being that any transaction in which a mediator is involved is inferior to one in which God acts directly (so H. D. Betz, *Galatians*, 171–73; T. Callan, *JBL* 99 [1980] 555–67).

It is extremely difficult to determine exactly what Paul meant when he said, “A mediator, however, is ἐνός οὐκ.” Is the plurality that of two parties (God and the Jewish people), or of two groups (angels and the Jewish people), or implied simply because of the inferiority of a mediator who must always work as a go-between?

Of the three positions, the latter two seem more tenuous than the first. The second falters because angels were never thought of in Judaism as being the principal cause or originators of the Torah, even though the tradition arose as to their being an efficient cause or agents of what took place at Sinai. Furthermore, the second view makes Moses only a functionary of the angels, which seems hard to countenance not only for Jews but also for Christians. The third view also seems tenuous because in all of the Jewish texts about Moses as a mediator of the Torah, nowhere does the fact of his being a mediator carry a negative connotation or reflect badly on the law itself. And while it can be argued that Paul here, as has been his pattern, “once again gives the tradition an unexpected twist in somehow viewing the fact that it was mediated by Moses as a point against the law” (T. Callan, *JBL* 99 [1980] 555), yet because Paul’s arguments throughout the probatio of *Galatians* are mounted directly against the law itself, in both its legalistic and nomistic forms, one wonders why he would now change the focus of that polemic to attack Moses directly and the law only as a result of its association with Moses. The first position, while not without difficulties, at least keeps the focus of attention on the inferiority of the law itself without deflecting attention first to either angels or Moses. Its point has to do with the inferiority of the law because of its indirect introduction into the people’s experience. That is certainly a different understanding than Judaism had of what went on at Sinai, but at least it is not first a put-down of the angels or Moses in order then to put down the law. [Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, vol. 41, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 141–142]

After giving several options, Douglas J. Moo, favors the second:

On the whole, then, the second general approach to this verse offers the fewest difficulties. The very existence of a mediator in the giving of the law implies an involvement on the human side that stands in contrast to the gift-character of the promise, suggested (albeit very remotely) by the confession that God is one. [Douglas J. Moo,

Galatians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 237]

Now a mediator is not for one [person], (ὁ δὲ μεσίτης ἑνὸς οὐκ ἔστιν.)

Paul is therefore saying that unless there are two parties, a mediator is not needed (compare JB “now there can only be an intermediary between two parties”; NAB “there can be no mediator when only one person is involved”; NEB “an intermediary is not needed for one party acting alone”). [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, 76]

Mediation also implies a contract between God and Israel. Therefore, the promises of the covenant were dependent on both parties fulfilling their responsibilities. The Sinai covenant failed because Israel did not do what was demanded and broke the stipulations of the covenant. The promise given to Abraham, by contrast, is dependent on God alone. And since it depends on his promise and is not contingent, it will certainly be fulfilled. [Thomas R. Schreiner, Galatians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 243]

but God is one. (ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν.)

ὁ δὲ θεὸς εἷς ἔστιν. A recitation of the opening verse of the Shema (LXX Deut 6:4), the fundamental credal statement of early Judaism. The logic is murky, but Paul’s point seems to be that the very giving of the Torah is in conflict with the Oneness of God, the God of Jew and Gentile (see the application of the Shema in Rom 3:27–30). [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 71]

The theological implications of the verse are difficult to understand. Here Paul again uses rabbinical methods to drive home his point. His point here is the superiority of the promise over the Law. What he has in mind all along is that the promise was not given through a go—between, but came directly from God. It is really difficult to make sense of the final statement in this verse, God is one. It reflects an Old Testament declaration, but its application to this particular context is certainly not clear. In some languages one cannot say literally “God is one.” It is, of course, possible to say “God is one God,” but this would appear to be repetitious and meaningless. Apparently the thought behind the expression employed by Paul is that “God acted directly,” or “God acted as one person without a go—between,” and in some instances this may be the only legitimate way to communicate the intent of this rather obscure expression. [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, 76]

Thus running parallel to the tradition that Moses acted as a mediator in the giving of the law at Sinai, there was also another tradition that stressed God’s direct dealing with his people over anything mediated (for discussions of the above references, see J. Goldin,

“Not by Means of an Angel and Not by Means of a Messenger,” 412–24; T. Callan, JBL 99 [1980] 556–58). And this tradition may very well have been in the back of Paul’s mind when he argued here in v 20 that the circumstances involved in the giving of the law at Sinai only serve to point up the inferiority of that law, whereas God’s redemptive activity is always direct and unilateral in nature, reflecting the oneness of his person. [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 143]

As Stephen Neill comments, “The promise came to Abraham firsthand from God; and the law comes to the people third-hand—God—the angels—Moses the mediator—the people.” [Stephen C. Neill, Paul to the Galatians (Lutterworth, UK: World Christian Books, 1958), 44]

Since there is one God, there is one way of salvation.

3:21 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

Ὁ οὖν νόμος κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ]; μὴ γένοιτο. εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι, ὧντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη·

Ὁ οὖν νόμος (— || Noun: M.N.S.). Subject nom.
κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ]; (ἐπαγγελία, ας, ἡ || Verb: F.G.P.). [τοῦ θεοῦ]. Subjective genitive (“the promises God made”) or genitive of source (“the promises received from God”).
μὴ γένοιτο. (— || Verb: Aor. Midd. Optative, 3S).
εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη (δίδωμι || Verb: Aorist, Passive, Indicative, 3S). εἰ. Introduces the protasis of a second-class (contrary-to-fact) condition.
νόμος (— || Noun: M.N.S.). Anarthrous: “any law.”
ὁ δυνάμενος (δύναμαι || Participle: M.N.S. middle / passive). Attributive participle.
ζωοποιῆσαι, (ζωοποιέω = to give life, to cause to live || Verb: Aor. Act. Infin.).
ὧντως (ὧντως = certainly, indeed, in truth || Adverb).
ἐκ νόμου (— || Noun: M.G.S.).
ἂν (Conditional particle, not translated). Marks the apodosis as belonging to a contrary-to-fact (second-class) condition.
ἦν (εἶμι || Verb: Imperfect, Active, Indicative, 3S).
ἡ δικαιοσύνη· (δικαιοσύνη || Noun: F.N.S.).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

Now is the Law against the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law was given that was able to give life, righteousness would indeed have been by the Law.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Now is the Law against the promises of God? (Ὁ οὖν νόμος κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ];)

[τοῦ θεοῦ] — P46 and B, two early and important witnesses, omit these words. Since the τοῦ θεοῦ can be explained as an early scribal clarification (perhaps motivated by the tendency to harmonize texts, here in the direction of Rom 4:20; 2 Cor 1:20), the shorter reading is probably to be preferred. [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, ed. Martin M. Culy, 71–72]

We come now to the third question Paul posed in Galatians 3. He opened the chapter by asking the Galatians, “Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing

what you heard?” (3:2). It was a question they could answer for themselves based on their experience of God’s working in their midst. The second query, “What, then, was the purpose of the law?” (v. 19), could not be so self-evidently answered and thus required a fuller explanation from the apostle. The third question, “Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God?” elicits an immediate and indignant response, “Absolutely not!” [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 258]

If there is such a distinction between the Law and the promise, and if there is such a clear superiority of the promise over the Law, then does this mean that the Law is against God’s promises? This rhetorical question is immediately answered with a strong negative statement. [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, 77]

May it never be! (μὴ γένοιτο.)

Pauline expression (he uses it 13 of 15 occurrences).

2:17 “But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

It was not opposed to God’s promises, for it operated in the economy of God on a different level or plane than did God’s promises. [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 145]

The Law/law is good for what the Law/law is good for. Cf. 1 Timothy 1:5-10).

For if a law was given that was able to give life, (εἰ γὰρ ἐδόθη νόμος ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι,)

The postpositive γάρ (“for”) sets off this sentence and the next as the explanatory reason for Paul’s strong negative exclamation. This first sentence of Paul’s explanation is in the form of a second class “contrary to fact” condition (εἰ with a past tense in the protasis; ἄν with a past tense in the apodosis), which assumes the condition to be untrue (cf. 1:10b; see also 1 Cor 2:8; 1 John 2:19). [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 143]

The aorist passive ἐδόθη (“had been given”) coupled with the anarthrous νόμος signals the idea of “any God-given law.” The adjectival participial phrase ὁ δυνάμενος ζωοποιῆσαι (“which is able to give life”) goes grammatically with νόμος, but the form of the sentence shows plainly that the association of “law” and “life” is for Paul a false one. “Life” in Paul’s thought is “spiritual life” (cf. Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22, 36; 2 Cor 3:6; see also John 6:63), which stands in antithesis to “death” with which the law is associated.

[Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 143–144]

Some interpreters understand law in the clause for if mankind had received a law to refer to the Torah or the Jewish law (NAB, JB “if the Law we were given”). However, since in the Greek “law” is not preceded by the article, many exegetes have argued that Paul is here referring to any law, and particularly, as the context shows, any divine law (compare Phps, RSV, Knox). [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, 77]

ζωοποιῆσαι. Aor act inf ζωοποιέω (complementary). Paul speaks of a quality of life beyond mere biological existence here (as all people have the latter before the question of Torah observance becomes relevant to them), whether coming alive to God (see 2:19–20) or living beyond death (or both; see BDAG, 431.1.a). The Torah cannot “make alive” in the sense of opening its adherents up to living a new kind of existence in the here and now and living an eternal life beyond death, beyond God’s judgment (so Fung, 162–63). This was simply never its purpose. It should be noted that Paul’s claim runs directly against contemporary Jewish views concerning the Torah (e.g., m. ’Abot 6.7: “Great is the Torah, for it gives life to those who practice it both in this world and in the world to come”; see Betz 1979, 148). [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 72]

For the plural form of “promises,” see verse 16. The expected answer, in the light of everything Paul has said so far, is in the affirmative. But Paul answers in the negative: No, not at all! (Phps “certainly not”; JB “of course not”; NAB “unthinkable!”; NEB “no, never!”). For this expression, see 2:17.

Paul is able to give a negative answer to this question because he not only allows that the Law has a function, but that function is even related to the fulfillment of God’s promise. Already he has said that the Law functions as showing what wrongdoing is (verse 19), and later he takes up other functions of the Law: as teacher (verses 23–25) and as guardian (4:1 ff.). But the function of the Law is not the same as the function of the promise. The function of the promise is to bring life. If the Law could do that, then it would be competing with the promise. But the Law cannot bring life, because it was not given for such a purpose. [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1976), 77]

Basically there are two possible ways of interpreting the expression to bring life:

(1) “Life” may be interpreted as “eternal life,” “spiritual life,” or “moral life,” as opposed to physical existence. This kind of life is made possible by man being in a right relationship with God. What Paul is saying, then, is: If there is a law that could put men

right with God, then eternal life could be achieved through law. In this sense one may often translate as “could cause men really to live,” or “could cause men to share the life that comes from God” (as a reference to “spiritual life”).

(2) “Life” may be interpreted simply as a state brought about by a right relationship with God. Previously, Paul has used “to live” as synonymous with “to be put right with God” (see verse 12), and here he may be doing the same thing. If this is the case, then “to bring life” could be understood as another way of saying “to be put right with God.” [Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 78]

righteousness would indeed have been by the Law. (ὄντως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ᾦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη·)

“based upon the Law.”

Romans 7:7–13 7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” 8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. 9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; 10 and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; 11 for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. 12 So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 13 Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

As one writer observes:

Like the Israelites in Egypt, we are commanded to make bricks without straw, to be perfectly holy when we have none of the makings of holiness—to love God with all our hearts and the neighbor as ourselves when we are without divine charity. [cited by Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 261]

Certain tools are for certain purposes. If I want to drive in a nail, I don’t use a pair of pliers, I use a hammer. The purpose of the Law was not to bring life. It could not do so. Life comes by the promise received by faith in Christ.

3:22 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν (συνγκλείω = to confine, imprison || Verb: Aorist, Active, Indicative, 3S).
ἡ γραφή (— || Noun: F.N.S.).
τὰ πάντα (— || Noun: N.A.S.). τὰ πάντα. Accusative direct object of συνέκλεισεν. The use of the neuter rather than masculine (inclusive) form emphasizes the collective nature of this state (Burton, 196). [David A. deSilva, 73]
ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν, (— || Noun: F.A.S.).
ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία (ἐπαγγελία, ας, ἡ || Verb: F.N.S.).
ἐκ πίστεως (πίστις, πίστεως || Noun: F.G.S.). ἐκ πίστεως. Basis or means. See 2:16 on this phrase (and the near-synonymous διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ — Objective genitive (trust directed toward Jesus Christ).
δοθῇ (δίδωμι || Verb: Aorist, Passive, Subjunctive, 3S).
τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. (πιστεύω || Participle: Present, active, M.D.P.). Attributive participle. Note present tense.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

But the Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

But the Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin, (ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν,)

ἀλλὰ. Strong adversative, introducing what Paul considers to be the “actual” state of affairs as opposed to the hypothetical state (the possibility of the law giving life) he rejects in 3:21. [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 73]

Does refer to a specific Scripture, a metonymy for God, or for the Scripture in general (the best view):

[W]e think it more likely that Paul here, as in 3:8, has in view the testimony of Scripture in general, with a focus perhaps on how the OT as a whole functions, via the law, to bring everything under sin’s power . . . [Douglas J. Moo, Galatians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 239]

The entire Scripture tells us that we are sinners without hope apart from a Redeemer (the “seed”). Rom. 3:23. This is true for the Jews, who have the law of Moses, and also for the Gentiles, who have God’s law written on their hearts (see Rom. 2:14–15).

συνέκλεισεν. Aor act ind 3rd sg συγκλείω. The verb essentially means “to confine,” but can be used in contexts where that confinement means “imprisonment” (BDAG, 952.2; Matera, 135). [David A. deSilva, *Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 73]

Paul may deliberately here use the neuter form to indicate a broader reference to the whole cosmos, in keeping with the reversal that Paul proclaims with the language of “new creation” (6:15; Martyn 1997: 360; Witherington 1998: 260). Romans 8:18–22 shows that Paul views the entire cosmos as having been made subject to “bondage of decay” (8:21) because of sin. [Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 239]

so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.)

“The promise” is the promise given to Abraham, and, as in verse 14. To those who believe is in contrast to the whole world.

τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. (πιστεύω || Participle: Present, active, M.D.P.). Attributive participle. Note present tense: continue in faith (as opposed to forsaking the gospel).

Luther:

Here one must say: “Stop, law! You have caused enough terror and sorrow.” ... Then let the law withdraw; for it was indeed added for the sake of disclosing and increasing transgressions, but only until the point when the Offspring would come. Once he is present, let the law stop disclosing transgressions and terrifying. Let it surrender its realm to another, that is, to the Blessed Offspring, Christ; he has gracious lips, with which he does not accuse and terrify but speaks better things than the law, namely, grace, peace, forgiveness of sins, and victory over sin and death. [LW 26.317]

Calvin (1854: 68) remarks about this verse:

This sentence is full of the highest consolation. It tells us that, wherever we hear ourselves condemned in Scripture, there is help provided for us in Christ, if we betake ourselves to him. We are lost, though God were silent: why then does he so often pronounce that we are lost? It is that we may not perish by everlasting destruction, but, struck and confounded by such a dreadful sentence, may by faith seek Christ, through whom we “pass from death unto life.” [cited in Moo, 240]

There was an early Jewish doctrine of three epochs in world-history—the age of chaos, the age of law, and the messianic age—each lasting for 2,000 years, after which the eternal sabbath rest would be enjoyed (b. Sanh. 97a; m. Tamid 7:4). [Babylonian Talmud (before title tractate); Sanh. Sanhedrin (tractate); m. Mishnah (before title of tractate)] | [F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 176]

For one brought up in this doctrine it followed that, ‘if the “Days of the Messiah” have commenced, those of the Torah came to their close. On the other hand, if the Law, the Torah, still retained its validity, it was proclaimed thereby that the Messiah had not yet arrived’ (L. Baeck, ‘The Faith of Paul’, *JJS* 3 [1952], 106; cf. H.-J. Schoeps, *Paul*, 171ff.). For a comprehensive discussion see W. D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (Philadelphia, 1952). [F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 176]

3:23 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι,

Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν (ἔρχομαι || Verb: Aorist, Active, Infinitive).

τὴν πίστιν (— || Noun: F.A.S.).

ὑπὸ νόμον (— || Noun: M.A.S.).

ἐφρουρούμεθα (φρουρέω = to detain, confine, imprison || Verb: Imperfect, Pass., Indicative, 1P).

συγκλειόμενοι (συγκλείω = to confined, imprisoned || Participle: Present, Passive, Plural, M.N.).
Circumstantial participle.

εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν (μέλλω = to take place in the future || Participle: Pres., Active, Singular, F.A.).
Attributive participle.

πίστιν (— || Noun: F.A.S.).

ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, (ἀποκαλύπτω = to reveal || Verb: Aorist, Passive, Infinitive).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

But before the faith came we were confined under law, having been imprisoned until the coming faith was later to be revealed.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

But before the faith came we were confined under law, (Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα)

After using the third person for most of the chapter (vv. 6–22), Paul reverts to the first person (we). In using we, he first of all identifies himself with the Jewish people, to whom both covenants were given.

See previous verse: the faith in Jesus.

ὑπὸ νόμον. Subordination (see 3:10 on ὑπὸ κατάραν). The lack of an article does not mean that Paul has moved away from thinking about the Torah in particular to thinking about law as a general principle (contra Fung, 167), as Paul will immediately speak again of ὁ νόμος in the following verse. The lack of an article does, however, give the phrase a qualitative force. [David A. deSilva, Galatians: A Handbook on the Greek Text, 74]

ἐφρουρούμεθα. Impf pass ind 1st pl φρουρέω. The word could communicate a sense of guardianship or protection (which would be appropriate for the analogy of the

παιδαγωγός that follows in 3:24; see N. Young, 150–76) or, like συγκλείω, a sense of imprisonment (BDAG, 1066–67.2–3). The tense suggests a state or condition that persisted over time. [David A. deSilva, 74]

“When Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” (Rom 2:14–15).

having been imprisoned until the coming faith was later to be revealed. (συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι,)

μέλλουσιν. Pres act ptc fem acc sg μέλλω (attributive, describing πίστιν). The verb points to an imminent action in regard to the past state of being kept under guard; it is well past by the time Paul writes. [David A. deSilva, 74]

Coming faith does not refer to justification through faith, as that was demonstrated through Abraham, as we’ve seen. It must here refer to Christ and the N.T. Gospel.

The Midrash on Song 2:13, applying the passage in conjunction with Jer. 31:31, expressly states that the Messiah would give Israel a new law, and the Targum, on Is. 12:3, although perhaps not quite so clearly, also speaks of a ‘new instruction.’ It is needless to multiply proofs (such as Vayyikra R. 13). But the Talmud goes even further, and lays down the two principles, that in the ‘age to come’ the whole ceremonial Law and all the feasts were to cease.² And although this may be regarded as merely a general statement, it is definitely applied to the effect, that all sacrifices except the thank-offering, and all fasts and feasts except the Day of Atonement, or else the Feast of Esther, were to come to an end—nay (in the Midr. on the words ‘the Lord looseth the bound,’ Ps. 146:7), that what had formerly been ‘bound’ or forbidden would be ‘loosed’ or allowed, notably that the distinctions between clean and unclean animals would be removed. [Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. 2 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), 765. See text for footnotes]

A new Moses would have to arise to change the Torah [Cf. W.D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come, 52]

“The Lord permits the forbidden (Ps. 146:7). . . . What does this mean? Some say that in the time to come all the animals which are unclean in this world God will declare to be clean as they were in the days of Noah.” [Midrash Tehillim on Psalm 146:7, cited by W.D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come, 58]

“It is surely a striking and significant fact that the New Testament presents Christianity, among other things, as a movement which not only denies the old Torah on one level, and affirms and fulfills it on another, but also introduces a new Torah.” [W.D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come, 91]

“We may with some confidence assert that the Gospel of Matthew regards the words of Jesus as a New Torah; and tended to find in them the ground for a new halakah. The words of Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, they were the Torah of the Messiah.” [W.D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come, 92]

Although Paul regards the words of Jesus as the basis of a kind of Christian halakah, it is Christ Himself in His person, not only or chiefly in His words, who constitutes the New Torah; and so too in the Fourth Gospel the New Torah is not only epitomized in the commandment of *agape* which finds its norm in the love of Christ for His own and the love of God for Christ, but is realized also in the Person of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, i.e. the personalized Torah who is set over against Moses.” [W.D. Davies, Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come, 93]

3:24-25 EXEGESIS

GREEK TEXT:

24 ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν· 25 ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν.

ὥστε (ὥστε = so then, therefore || Conjunction: logical inferential).

ὁ νόμος (— || Noun: M.N.S.). Subject nom.

παιδαγωγὸς (παιδαγωγός = tutor, schoolmaster, guardian || Noun: M.N.S.). Predicate nominative.

ἡμῶν (ἐγώ || First Person Independent Pronoun: D.P.).

γέγονεν (— || Verb: Perfect, Active, Indicative, 3S).

εἰς (Note this use by BAG: extension in time, to, until, on).

Χριστόν, —

ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως (πίστις, πίστεως || Noun: F.G.S.).

δικαιωθῶμεν· (δικαιόω || Verb: Aorist, Passive, Subjunctive, 1P).

ἐλθούσης δὲ (ἔρχομαι || Participle: Aorist, Active, Singular, F.G.). Perfective aorist.

τῆς πίστεως (— || Noun: F.G.S.).

οὐκέτι (οὐκέτι = no longer || Adverb: negative).

ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν (παιδαγωγός = tutor, schoolmaster, guardian || Noun: M.A.S.). Subordination (see 3:10 on ὑπὸ κατάραν).

ἐσμεν.(— || Verb: Present, Active, Indicative, 1P).

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

24 Therefore, the Law has become our guardian until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

CONTEXTUAL, GRAMMATICAL, THEOLOGICAL, APPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS:

Verse 24:

Therefore, the Law has become our guardian until Christ, (ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν,)

The word παιδαγωγός means literally a boy or child leader and it refers to a member of the household entrusted with the care and guardianship of a minor. This person was almost always a slave,⁴² and very often in the first century A.D. was a foreigner. In place from age 6-7 through late teens. [Witherington, 263] Best translated “guardian” rather than “tutor.”

In view of the widespread practice of pederasty, a father was usually careful to choose an older man as his son's 'guardian', indeed not infrequently an old man who had outlived his usefulness in performing some of the more strenuous physical activities required in the managing of an estate or household. This is no doubt why the pedagogue is so often depicted as aged in vase paintings and terra cotta figures.⁴⁵ Stobaeus in fact complained that fathers too often gave what was most valuable by nature (he is referring to the training of sons) to the least valuable (monetarily speaking) household members—old or injured slaves (Ecl. 121). [Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 264]

In ancient Greece and Rome wealthy parents often placed their newborn babies under the care of a wet-nurse who in turn would pass them on to an older woman, a nanny who would care for their basic needs until about the age of six. At that time they came under the supervision of another household servant, the *paidagōgos*, who remained in charge of their upbringing until late adolescence.¹²³ The pedagogue took over where the nanny left off in terms of offering menial care and completing the process of socialization for his charge. For example, one of the functions of the pedagogue was to offer instruction in the basics of manners as this description from Plutarch reveals: "And yet what do tutors [*hoi paidagōgoi*] teach? To walk in the public streets with lowered head; to touch salt-fish but with one finger, but fresh fish, bread, and meat with two; to sit in such and such a posture; in such and such a way to wear their cloaks."¹²⁴ The pedagogues also offered round-the-clock supervision and protection to those under their care. In this regard Libanius described the pedagogues as guardians of young teenage boys who warded off unsolicited homosexual advances their charges regularly encountered in the public baths, thus becoming "like barking dogs to wolves." [Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 265]

Cf. 23b "until." The preposition *eis* can have either a purposive, "unto Christ," or a temporal, "until Christ," meaning. I'm opting for the time element in this context.

Paul implies that the pedagogue is replaced in the life of the Christian by other things, namely: (1) the example of Christ; (2) the 'Law' or principle of Christ; and (3) the Holy Spirit (chapter 5, esp. v. 18). [Witherington, 266] 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. The verb 'led' (ἄγεσθε) in 5:18 the verbal form of ἀγώγος, part of the word pedagogue.

Paul's metaphor here suggests that the pedagogue was for Jews before the time of Christ, and now that Christ has come no one needs or is required to submit to it for getting in, staying in, or going on in the Christian life. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts in the new era, what counts is the new creation. [Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 267]

The analogy of a pedagogue who brings his young charge to a teacher (the role of a παιδαγωγόν verses that of a διδάσκαλον). Note that a παιδαγωγός was temporary (“until”).

In the present context, however, eis Christon should be translated “until Christ” rather than “unto Christ,” for Paul was again stressing the temporary nature of the law that in the unfolding of redemptive history had both a terminus a quo, Mount Sinai, and an equally punctiliar terminus ad quem, Mount Calvary. Paul was saying to the Galatians: “Look! About twenty years ago something happened in Jerusalem that has forever changed the history of the world. God’s promised Messiah appeared on earth. He was born under the law and fulfilled its every jot and tittle to utter perfection. For our sake he suffered the curse of the law in his own body on the cross so that we might be justified and set free from the bondage from sin and death that the law had justly imposed upon us because of our rebellion and unbelief.” [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 267]

Paul is bringing to a climax his argument about the salvation-historical shift that has taken place with the coming of Christ/faith, there may also be some indirect reference to the Galatians as well: “We Jews—and certainly, therefore, any of us, including you Galatians—are no longer under a guardian.” [Douglas J. Moo, Galatians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 244]

Notice how Xenophon puts the matter: “When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad, others release him from his ‘pedagogue’ and from his teacher; he is then no longer under them, but is allowed to go his own way” (Laced. 3.1). [Ben Witherington III, Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 265]

so that we might be justified by faith. (ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν·)

“I have said that although justification is 'by faith alone,' faith is not the ground of justification; only Christ is that. What role, then, is played by faith? Faith is what receives the grace of God in Christ. So theologians have described its role as instrumental. Faith claims no merit for itself; it makes no claim to deserve the gift of God's righteousness. It confesses that only Christ can save, and only his righteousness can justify.

"This is the main difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic views of justification. For Roman Catholicism, justification is primarily God's making us righteous, not declaring us righteous. It is not a consistently forensic concept, but overlaps sanctification. So on the Roman view, God makes us righteous within and declare us to be righteous on the basis of his 'infused righteousness.' That infused righteousness, which includes both faith and works, merits eternal life. This means, then, that salvation is based partly on our works. The consequence, then, is that we cannot be assured of our salvation

in this life, because we are never sure whether our works have been sufficient." [John Frame, Systematic Theology, 969]

The law is a harsh taskmaster: a prison warden, a public executioner, a pitiless pedagogue. But the condemnatory character of the law was a part of God's design from the beginning, and the coming of Christ has forever altered its former claim and status. To seek to go back under the tutelage of the law is to deny the efficacy of Christ's death. We who are the true children of Abraham through faith are no longer under the law or its curse. No longer slaves or truant children now, we have been set free, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and adopted as heirs of God himself. [Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 270]

Martin Luther: "that I know that by the Law I am being brought to an acknowledgment of sin and am being humbled, so that I may come to Christ and be justified by faith." [cited in Ryken, 141]

Verse 25:

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. (ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἔσμεν.)

The Law has served its intended function and is no longer in charge of us as the time for justification by faith in Christ has come.

Here Paul delivers the coup de grâce to the Judaizers' argument for Gentile Christians to live a lifestyle governed by the Mosaic law. For with the coming of the Christian gospel (τῆς πίστεως) as effected by Christ, the law no longer has validity as a παιδαγωγός regulating the life of faith. One may, of course, as a Jew continue to live a Jewish nomistic lifestyle for cultural, national, or pragmatic reasons. To be a Jewish believer in Jesus did not mean turning one's back on one's own culture or nation. Yet no longer could it be argued that circumcision, Jewish dietary laws, following distinctly Jewish ethical precepts, or any other matter having to do with a Jewish lifestyle were requisite for the life of faith. [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 149]

The Christian church today has many who formally oppose legalism but hold firmly to nomism. Theirs is a religion of piety that they believe to be God-honoring. What they fail to realize, however, is that in many ways they are recapitulating the error of the Judaizers. More importantly, they fail to appreciate Paul's words regarding the purpose and function of the law here in 3:19–25, often preferring to dwell on his words of 3:1–18. Furthermore, they fail to appreciate the full import of what it means to be "in Christ" as presented in

3:26–29 that follows. [Richard N. Longenecker, Galatians, vol. 41, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 150]

What was to be the status of the Torah in the age of the Messiah? Paul may have debated this very question in his pre-Christian rabbinic training because it was a burning issue in the thought world of second-temple Judaism. Some believed that when Messiah came the old law would be modified or a new one promulgated. Still others divided the history of the world into three epochs, each lasting some two thousand years: the age of chaos, the age of law, and the messianic age. According to this view, there was to be a major break between the second and third epochs so that “if the Torah still retained its validity, it was proclaimed thereby that the Messiah had not yet arrived.”

fn. See also W. D. Davies, *Torah and the Messianic Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952). R. Banks has shown that much of the evidence cited by Davies in support of his thesis that the messianic age would usher in a new Torah or at least a major modification of the old law reflects later rabbinic speculations. This does not mean, however, that such ideas could not have been present in Paul’s time as well. See R. Banks, “The Eschatological Role of Law in Pre- and Post-Christian Jewish Thought,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 173–85.

[Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 254]

The Mosaic Law had an expiration date.

In other words, what comes to the forefront with the word “custodian” (παιδαγωγός) is the interim character of the law. Just as people had a pedagogue only as long as they were children, so too the law was intended to be in force for a limited time in the history of salvation. The Judaizers, who insisted on circumcision, failed to see that the Mosaic law was not designed to be permanent. Therefore, in using the word “custodian” (παιδαγωγός), the precise focus is neither negative or positive. What comes to the forefront is the temporary role of the law. It functioned as a kind of babysitter until the fullness of time came. [Thomas R. Schreiner, Galatians, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 249]

The interim character of the law and therefore of the Mosaic covenant is a distinctive and indeed revolutionary feature in Paul’s theology. Before Paul believed in Jesus Christ, he fervently believed what most Jews of his day asserted, that the law remained binding until the end of history. Rabbinic Judaism after the time of Paul also assumed and promoted the continuing validity of the law. Therefore, Paul’s notion that the promise to Abraham takes precedence over the law is a striking innovation. He read the OT in terms of its story line and did not conceive of it as a flat entity that could be mined apart from the overall story.

One cannot cite any part of the OT as binding for people today (like circumcision, food laws, tithing, or Sabbath laws) without considering where such commands are in the entire story. The OT as a whole must not be thought of as a gigantic book of Proverbs but must be read and interpreted in light of the unfolding story of redemption. Indeed, Paul makes it clear that the Mosaic law is not binding on believers today, for the Mosaic covenant is no longer the standard for believers. [Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 250]

. . . the Law is seen by Paul as an important parenthesis between the Abrahamic covenant and the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham in Christ, but a parenthesis nonetheless, a temporary means of God's dealing with the chosen people. [Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 254]

Relevant for vv. 26ff.:

Careful attention must be paid to the use of pronouns throughout Paul's arguments in Gal. 3–4, and this subdivision of Paul's second argument is no different. In vss. 23–25 we have the first person plural 'we' which is distinguished from 'you all' in vss. 26–29. Once again, in 4:3–5 Paul goes back to the first person plural, but returns again to the second person plural in 4:6–10. In the 'we' passages Paul is describing the situation of those under the Law, namely Jews, which of course included Paul before his conversion to Christ. In the 'you' passages Paul is directly addressing the Galatians, who were apparently overwhelmingly Gentile in terms of ethnic extraction. [Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 267]