

COMING OF AGE

Coming of age stories resonate with us because we all know what it feels like when a season ends and a new one begins. Something shifts. You can feel it. And you know you can't go back. One of the most popular coming of age movies is the 1986 Rob Reiner movie *Stand By Me*. During the weekend before starting junior high, four twelve-year-old boys set out on a two-day journey along the railroad tracks to find the dead body of a missing kid.

VIDEO: STAND BY ME

He ends the movie saying, "I never had friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve."

Gordie looks back on that summer and knows — something changed. He crossed a threshold he could never uncross. The boy who walked into those woods came out different. Not just older. Different. And he spent the rest of his life knowing that summer marked the end of one thing and the beginning of something else entirely.

Most of us have a moment like that. A before and after. A line we crossed that changed everything.

Jesus rose from the grave and defeated death. There was a before. And there is now an after. And the difference between the two is not just significant — it's everything.

Turn with me to Galatians chapter 3

Galatians 3:15-18 ESV

15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. **16** Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. **17** This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. **18** For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Abraham simply believed that promise and it was accounted to him, it was given to him as righteousness. Paul's point in this text is that 430 years before the Law even showed up on the scene, God had granted salvation to Abraham.

His point in the text is: the law can't save you. God does not save via behavioral modification. You doing better, you living a cleaner life, does not save you. You being more and more obedient to the Ten Commandments cannot save you because God granted salvation through faith alone, grace alone, before the law even existed. Paul's argument is, "If you can be saved by cleaning up your act, then God's a liar."

It's like if your last will and testament is read and a judge adds a GPA requirement for your kids.

The judge can't do that. They cannot add to a ratified document. They don't have the rights.

If we were saved 430 years before the Law was given, why was the Law given? What's the point off the Law?

FIRST

It seeks to restrain evil. It doesn't make you righteous but it restrains evil.

"there's a reason why you don't speed badly." Is it because you're righteous? Or because you don't want a ticket?

This is what the law does: the law is like a cage that restrains a lion. It doesn't change the nature of the lion, it just cages in the lion.

The Law doesn't make you free it just restrains your evil.

SECOND

The Law is a spectacular diagnostic. Most people believe they are good people. Because we compare our strength against other people's weaknesses.

The law of God, those Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, are like a hammer on glass to the myth of self-righteousness that so many people walk in.

So the guy that comes to church every weekend, the guy that wakes up early and reads his Bible, the guy that memorizes the Scripture but doesn't love and know Jesus in doing those things is self-righteousness.

But the one who does whatever he wants, goes wherever he wants, has no fear of the law of God is also just as self-righteous.

The law reads everyone the same: Sinner in need of grace; fallen short of the glory of God.

Galatians 3:19-20 ESV

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

Clarify: the Law was given to because of sin to cage it until Jesus, The Offspring, arrived. The Law was put in place by an intermediary, Moses.

What is the purpose of an intermediary? To settle a dispute between two parties. Moses, is a lousy intermediary because all he can do is give the law that condemns the people.

VIDEO: THE PROMISED LAND

All Moses can do is hear peoples problems and say "This is really, really, jacked up. Good luck." Moses doesn't give us any way to be saved. He just simply points out, "This is actually a bigger mess than you guys think."

Galatians 3:21-22 ESV

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

The Law was given by God, therefore it cannot contradict the previous promises of God. The Law is a wearisome weight on our shoulders, if we are trying to use it to earn our salvation.

Matthew 11:28 ESV

"Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I'll give you rest for your souls."

Are you trying to carry the weight of salvation on your own shoulders, give it to me and I will carry that load. I came to bring you rest.

Galatians 3:23-29 ESV

"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

The word translated "guardian" is *paidagogos* ("**pie-dah-go-GOhs**") in Greek — not a teacher, but more like a custodian or escort. In the Roman world, this was a slave who accompanied a child, kept them in line, and protected them until they came of age.

Guardian is a temporary position. The law was our babysitter or nanny. When the actual owner, or master arrives, the guardian is stripped of its power. The babysitter didn't get to tell me what to do when my parents arrived.

Paul's point is that the Law was never the destination — it was a temporary, protective measure pointing *toward* something. That reframing is huge: the Law isn't bad, it just wasn't the goal.

Many Christians still live as though they're under the custodian's watch, earning approval, walking on eggshells before God. *You are not a child under supervision anymore — you are a son or daughter, an heir.* The posture of the Christian life is freedom and inheritance, not anxious performance.

"Now that faith has come" Paul writes as if faith itself arrived at a moment in history — not just individual belief, but the *era* of faith inaugurated by Christ. Jesus' resurrection ushered in a new era. Something broke open in the world. The veil was torn and the this new era of faith has begun.

"You have put on Christ" — like putting on clothing. Baptism is a new identity, not just a ritual. You don't just get a membership card, you get new clothes and a new identity.

Many scholars think verse 28 is actually an early Christian baptismal confession — something new believers declared when they came up out of the water. Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female — these were the three fundamental social divisions of the ancient world. Paul says they're relativized *in Christ*. Not erased in daily life, but no longer determinative of standing before God or within the community.

We are all children of Abraham and in line to inherit the promise =given to Abraham. The through-line is the *promise and* not the law. Being in Christ means being grafted into something older and deeper than Sinai.

The line has been crossed, we cannot go back. Why would we ever want to go back? The resurrection of Jesus has brought with it a new identity and a new way of living.

COMING OF AGE

GALATIANS 3:15-29 ESV

15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. **16** Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. **17** This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. **18** For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. **22** But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. **24** So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, **26** for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. **27** For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Here are six small group questions that move from observation to application:

In verses 23-25, Paul describes the Law as a "guardian" or paidagogos. In the ancient world, this was a slave who escorted and supervised a child until adulthood. What does this image tell us about the purpose of the Law — and what it was never meant to be?

Paul says the promise made to Abraham came 430 years before the Law (v. 17). Why does that chronology matter to his argument? What does it tell us about which is more foundational — promise or law?

Do you ever relate to God more like a child under a guardian's supervision — trying to stay out of trouble — than like an heir who is fully accepted? What does that look like practically in your daily life?

Verse 28 says there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" in Christ. These were the three deepest social divisions of the ancient world. What are the equivalent divisions in your community or culture today, and how should this verse shape how your church handles them?

"You have put on Christ" (v. 27) — like clothing that others see before they see you. What would it look like this week for Christ to be the most visible thing about you in a specific relationship or situation?

The passage ends with "heirs according to promise." An heir receives something they didn't earn. How does that change the way you think about your standing before God — and how might it change the way you live?