

Live like I mean it! Living on the Promise

Galatians 3:15-25

Todd Kleinhans July 30, 2019

Ok, let's keep it simple today. Two points:

- 1. Huh? What in the world is Paul talking about here?***
- 2. What does this mean for me today?***

Paul is writing this letter dealing with all kinds of issues going on in the Christian church in Galatia. Let's review what he has talked about so far:



In chapter 1, Paul is defending the gospel and himself, because a group of false brothers worked their way into the church and started teaching things that were against the gospel.

In chapter 2, the false teachers are saying that all the guys in the church who aren't Jews have to be circumcised, otherwise they aren't really saved. Even Peter was afraid of these guys, so Paul had to tell them to cut it out.

Then he reminded everyone, ***"Hey, we're saved by faith in Jesus, not by works of the law!"*** That's Old Testament stuff, we're living under the New Testament.

Then Paul begins chapter 3 by calling the Galatians foolish. He really had a way with people. They were trying to earn salvation by following all those old laws from the Old Testament—which is foolish, because it's impossible.

Now beginning in ***Galatians 3:15***, Paul explains why . . .

Galatians 3:15-25 Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. 17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

19 What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

We are saved by faith because we live under the Promise. And back in the OT they had the Promise too, except people were still trying to get right with God by trying to obey the Law.

Paul talks a lot about these two things throughout the letter: the Law and the Promise. So let's define what these two things mean.



God made a lot of promises in the Bible.

The Promise Paul refers to here goes back **to *Genesis 17:4-5***. This is God speaking to Abraham. ***"As for me, this is my covenant (promise) with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations."***

God made this promise with Abraham, and Abraham believed God and so he accepted God's word by faith.

Then in his letter to the Galatians, Paul refers back to Genesis 12, saying this promise was made to Abraham and his seed. ***Genesis 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your seed (referring to Christ, and to Abraham's offspring) I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.***

They didn't have ancestry.com back them, but the Bible shows us that Jesus' earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, were descendants of Abraham.



Do you see how everything comes together here?

Isn't it amazing, how we can look at the Bible as a whole and see how everything points to Christ? We can go back to this very specific verse in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and we see that from the very beginning, God had already planned to send Jesus into the world to redeem us.

Even back in Genesis, everything depended on having faith in the promises of God. That's the point Paul is trying to make here in Galatians.

But when God made this promise with Abraham, Jesus hadn't come yet.

Which brings us to our next definition: [The Law.](#)

430 years after God's promise to Abraham, God introduced the law to Moses, his mediator. His go-between. The law was given to the people through Moses.



This begins in **Exodus 19**, where God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. Then God gave them a lot more rules to follow which are found in the rest of Exodus, and Leviticus, and Numbers, and Deuteronomy. There were hundreds of rules for them to follow.

Now the reason Paul brings all this up at this point in his letter is because the Galatians were still trying to live under that law, when they didn't need to anymore – because Jesus had come – and he fulfilled the law by living in complete obedience to it. He was without sin. And in doing so, Jesus also fulfilled the Promise.

So now in **Galatians 3:19**, Paul asks a rhetorical question. He wants to know, ***what's the purpose of the Law?*** If the promise of God is received by faith, then why did God introduce the law through Moses 430 years later?

Then he answers his own question. Paul did this a lot.

The law was given to show them their sin. Both Jews and Gentiles were guilty, sinful people.

If there were no speed limit out here on Broadway, how fast would people drive?

And what would be the consequences? Maybe some wrecks, yes, but legally it's ok because there is no law controlling it.

But there are little white signs out there showing the speed limits. So that if you drive over that limit and a cop pulls you over, you can expect legal consequences.



God gave the law to make people aware of their sin. ***To show them their need for a Savior.*** But the Old Testament law, in and of itself, did not save people. No more than a speed limit sign will keep people from speeding.

If someone lived in obedience to the law back then, followed the rules, offered all the required sacrifices, then they still would not be justified.

The great design of the law, with its rules and sacrifices that were unable to take away sin, was that it pointed to the Promise. And that PROMISE is that faith in Jesus is what saves us.

The Law made people realize, we can't possibly keep the law perfectly – we need help! Somebody needs to pay the price for our sins because we want to be right with God but we are sinful!

Here's one way to look at it. ***The Law showed them their wounds, but could not render first aid.***

Everything in the Old Testament points to Jesus. So later, when Jesus did come to earth, they were supposed to be prepared. They had grown up under the law for generations, pointing out their sin, unable to take away their sin . . . the point of the law was to show them that they needed some help!

We can't get right with God on our own. We need Jesus!

This was God's plan all along. ***God had no "Plan B."*** He didn't need it. He's God!

Sending Jesus wasn't an afterthought of God's. "Oh, the people are sinning, I better do something." No, it was always part of God's plan.



Back when God created Adam and Eve, and they sinned, do you think God said, "Well, I didn't expect them to do that. What am I going to do now?" No.

Later, ***when God made his promise with Abraham, it was part of his plan.*** When he introduced the law through Moses, he knew what he was doing. It wasn't, "Well, they're sinning again, I better give them some rules to follow. I didn't expect this." No.

Noah, the flood, slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, 40 years wandering around in the desert, coming into the promised land, opposition from other nations . . . ***everything that happened in the Old Testament happened according to God's plan . . . to point people to Christ. To show us our great need for a Savior.***

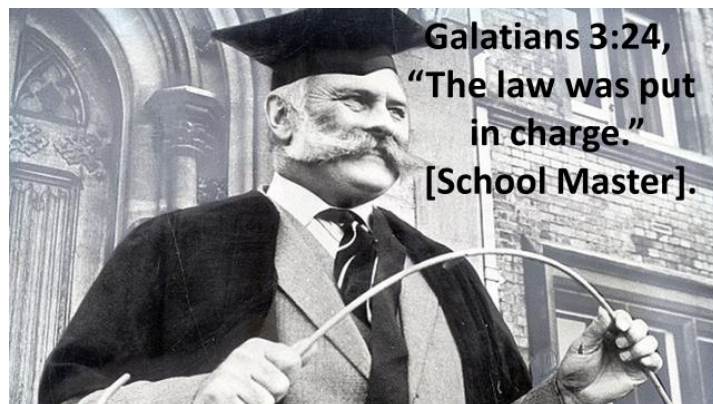
And today we have the great honor, the great blessing, of living under that Promise. We have what those in the Old Testament only hoped for, longed for.

Do you realize what a privilege it is to have this free gift of salvation?

Faith in Jesus has always been the means of justification, even back when they were living under the law. But Jesus hadn't come yet. Since Jesus hadn't come yet, the idea of justification by faith wasn't fully discovered—so the Jews were held as prisoners under the law to try to keep all these rules, works, sacrifices of the law, even though it was impossible for anyone to keep it all perfectly—and here's why . . .



Galatians 3:24, "the law was put in charge." Literally, the law was a school master. That's what the Hebrew word means here. Remember in schools, maybe a couple hundred years ago, more or less, in a classroom full of children, there was a teacher. There was also what was known as a school master. This person's job was to walk around the classroom during the lesson and watch the children to make sure they were paying attention.



And when they were falling asleep, or goofing off with their neighbor, the school master took this long stick and whacked them on the head or on the knuckles to keep them in line. Wouldn't it be great if we still did that today? That's the word Paul uses here for the law in verse 24.

The law was meant to show people they were messing up. Keep them in line.

But then at the end of the school year. On the last day of school. All the kids are sitting anxiously watching the clock, counting the seconds when the bell would ring and summer vacation would begin. Then the bell rings and they all run from the building. Freedom!



The people of the Old Testament were under this school master. They learned that they could never live up to the rules of the law. They were constantly being shown all the

things they were doing wrong.

Then, when Jesus came, he paid the price for all their sins. He set them free! Like summer vacation, only so much better!

When Christ came into the world, those who recognized him from all the Old Testament teaching and prophecy, because they knew he was coming, they were freed from the prison of the law, the school master. And they ran to Jesus like kids getting out of school.

The purpose of the law was to lead them to Christ. To prepare them to follow Jesus, the great teacher, in the way of salvation by faith in him.

When Jesus came, everything from the Old Testament became clear.

When we put our faith in Jesus, we are free! Not free to go out and do all the bad stuff we've always wanted to do, no. Free to enjoy the salvation we have in Christ.

Free from the sin we left behind. Forgiven! Washed clean! Free to live like we mean it!

Now, in Paul's letter to the Galatians, the problem with these false teachers in the church was that they wanted to stay in bondage to the law. It was comfortable.

I know guys who were afraid of being released from prison. They didn't know what to expect in the outside world and they were scared. So, when they got out they committed another crime so they could go back.

This is a real thing. You might think it's foolish. Just like when Paul calls the Galatians foolish at the beginning of Chapter 3. Same idea. Because they were doing the same thing.

The false teachers were saying, ***"Stay here in school with us during summer vacation, the school master will keep us in line. It's comfortable here."*** And people in the Galatian church were listening to them.

Verse 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Christ came and showed us the way to be free, the way of salvation through belief (faith) in him, we are no longer under the strict school master of the law, but now under grace.

Because of Jesus' sacrifice for us, we have been made right with God.

This is the Promise we live under as Christians.

This is what Paul is saying here in ***Galatians 3:15-25***



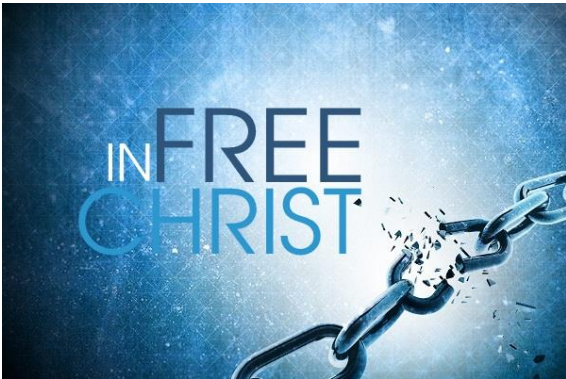
Ok, point 2 - What does this mean for us today?

Jesus came, lived, died for our sins and rose again. We who believe in him, as Christians, are forgiven of our sins, we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of eternal life in heaven.

This is our Promise. It's not about works. We can't earn salvation by doing certain things. It's a free gift.

What does Galatians 3 mean for us today? Paul explains it in . . .

Romans 8:1-4 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.



We are no longer imprisoned by our sin, but free in Christ. And because of this, we are entitled to privileges that those under the law did not have . . .

The rest of Galatians chapter 3 and the first part of chapter 4 go on to explain this . . .

We are children of God by faith in Christ, no longer servants but sons and daughters. We are allowed free access to God. This salvation is for everyone who believes. There is no longer a distinction between Jew and Gentile, rich or poor, male or female, black or white or Hispanic.

All are equally saved by grace through faith. Jesus came and leveled the playing field.

Regardless of our backgrounds, whatever we have done in the past, we are all one in Jesus Christ.

So, if we're not living under the law or the Old Testament anymore, what's the purpose of the Old Testament for Christians? Why should we read it?

It is faith-building. It shows us the nature and character of God.

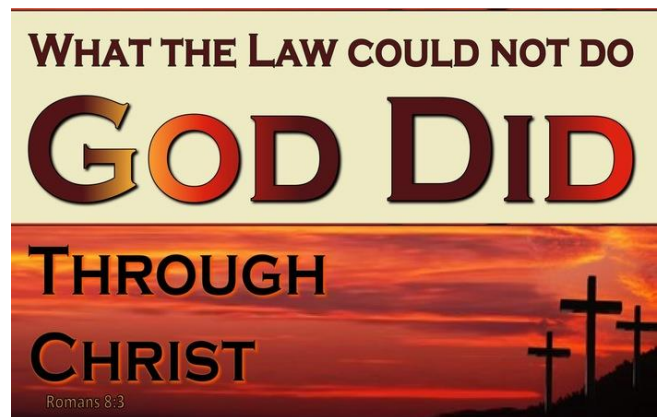
We can learn from looking at the history of the people of God. Beginning with Adam and Eve. Because of the first sin, we were all separated from God. Why? The whole OT and the law shows God's holiness. His perfection. Sinful people cannot approach a Holy God.

We learn from the OT how the Jewish priests had to go through a purification process before entering the tabernacle to perform their duties. God still demands purity.

Jesus did what the law could never do.

He forgave our sins and made us righteous so that now we can approach God. This was God's big wonderful plan all along.

And yet, many are still lost. This free gift is available for everyone, but so many are still searching for something else in all the wrong places.



We live under a Promise.

And our Promise from God is this: Jesus came and died for our sins, and if we believe in him, then by faith, we repent and are forgiven of our sins. We receive the Holy Spirit and the gift of eternal life.

We are saved by faith in Jesus. And yet so many people chase after other things.

We are saved by faith in Jesus! And yet we often take for granted what he has done for us. We should be celebrating constantly that we have this assurance of eternal life!



We are saved by faith in Jesus! But we're like the Galatians, afraid of offending other people, worried what others will think.

We are saved by faith in Jesus! And yet so often our faith is failing to produce in us good works.

We are saved by faith in Jesus! That's something to be excited about! That's something we should want to do something about! Tell others about!

We are saved by faith in Jesus!

Do you believe it?

Live like you mean it!

