

Topic/Subject: Our Inheritance Depends on God's Promise not the Law

Scripture: Galatian 3:15-25 (18, 23-25)

Background Scriptures: Gen. 17:7-8, Exo. 20: 1- 26, Acts 7:53, and Hebrews 2:2

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## I. Background

Paul continues his letter to the Galatians. In Chapter 3 he is making the argument that it is faith and not works of the law that puts man in right relationship with God. In the early church converts nearly always receive the Holy Spirit in a visible way. The early chapters of Act show this happening again and again. (Acts 8 and Acts 10). What they received was a surge of life and power that anyone could see. That experience happen to the Galatians, not because the obeyed the regulations of the law, because at the time they never heard of the law. However, they heard the good news of the love of God and responded to it in an act of faith.

Today, we will continue in this discuss of Paul's letter to the Galatians. We will take a look at the promise made to Abraham and the law that was given to Moses. We will look to see what was included in the promise to Abraham and how we are connected to the promise. We will explore the Law of Moses and identify the purpose of the law.

## II. The Lesson

### 1. Versus 15 -18.

As we study this passage, we should remember that Paul was a trained Rabbi and expert in theoretical methods familiar to the Jews. His objective was to show the way of grace was superior to the way of the law. When Abraham made his faith journey, God made his great promise to him. (**Genesis 17: 7-8**). That is to say, God's promise was consequent upon the act of faith; the law did not come into fruition until the time of Moses (430 years later). God's covenant with Abraham was ratified before the law came into being.

Paul's argument that the seed used *in the* singular and not in the plural; therefore, God's promise points to not a great crowd but to a singular person, Jesus, whom the

covenant finds consummation. Thus, the way to peace with God is the way of faith that Abraham took, and we must repeat that way by looking to Jesus in faith.

One of the challenges in a man's life is to get into the right relationship with God. No one can be in the right relationship with anyone if they are afraid of them. The same would apply to God, and we cannot find peace with God if we are scared of him because of the law. Could we develop a relationship with God if we follow the law? Could a man with our imperfections meet God's perfection by following the law? Would man abandon our efforts to bring ourselves and our sins to God, where his grace opens its arms to us, and we find ourselves at peace with a God who is no longer judge but a father? Paul argues that this is what happens to Abraham. It was on that basis that God's covenant with Abraham was made, and nothing that came afterward could change this covenant or alter it. The point is Abraham's covenant was based on faith.

## 2. Verses 19-22.

This is one of the most challenging writings of Paul. So much so that several hundred interpretations exist in various commentaries, online reviews, and books regarding the text. I will try and explain the text using the Wright interpretation, focusing on Paul's demonstrating that the correct way to salvation is through grace and faith over the law. Here are four points that Paul is making.

1. Why introduce the law? It was submitted, as Paul put it, to identify sin. What he means, if there is no law, there is no sin. A man could not be condemned for doing wrong if he did not know it was wrong. Therefore, the function of the law was to define sin. But, here is the point, while the law can and does identify sin, it can do nothing to alleviate it.
2. During Paul's time, many believed that the law was not given directly by God. In the Old Testament (Exodus 20:1-26), it was given directly to Moses; but in the days of Paul, the Rabbis were so impressed by God's holiness and remoteness that they believed that the law was first given to the angels and by the angels to Moses. We see this belief when Deacon Stephen confronted the Sanhedrin Court (Acts 7:53). Thus Paul was using the rabbinic thought of his time. The law was double removed from God, given first to Angels, and then to a mediator, and the mediator to Moses. Compared to the promise given to Abraham, which was direct from God.
3. This is where the text get a bit confusing. There is no such thing as a mediator of one; God is one – to have an agreement, there has to be an offer and

acceptance, and it depends on both sides keeping their share of the deal. If anyone does not keep their side of the agreement, then the agreement is broken. However, that was not the case with the promise (Genesis 17:2). God made the promise, and only he had to do something to keep it. It was one-sided. The way of grace is entirely on God. It is in his promise. We can do nothing to alter that. We may sin, but God's love and grace remain unchanged. To Paul, the weakness of the law depends on two people, the lawgiver, and the law keeper. It is better to depend on the grace of an unchanging God than rely on man's hopeless efforts.

4. Does the law opposes the promise of God? - Paul gives an emphatic no. He states that the scripture has shut up everyone under sin. (Deuteronomy 27:14 - 26). Therefore, anyone who did not follow the law was cursed. That means everyone because no one could perfectly keep the law. The law was given so that man could see his sins and seek God's grace. We cannot get into the right relationship with the law. We realize that we cannot do it and will be driven to accept God's grace, which Jesus delivered to us.

### **III. Final Thoughts**

From this text, we can draw the following conclusions. First, the law was given by God during a time when man needed to know what sin was. The law was not given to provide us salvation but to move us to accept God's grace.

God's grace was included in the promise made to Abraham and manifest in the sacrifice of Jesus.