



Lazybrook Baptist Church

GALATIANS: FREEDOM THROUGH CHRIST • THE LAW AND THE PROMISE •
GALATIANS 3:15-26 • 7/27/2020 - 8/2/2020

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. This promise of salvation has always been and will always be by faith alone!

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most significant promise you have ever made and then kept? What is the most significant promise you have ever made and then broken?

How do you feel when someone makes a promise to you? What do you expect from him or her?

A promise is a vow to follow through on something. Promises are meant to be kept and breaking them has consequences. We expect others to keep their promises and if they fail then our view of them changes. God made many promises in the Bible, and the way that He kept His promises not only revealed His character but also secured glorious consequences for His children.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:15-18.

How did Paul understand the idea of a promise? What did it entail? What didn't it entail?

What were some of the promises that God made to Abraham? How is Christ the fulfillment of the promise of offspring?

What is the difference between the law and the promise? How do the law and the promise work together?

Paul understood that a promise could not be changed or altered, once it was made it was final. In this text, he focused on the promise of offspring to Abraham. God's promise was not focused on many descendants, but now, Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the Galatians to know that nothing would change the promises of God, including the law. The law came 430 years after the promise to Abraham, but the law, just like the promise, was meant to point God's people to Christ.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:19-26.

For what reason did Paul say the law exists (Note: [Click here for 'The Law' used in Sunday's sermon](#))?

Look at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. How do we break these most basic "rules" of life every day?

What is revealed about our lives when we look at the standard set by the law? How does that make you feel about yourself? How does God intend for you to feel?

The purpose of the law was to show our desperate need for God. The law sets the standard for righteousness and highlights our sinfulness and need of a Savior.

What does God's intervention through Christ reveal about God's plan? What does it reveal about God's feelings towards us?

A quick review of the Ten Commandments shows us how easily we fall short of God's standard. Our inability to fulfill the law proves we need a mediator between us and God. That's precisely what Jesus' death on the cross was all about. By embracing faith as the basis for our relationship with God, we move from attempting to please Him and earn His love to being adopted children blanketed in Christ's righteousness. Paul wrote that we are "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (v. 26). By faith, we become Christians saved by God's grace, and by faith we live as Christians, furthering His kingdom and spreading the gospel. As believers in God, our works become acts of obedience and faithfulness that mirror His love to the world.

What happens if the church focuses on the law more than on Christ, who fulfilled the law?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Now that Christ has come to fulfill the law and the promise, what role does the law play in our lives?

Are there ways that you still try to live by the law? What happens if you try to live by the law? How can you guard against that tendency?

“UNLESS WE KNOW HOW BIG OUR DEBT IS, WE CANNOT HAVE ANY IDEA OF HOW GREAT CHRIST’S PAYMENT WAS.” – TIM KELLER

What promises has God made to us in Christ? How can our focus on God’s promises, instead of a set of rules, lead us to joyful obedience?

“THE GOSPEL MEANS THAT WE NO LONGER OBEY THE LAW OUT OF FEAR OF REJECTION AND HOPE OF SALVATION-BY-PERFORMANCE. BUT WHEN WE GRASP SALVATION-BY-PROMISE, OUR HEARTS ARE FILLED WITH GRATITUDE AND A DESIRE TO PLEASE AND BE LIKE OUR SAVIOR—AND THE WAY TO DO THAT IS THROUGH OBEYING THE LAW. AND ONCE WE COME TO THE LAW MOTIVATED BY GRATITUDE, WE ARE BETTER IN OUR OBEDIENCE OF THE LAW THAN WE EVER WERE WHEN WE THOUGHT THAT OUR OBEDIENCE MIGHT SAVE US.” – TIM KELLER

Is there someone in your life who might need to be reminded of the promises of God? If so, how can you help them this week?

PRAYER

Close your time in prayer. Ask God to remind you of His promises continuously. Pray that as a group, you would focus on Christ as the fulfillment of the promise and the law. Pray that Christ would be glorified at our church as you proclaim who He is and what He has done.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Relisten to Pastor Zach's sermon from Sunday, July 26.](#)
- [Watch 'The Law' video used during Pator Zach's sermon.](#)

- Great commentaries on Galatians:
 - [Exalting Christ in Galatians by David Platt and Tony Merida](#)
 - [Galatians For You by Timothy Keller](#)

DISCOVERY PROCESS REMINDERS

Please take a few minutes to remind everyone in your small group to do the following:

- [Watch the Virtual Town Hall Meeting with The Discovery Team](#)
- [Submit any questions that they may have to The Discovery Team](#)
- [Complete the Congregational Survey from The Discovery Team](#)

Remind your group of the importance of our Discovery Process and to continually be in prayer for our Discovery Team as they prayerfully discern where we are currently and where God is calling our church to go!

SERVICE REMINDER

Please remind your small group of the following...

On July 3, 2020 we made the difficult decision to temporarily return to online only worship services for at least three weeks. This decision was made as a result of increasing COVID-19 cases in Houston, a strong desire to lovingly protect our congregation and a request from the mayor's office for Houston area churches to worship online until the virus is under control. Seeing as the COVID-19 numbers have continued to increase in the Houston area, we have made the decision to continue with online worship services only until further notice. It is our desire to return to in person worship services as soon as possible, but want to ensure that we do so responsibly and do not put you and your families in danger.

Note: If you or someone that you are aware of are unable to watch online, please click here to request a DVD to be delivered a few days after the service takes place.

COMMENTARY

3:15-16. The Judaizers argued that since the law came after Abraham, then the law had priority over grace (salvation by faith alone). To refute this point, Paul appeals to a permanently binding contract or will. Once a permanently binding contract is written and signed, it cannot be changed. Paul argues that God's promise of salvation by faith to Abraham was a binding contract and that nothing, not even the law, could change it.

This promise of permanence was made to Abraham and his seed, Christ. The singular use of seed (NIV, “offspring”) (compare Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7) was an allusion, not to Abraham’s many physical descendants, but to the coming Messiah who would be the conveyer of blessing (see Matt. 1:1). The use of the singular “seed” is Paul’s biblical basis for saying that Christ is the one who fulfilled God’s “promises... to Abraham.” However, the Jews are still the physical seed of Abraham and those in Christ are his spiritual seed (v. 29). Because of the nature of “a covenant” (v. 15), the Mosaic law—and “the works of the law” (2:16)—cannot override the role of Christ in fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant or Abraham’s example of justifying faith.

3:17-18. Paul clarifies that the law, which was given 430 years after the Abrahamic grace promise, does not nullify justification by faith. Faith is the permanent path to salvation. The inheritance (that is, justification by faith) was given as an unconditional gift to those who believed. Contrary to what the Judaizers taught, the message of justification given to Abraham is permanent and has priority over the later law. The exalted position of “the law” with the Jewish teachers who had come to the Galatians did not fit the biblical teaching. God’s earlier promise given to “Abraham” was the proper basis for their spiritual “inheritance.”

3:19. Now Paul reveals the purpose of the law answering the question, “Why was a change made at Sinai?” Paul answers this question by explaining the one purpose and the two characteristics of the law. The law was added because of transgressions. Transgressions means “a stepping aside from a right track.” The law laid down a right track (perfect standard) and made people aware when they were deviating from that perfect path. Yet the law was temporary. Its end point was the coming of the Seed (Christ, the Messiah). It is also inferior to Abraham and faith because it needed a mediator (angels and Moses on Mount Sinai).

3:20. Because the law required mediation, it required each party to live up to the contract. The Abrahamic covenant, on the other hand, was dependent only on the commitment of God, who is one. Therefore, the law was inferior to the promise given to Abraham.

3:21-22. Another question is raised: Is there conflict between the law and the promises of God? Paul answers, absolutely not! The law was not given to impart life and a right standing with God. Its purpose was to reveal that the whole world is a prisoner of sin condemned under its judgment. Such condemnation created in mankind a need for forgiveness and release from the law’s penalty—a need for forgiveness in Christ.

3:23-25. Before faith in Christ came, people were held prisoners by the law. In a final image, Paul conveys the purpose of the law. In the kjv the second half of this verse states that the law was given as our tutor (nasb more literal than NIV, “was put in charge”). A better translation is “custodian” or “strict nanny.” In the Jewish culture a slave was assigned to each child to escort

them to school and to assist in their supervision. This nanny was not a thirteen-year-old, sweet, little baby-sitter. This supervising nanny was more like a stern sergeant who had the bark of a German shepherd and the bite of a Doberman pincher. Every time the child took liberties without permission on the path to school (children like to play) or did something wrong, this authoritarian nanny pointed her finger at the child and in no uncertain terms told the child what it had done wrong and delivered the punishment. By correlating the law with this nanny image, we learn that the law was given to point out sin and to threaten a great punishment if God's people didn't straighten up. Man's very inability to obey this law perfectly, and thus earn God's approval, caused men and women to long for a better way to salvation and a relationship with God—by grace. God brought hope to mankind's hopelessness in the most amazing way by sending Jesus Christ into the world. The law led us to Christ for forgiveness and righteousness.

3:26. Verse 26 is the key to understanding this passage. Paul countered the divisive teaching promoted by the Judaizers by declaring that "all" the Galatian believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, had received the promise as evidenced by their relationship with God through Christ. That relationship came, not through keeping the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, they were "sons of God." They had entered full adult sonship. The services of a pedagogue to guide them were no longer required. They could enjoy the privileges and freedom of their sonship.