

GALATIANS 3:15-29

As Paul continues to “free up” the Galatian believers from the heavy burden of keeping the Law, he’s been taking them back to the roots of the good news, to the time when “out of the blue” God Himself initiated a covenant of blessing with Abraham.

At first the covenant might seem like a gracious offer of earthly benefits to one man and one nation. But Paul’s been telling us it means so much more. Ultimately, the incredible blessing God had in mind was the *gift of justification* (Galatians 3:8) and the inheritance He intended was *eternity with Him after this life—and His indwelling Spirit now!* (3:14) Who is in line to receive all this? People of all nations who, like Abraham, simply believe God and put their faith in Christ.

More treasures of truth and encouragement are “embedded” in God’s great covenant with our brother Abraham. The apostle will help us dig them out as we now go on in chapter 3.

***Begin** with prayer: “Lord, help me hear Your voice speaking to me through Your Word today. I want to know, trust and delight in You more and more. Great is Thy faithfulness!”

***Review** your latest memory verse, Galatians 2:20, by dividing it up into 5-6 “learnable lines.”

***Read** Galatians 3:14-25, noting the repeated use of the word “promise.”

1. Have you ever fully intended to do something, but it didn’t happen? What are some reasons for this?

Secure in His Promises: Galatians 3:14-20. The term “covenant” here often refers to a will.

2. a. What does Paul point out in verse 15?

- b. What duly established, confirmed terms of the covenant are briefly stated in verse 16a?

3. a. Scan God’s covenant words from Genesis 12 and 22:

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed... To your offspring (*lit.* seed) I will give this land.. in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” (from the NIV/NAS. Note that *seed* can be singular or plural.)

- b. What do you think God is making clear by His repeated use of “I will” and “will/shall be?”

c. What can we count on when God speaks? See Numbers 23:19, Job 42:2.

God spoke promises (said I will!) to Abraham, and both His earthly and eternal intentions for Abraham and us were utterly sure, a done deal. They were also inseparably linked with the seed.

4. a. What descendent of Abraham did God ultimately have in mind when He spoke of the seed? Galatians 3:16b

b. What is foreseen in the promise “*in your seed all nations will be blessed*” (Genesis 22:18-NAS)? (See I John 2:2.)

Note: Christ the ultimate Seed is also promised the ultimate inheritance. He is appointed “heir of all things,” and “to Him every knee shall bow.” (Hebrews 1:1-2, Philippians 2:8-11)

5. God’s covenant unconditionally promised (granted, bequeathed) salvation to all who would believe. Then came the Law. Did that change things? Explain. (Galatians 3:17-18)

6. The bottom line is this: God Who cannot lie calls you to rest your whole weight upon His eternal promised provision. Underline what stands out to you below; share as you wish.

I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life...the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. (John 5:24, 6:37)

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand. (John 10:28-29)

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come...God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid..” (II Corinthians 1:21-22, Hebrews 13:5-6)

Pursued by His Law: Galatians 3:19-25.

7. If salvation and all of its blessings come as an inheritance, through faith in God’s promise alone, what question would naturally arise? (Galatians 3:19a)

Verses 19-20 are challenging, but Paul's aim is to show how the Promise is superior to the Law. He's already said that "the way of the promise" came first and can't be changed. Now he adds that while the Law was given "third hand," (from God, through angels, to Moses, to the people) the Promise is better, being given face to face. Also implied is the fact that the Law was a stern, impossible list of "thou shalt," but the Promise rested on God's "I will" alone. In the end, though, Paul says that both Promise and Law are from God and necessary for His gracious plan.

8. a. The Law was "added because of _____" (verse 19). For a lost world, the Law gave a system of sacrifices to temporarily cover sin, pointing to Christ, the Lamb of God.

b. The Law couldn't give or impart _____ (verse 21).

The Law did give a revealing measuring stick, a code of behavior based on God's holiness.

Here's a brief summary taken from Exodus 20 and Matthew 22:

You shall not: have other gods before Me, make for yourself an idol, misuse the name of the LORD, murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or covet. You shall keep the Sabbath, honor your father and mother...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind..and your neighbor as yourself.

(Note: The Sabbath pointed ahead to resting from our own works, and resting in Christ's work on the Cross for us.)

9. Galatians 3:22-23 say that Scripture/the Law declares the whole world a prisoner of sin and holds us prisoner. What do you think is meant by these statements?

10. In Paul's day a *guardian* or *tutor* was a servant whose duty was to lead children firmly to destinations such as school. How is the Law "a tutor leading us to Christ?" (verse 24-NAS)

No sin of ours is a surprise to God: He's always known all about it, and the pain and death it brings us. He reveals in order to heal. His constant word to us is "Come." His constant promise: *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!* (Romans 5:20 KJV)

* When sin is revealed to us, we can tend to run to futile human responses instead of to Christ. (For example, we can choose denial, defiance, deep discouragement, working harder.) Is that the case in your life? If so, what do you think the Lord is asking you to do?

* See Isaiah 61:1-3 and I John 1:8-9 for additional beautiful truth about Christ.

Placed In The Son: Galatians 3:26-28.

11. According to verse 25, we're _____ under the tutoring or guidance of the Law. The Law did its work, revealing our need, persuading us to put our faith in Christ: believers are now all called _____ (verse 26). Notice the next verse starts with "For..."

12. In verse 27, *baptized* (meaning literally *placed into*) isn't speaking of the outer ritual, but the spiritual reality it represents. Envision the truth we're being told:
- Verse 27a speaks of God's action. What did He "do" with you when you believed?
 - How does He see you now? (verse 27b)
 - How does this impact your understanding of your personal relationship with the Father and the Son?
13. Read verse 28 aloud. For the Galatians, their Jewish Christian friends, and any/every believer, what do you think Paul is saying? (Remember verse 22a, as well as the "alls" in 3:26-27.)
14. If you really grasp this truth, will it affect your relationship with other believers? Explain.

Because we've been placed into Christ (the Son, Abraham's Seed, Heir of an eternal Kingdom) all that Paul finishes up with in verse 29 is true. Once we were all utterly divided from God by our sin. Now He sees each individual believer in Christ, clothed in the Son's righteousness, a joint heir with Him: He calls you a son, "accepted in the Beloved." (Romans 8:17a, Ephesians 1:5-6)

Two hymn writers of years ago put it this way; each and every believer can sing these words and all believers can sing them together.

"In the Beloved"—how safe my retreat, "In the Beloved" accounted complete;

"Who can condemn me?" In Him I am free, Savior and Keeper forever is He.

Chorus:

"In the Beloved," God's marvelous grace-- Calls me to dwell in this wonderful place;

God sees my Savior and then He sees me, "In the Beloved," accepted and free.

Mrs C. D. Martin

So near, so very near to God, I cannot nearer be;

For in the person of His Son I am as near as He.

So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be;

The love wherewith He loves the Son, such is His love for me.

Catesby Paget

15. As you finish up, you may wish to go back through your lesson and recall the things you learned (or remembered) that especially make you respond in thankfulness and praise to God.