

Galatians 3:15-29

True Israel and the Gospel: How Do Abraham and Moses Relate?

Opening Illustration: Father Abraham – *Tony mentioned it last week, but when I was a kid we sang a silly songs... I hated it (I hated lockins, etc) but I didn't realize that that Children's song had such a rich theology.*

- **That Song teaches WE GET THE PROMISED INHERITANCE, WE ARE SONS OF ABRAHAM, BROTHERS OF CHRIST** by faith... and we should rejoice
- **What we will see in this passage is:** True Israel are those who have been Justified (given new heart and standing) by faith and not works... but we will really see something even deeper than that

IN THIS PASSAGE, Questions to Ponder:

- Who is Israel? True Israel
- How do the Promise to Abraham and the Law of Moses Relate? And which one is Preeminent?
- “Why did God give the Law if Salvation is by faith not works?”

Opening Context: *Paul continues to address Justification by Faith alone in Christ Alone by Grace alone...not by works, not by the law.*

Main Idea: *The Law cannot/does not produce righteousness... but it does show us our need for it*

I. (15-18) The Giving of the Law does not change that the Just will Live by Faith

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. 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. 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. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

(15) God's Promise cannot be annulled

Explanation: If a man-made covenant cannot be changed by later additions, how much more so is this true of a God-given covenant – so the Mosaic Law does not nullify the promises made to Abraham

Illustration: Marriage “*Let what God put together no man put asunder*” – if this is supposed to be binding how much moreso with a God-given and God taken covenant

- Paul is using nicer language now to drive this point home “Brothers”
 - o “**Hey Brother**”
 - o **But this appropriate considering this section asks the question who are the true children of Abraham**, because these are those who will inherit the promise, those that are the Just living by faith

(16) Jesus is true Israel (the faithful remnant the OT looked for)

Explanation: *What we will have to see is the promise comes to Christ and we only have the promise in Christ, not the law – this is not to say the law is pointless though.*

- All the promises given to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ (the only Offspring) – and we will be grafted into this true Israelite and gain the promises
- **Question: who is true Israel? – To whom do the promises come...**
 - o We see here, the promises were made to Abraham's offspring (seed), not a plural deal going on here... one person, Jesus Christ who is the true Israelite.

- *So if Christ is the promised offspring of Abraham, and He is... then the works of the “Law” given at Sinai cannot override the role of Christ in fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant or Abraham’s example of justifying Faith*
- **The true and ultimate fulfillment of the OT promises comes to one.... Christ**
 - o And “promises” is used to show this is a gift and not works based – and these promises of Land and universal blessing come to the “Offspring”
 - o **Some translations use “seed”** – which should draw our minds back even further than Abraham to Eden... The seed of woman will crush the dragon’s head
 - o **Throughout the OT, this seed continually narrows** (from the offspring of woman, to Abrahamic family, to the tribe of Judah, to the family of David... to the ONE)

This is the one you have been looking for since Eden

- **So idea of representation is implicit here:** if you are in Adam, you are under a curse, in Christ you get the Inheritance, the Promise given to Abraham

Excurses: We sometimes miss True Israel, and what it means to bless Abraham...

Theology of the Remnant, True Israel:

- **We must have a theology of the remnant, they are not all Israel who are called Israel** – the only true Israelite to perfectly obey His covenant Father was Jesus Christ – The Israel of God
- **But it is imperative to see that the promises were made to Christ, so if we are to be blessed through Abraham/Israel it will only come through Christ not ethnic Israel, how can we be blessed for honoring a country that clearly rejects the Messiah...**
 - o **And what do we mean by blessing anyways, that we will be a prosperous nation?** That is prosperity theology...
- **There is a lot of talk politically, theologically about end times, about Israel’s place, about America’s relationship to Israel...** I just want to be clear about what the Bible says about Israel, in terms of the promises Israel are the ones who believe, not those who are ethnically Jews...
 - o **Its those who are linked to the Offspring of Abraham,** Jesus (He is the one promises are given to) and he gives his inheritance (the promises) to those who are In Him.
- **Bless Those/Curse Those Really Means: And this is given so all the nations will be blessed...** So those that honor Abraham by believing in His offspring will be blessed with the promise... **not those who honor the nation reconstituted in 1949 (not to say we shouldn’t, but different issue)**

Why does this matter?

- Because we cannot believe we are blessed as a nation or a people by honoring a nation that rejects the Messiah
- I do think there will be a **revival of Jewish People**, but it only comes in Christ, not bloodlines
- **Hagee – two covenants... misses point of Galatians**

(17) The Law does not void the promise given 430 years earlier

This verse explains verses 15-16, which stresses what I have said earlier the law does not change the promise made to Abraham 430 years earlier

- Circumcision came after the promise, and the law came 430 years later... **so this giving of the Law cannot nullify the Promise of God**
- **We have to see the difference in the Covenants:** One shows us what God does for us (justifies us freely) whereas the other shows us what the already saved person should look like

- **Even the Ten Commandments were given out of a sense of having salvation, not as a means to gain it...** “I am the Lord your God...Now...”
- He never gave the Law to produce works (or cancel the stumbling block of the Cross) instead it was given as a picture of what the redeemed life should look like that is lived out of love for a great deliverer.
 - Be careful here as well... never let works produced by faith be a gateway to self-righteousness (**Your standing is based on Christ, not you**)

No, instead v. (18) says, “Our inheritance comes by the promise (the Just will live by faith) not the Law”

Explanation: “For” so same argument... **if the inheritance (sonship) came by the law then that would render the promise from God to Abraham useless, we would nullify the grace of God.**

Keller Illustration: If you give a gift, it is not based on that person’s performance to get it... if I give you something based upon what you have done, then its not a gift it’s a fee for a service.

- If I want to hang out with you and give you a million \$’s the only way you will fail to get that money is to not come hang out with me (sounds pathetic ☺)
 - But if I say I want to give you a million dollars for helping me paint my house then you only get the money if you fulfill the obligation...
- Keller says: *Paul is adamant: either something comes by grace or works, because of the giver’s promise or the receiver’s performance. It is either one or the other.*

HOW BEAUTIFUL IS THE GOSPEL/GRACE? It only needs to be received not earned – “THE LAW SAYS DO THIS, GOSPEL SAYS ACCEPT THIS”

- **Luther Illustration – he was tormented**
- **This is a radical message; you don’t have to do anything, completely diff than other religions...**
 - **Rest in your Justification, Love it...**
 - This is something worth sharing... **Especially when I feel sin raging in me**, when I feel that I am at war in my self – I can look and see the beauty of this truth if we are IN CHRIST

Bunyan’s Poem gets at the difference between the law and the gospel: *Run, John, run, the law commands; But gives us neither feet nor hands, far better news the gospel brings: It bids us fly and gives us wings.*

Applications (15-18):

- Trust in the promises of God... not your works, pre or post regeneration (have supreme faith)
- Blessing or Curse will come from how you respond to Christ, Abraham’s Seed, not the nation of Israel (and what is true blessing anyways?)

II. (19-25) [The Purpose of the Law] The Law Reveals our Sin and need for another’s Righteousness

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.

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.

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,

(19) A natural question arises: if Justification is by faith, then why the Law?

Answer: To Highlight our Sinfulness/rebellion and to point to a Savior

Explanation: The Law is given to:

- **Reveal Sin** (like a microscope)
- **Provoke or Stir up more Sin**
 - o **Illustration:** Jon Stepping over Bathroom line
- **To show us our condemnation, how deep our rebellion is – and so our need for a savior**
 - o **This points us to the Abrahamic promise that the Just will live by faith and not works...**
- **In order to know our need for an outside righteousness, we have to know how far we fall short...** we are infinitely sinful against an infinitely Holy God (**this is why He banished our parents in the Garden, He cannot be in the presence of unrighteousness**)
- **This is why legalism is so much more dangerous than wild living for the unbeliever... LEGALISM GIVES THE SENSE TO SOME THAT THEY ARE OK**
 - o You have to know **the purpose of the law, or it will be a killer – especially if you think it is in place to save you...**
 - o **Piper Illustration:** If you don't know why a traffic light is red, you may get smashed in the intersection – if we do not understand why it is given, than we can kill ourselves with it

In fact any religion that relies on law, or behavior is horrible and removes any freedom (you are in chains) – they say obey and God will love you and you wont be punished... problem is you always live in fear wondering does God really accept me.

- **Illustration** (Seyfo) - *"Can you imagine a life lived without the tyranny of keeping score?" Paul Walker*
- **If justification were by the law then Christ's death is worthless and the promise is nullified... that is why Hagee is a heretic**

(19b-21) Shows that Mosaic Law is subordinate to the Abrahamic Covenant and that righteousness comes by faith

Explanation – comment on Tony giving me this verse: The Mosaic law needed Angels and an Intermediary and was conditional upon obedience. The Abrahamic was unconditional and was a one-way Covenant fulfilled by the One God coming in the Flesh and not by sending Angels

- **Implication:** there is one way of Salvation

(21) Explanation: The Law was never intended to produce righteousness (it cannot change our heart)

Radical Implication for how we read and teach the Bible: David and Goliath/Temptations

- **The law reveals how people should live, but does not give the power to enable us to live in a way that pleases God.** The law though serves the purposes of God by revealing our need, and pointing to the one who can fulfill it... the cross and Grace of Christ are evident because of the law (a burden lifted)
 - o **The law far from contradicting the promises of God, actually fulfills it, not by producing righteousness but revealing what true righteousness is and our need for it (an alien righteousness)**

Illustration – Footloose remake (opening scene is a party, drinking and get a car wreck and die) and so counsel of city makes laws to eliminate public dancing, drinking etc to cut out all of these things to make them better... and years later still doing the same thing (so instead of dancing public they dance in secret) so the rules didn't

produce righteousness, the law cant produce righteousness, **instead they produced hidden sin (self or public righteousness)**

(22-23) The Law enslaved us and held us captive so that we would long for a savior

Its even worse than revealing that we are sinner, we are actually enslaved to it: its not just that we fall short, but also we are completely under sins power (locked up, jailed), the law reveals this.

- **Sin doesn't Need a Pill**

- **Question:** So how do we know we are sinful? The Scriptures.. and they should drive us to the Promise
 - o **SO LOVE THIS WORD...**

But Law Points us to our need – *by killing any thought of self-justification, we are guilty and if we admit deep down we know we are guilty*

- It makes us love and long for the promise... **I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. (Exodus)**

*(24-25) The Law was a harsh Taskmaster that we could never please, but makes us long for Christ
The point though is that the Law drives us to long for justification by faith*

Explanation: I think there are two things going on with the Law in these two verses:

- **Law protected the people until Christ came** – Gives guard rails to protect the people of Israel
 - o Protect Israel...no intermingling... but didn't produce heart change
 - o **Illustration:** Luther and Lion in a cage...
- **You can see this with Children and rules (just think about Children with no rules)** – but rules can be given to help children learn to behave...
 - o **But be extremely cautious here, this could lead them to self-righteousness if you don't address the heart...**
 - **Illustration:** *Give Children rules, but don't want to give to many rules so that just heap guilt and punishment on them, but don't give so few rules so that they don't think there is any standard (of righteousness) or no accountability – that is a way it can be a tudor*
 - o **Be careful that your conversion moment wasn't really a declaration to start acting better,** but instead is a complete surrender and recognition that I cant be righteous... I need it elsewhere, that is the Law's intent.
- **But, The Law was a harsh Taskmaster we could never please**
 - o **Folly to think the Law can change our Heart: The “custodian” or “tutor” or “schoolmaster” does not have the power to make the child's heart good, nor can he give the child his inheritance....**That's how the law functioned for Israel. It provided direction and restraint. It prescribed the way a mature child should behave. But it could not give Israel the Inheritance or new affections, but merely show Israel they needed new affections...

Gospel-Obedience: Obey out of love and not coercion... because our heart has changed and we now live as a living sacrifice, not to earn favor/points – but out of love

Grace that taught our hearts to fear (giving of the law) and grace our fears relieved (justification is not by our works, but by Christ's)

So Final observations from this section:

1. **God gave the law and thousands of years of Salvation history so that we could identify with Israel's failures** – that we would realize we are under a curse
2. **Preach the law with force to yourself (see your own depravity)...**but not as a means of heart change but to point to our need for another's righteousness
3. **Preach Grace to yourself/Revel in Grace! (Give my own example)** – APPLY THE GOSPEL (FUNCTIONAL SAVIORS) – live out of love not compulsion
 - a. **He makes the dead alive**
4. **Preach this to others, this message shouldn't stop with you** – make them want to believe in Grace and then show them that it is true...

III. (26-29) By Faith, We are given the inheritance of the Firstborn

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.

(26) Sonship – seen as the firstborn

- **Observations:** We see now a shift from justification by faith in history, to a personal nature
- **WHY SONS?** – Paul is not a Chauvinist – If we don't let Paul say to women, "In Christ, you too are sons; you too are heirs," then we miss how radical a claim this is – we are legal heirs, a status that women didn't have during that time.
- **Gain an inheritance by Grace, We already have the title (not something we earn)** – WHICH IS CHRIST HIMSELF AND ALL HIS GIFTS, ENDS OF THE COSMOS

(27) Immersed in Christ... by faith we identify with Him

EXPLANATION: Change of the Heart does produce a different life, we are identified with him

- **Importance of Baptism** – we are identifying with Christ and the gospel and now we are in Christ... we are the firstborn Son – This is referring to Spiritual Baptism but highlights importance of Physical Baptism (an outward proclamation of the Gospel:
 - o now as though we have never sinned (because He didn't)
 - o now as though we have been judged (because He was)
 - o now as raised to a new life and an eternal one (because He was)

So Baptism is not a rite of passage... but a gospel sign, that you are now identified with Christ (our King) and it is a war declaration to the demons... that you have been transferred from death to life, darkness to light, from the wilderness to the promise land

(28) There is no distinction in Salvation, it is open to all regardless of class

Observations: *So now the Jew/Gentile distinction in Christ is nothing*... all of our identities have changed that why we can sing Father Abraham... we are now ALL grafted in to the true Israel (the perfect obedient Son) Distinctions are gone, we are now ALL seen as the firstborn Son taking all the inheritance, which is the entire cosmos

- *You don't have to be a free, Jewish, Man...*

- **This doesn't mean distinctions, or roles are abolished**, as other parts of the Scripture let us know (we aren't neutered, *women will be women 1,000,000 years* from now and that is a glorious thing) but instead this shows the impartial nature of Gods salvation... we are equal in God, because all in Christ
- **He gives distinctions in roles later, but there is no distinction in the equality of salvation**, all are welcome to the table – WE SHOULD BE A RADICALLY ACCEPTING PEOPLE

(29) Full Circle... We are sons, part of True Israel

Observations: Paul now reminds us of the main point of chapter three... who belongs to the family of Abraham? Who is the true offspring? **The only genuine son of Abraham is Christ himself.**

- **To be a Son of Abraham then We have to be found in the True Israel, in union with Christ** – So Paul has argued the inheritance does not come via the law but via Christ.
- **We are in Christ by Faith and now all the promises are now mediated to us in Christ...** That is a beautiful peace giving truth, that is the Gospel
 - o **We are not only sons, but heirs** – and so we can sing with Joy “Father Abraham” because the ends of the Cosmos belong to us

Implications:

- **Don't Feel condemned** (same proclamation over the **Jordan River- not a former abortionist**)
 - o **We get the inheritance, being in the presence of our King...**
- **Gospel is for all, regardless of distinction**
- **Live with Courage, you get the inheritance... even if your head is cut off**

Invitation:

- **Unbeliever:** Turn from your works to Christ... find your righteousness in Christ
- **Believer:** Rest in your justification and out of love for that live, produce fruit, not out of compulsion or for a better standing with God, but out of love for what He has done on your behalf

Conclusion – How Can this be accomplished?

Schreiner Quote: *Still, the Mosaic covenant promises that the inheritance (the promise of the land) would be gained by obedience, where as the Abrahamic covenant pledges that God would save His people by virtue of His promise*

How can the covenant promises to Abraham and Moses be true? In Jesus at the Cross – where Law and Promise meet, where the Law is fulfilled and the Gospel proclaimed. In the one who is both the seed of Abraham and the Fulfillment of Moses' Law. And we get the promises and blessings of both mediated to us through Christ...

- **Jesus fulfills The Abrahamic Law as the Seed of Promise** – the one who can crush the Dragons head and bring salvation to all nations...
- **And He can be the Seed of Promise by fulfilling the Mosaic Law** – the only one who was perfectly obedient... the only one who was not like Adam in the garden trying to put Himself in the place of God

So in one sense our salvation does come by the Law, but not our fulfillment of it, Jesus' fulfillment...

The only way the gap of our ungodliness and God's holiness could be bridged was by one who could fulfill both covenants... A true Israelite, a perfect sacrifice (Law), the Son of Promise

Now because of His faithfulness we can be heirs of promise, so be found in Him today and if you are lets rejoice that we are sons of Abraham – Father Abraham...