

## COR@g: Galatians

8 March 2015

### “Why then the Law?” Galatians 3:15-25

- I. Introduction
  - A. According to the Scriptures...
  
  - B. Where we've been and where we're going...
  
- II. Promise Always Came First → 3:15-18
  - A. Paul is continuing his argument that God's covenant with Abraham takes primacy over the law given to Moses.
  - B. The “human example”: making a will (15)
  - C. The example applies: Messiah is Abraham's ultimate heir of the promises. (16)
  - D. The example brought home: the binding agreement God made with Abraham couldn't be annulled or altered by the “coming-430-years-later” law. (17)
  - E. Therefore, “the way to inherit is the blessings of Abraham ... is the way Abraham got it: by faith in God's promises,”<sup>1</sup> NOT by keeping the law. (18)

→ How we read our Bible matters!

- III. So What Good Is the Law? → 3:19-25
  - A. Question 1: “Why, then, the law?”
    - 1. Restated: If Promise was always primary, why did God give the law in the first place?
    - 2. Law was given to *deal* with sins until the coming of the Messiah (19)
    - 3. Law was given to *reveal* sin (c.f. Romans 4:15)
    - 4. Sidenote: Law inferior to promise because given through mediators (19b-20)
  - B. Question 2: “So is the law contrary to the promises of God?”
    - 1. No way!
    - 2. What the law cannot do
      - a) The law is good (21) but...
      - b) The law was never intended to bring ultimate “rightness” with God!

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<sup>1</sup>Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Appl. Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1995, p. 167.

→ *The Judaizers are asking the law to do what the law was never meant to do, what only God can do, what only Jesus Messiah did, and what only the Holy Spirit does. The law, though good, could not bring about the life and blessing that was promised.*

3. What the law could do and was intended to do
  - a) The law pointed toward the promise. (22)
  - b) The law kept us shut in / guarded / imprisoned (22-23)
  - c) The law was our teacher / tutor / guardian (24)
  - d) The law was always meant to be temporary -- until the Messiah came
- C. The punchline: Now that the "faith era" has arrived through the Messiah, the "law era" is done.
  1. The law has served its purpose, but we are "grown ups" now.
  2. Implication: God no longer works exclusively through one particular nation (i.e. Israel). What it means to be part of the people of God has changed (but it was always intended to expand in this way).
  3. Implication: we are no longer ruled by law, we are ruled by the Spirit of God.

#### IV. "Penning Ourselves In"

- A. In what ways do we/you try to create "new laws" for ourselves rather than relying on the Holy Spirit to bring about transformation in our lives?
- B. In what ways do we/you create boundary markers in our communities (who's "in" vs. who's "out") other than trust in Jesus Messiah and the mark of the Holy Spirit?

→ For next week: 3:26-4:7

**Glossary** (Because Paul sometimes makes my head spin too...)

Justification	Being made right with God. Justification is one of several metaphors in Scripture that describe what God does in order for us to be accepted by him. Imagine a courtroom in which you're on trial and have been found guilty, and you owe a fine of 100 billion dollars. You actually <i>are</i> guilty -- the issue isn't your guilt or innocence, but rather the payment owed. Someone else steps in and pays the fine on your behalf. Since the penalty has been paid, you are free to go. It's not that you are suddenly not guilty of all the traffic violations, but rather the fine has been paid, so you're free to go. That's one (albeit inadequate) picture of justification, being accepted by God on the basis of the work of Christ.
Law	The instructions given to Moses by God for how the nation of Israel was to conduct itself as the people of God. In Galatians, especially: (1) Rules about ritual purity, clean/unclean -- these rules were to separate Israel from the nations in order to illustrate the holiness required of God's people by a Holy God. (2) Circumcision as a sign of God's covenant to Israel. Both of these elements emphasized the unique relationship of the Jewish people to God and separated Israel from the nations that worshiped other gods ("clean", holy).
Blessings of Abraham	God made a covenant (binding agreement) with Abraham in which He promised the following (see Genesis 12, 15, 17): (1) Offspring, (2) blessing for Abraham, (3) a great name, (4) blessing or cursing, depending on how someone treated Abraham, (5) the Promised Land, (6) that all nations would be blessed through him, (7) God being the God of his people, (8) Kings coming from Abraham's line. <sup>2</sup> In our passage today, Paul sees the blessings of Abraham fulfilled through the incorporation of the Gentiles (the "nations") into the people of God, as well as in the sending of the Holy Spirit, etc.
Promise	This is what God does and gives freely -- in today's passage, especially the promise of the blessings mentioned above and fulfilled through Jesus Messiah.
Faith	Trusting in God, especially that God will do what he says he will do. This is what <i>we</i> do (whereas Promise is what God does).
Inheritance	The fulfillment / receiving of the blessings promised to Abraham. Paul sees the inheritance as salvation/kingdom of God, as well as in the giving of the Holy Spirit

<sup>2</sup> As in McKnight, 168.

