

## Galatians 3:15-25

**Paul gives an example from everyday life that illustrates what covenant principle (v. 15)?** The unchanging nature of God's covenant with Abraham. A covenant stands firm once it is made – no one annuls or adds to it. Paul's point isn't really about covenants among men, but to say "How much more certain is a covenant that *God* makes."

**To whom were the promises given (v. 16)?** To Abraham and his seed.

The promises include: Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation." Genesis 12:7 "To your offspring I will give this land." and Genesis 13:16 "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth." Those promises were later ratified by the two Abrahamic covenants (Genesis 15: 17).

**What does Paul mean by "seed" (v. 16)?** Note that the singular for seed is used, not the plural. The point is clear: God is referring to one specific descendant of Abraham "*who is Christ*," not all his descendants in general.

**What are the 430 years Paul is referring to (v. 17)?** The period of captivity in Egypt which is designated in round numbers as 400 years (Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6). Exodus 12:40 confirms that Israel spent 430 years in Egypt.

**What is the relationship between the promises to Abraham and the Law (Mosaic Covenant) (v. 17)?** The Mosaic Law, established 430 years after Abraham, had no impact on the promise. They were mutually exclusive.

**What point is Paul making about the inheritance (v. 18)?** The "inheritance" refers to what God promised to Abraham, namely that he would be heir of the world (Romans 4:13). It was an unconditional promise, not dependent on works, that was confirmed and ratified hundreds of years before the Law was given, and the giving of the Law could not affect it. God would not revoke His promise. That would be inconsistent with His nature.

**What was the purpose of the Law (v. 19)?** "*It was added because of transgressions.*" It was given as a means of checking sin. It served as a restraint by revealing sins to be transgressions of God's law which would incur His wrath. Sin existed before the Law, but man did not recognize it as transgression until the Law came. It was also temporary until the seed (Messiah) came, after which it was no longer needed. Just as the Law had a point of origin on Mount Sinai, so also it had a point of termination—Mount Calvary." The function of the law was to point people to Christ, not to provide for all time the way the people of God should live."<sup>1</sup>

The Law was given to a nation of sinners. They could never obtain righteousness by keeping it because they did not have the power to obey it. The Law was meant to show men what hopeless sinners they were so they would cry out to God to save them by His grace.

The Law was meant to prepare us for the arrival of the Messiah. It isn't that the Law of Moses is *revoked* when Jesus came (Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law, not destroy it (Matthew 5:17)). Instead, the Law of Moses no longer serves as our ground for approaching God.

**What role did angels play (v. 19)?** "*The Law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.*" The Law was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai by the hands of angels. Angels were the "go-between" or mediator for Moses when he received the Mosaic Covenant from God (Deuteronomy 33:2; Acts 7:53; Hebrews. 2:2).

**What is the meaning of v. 20?** The Law required a mediator between man and God (v. 19 – which was Moses) which implied that the Law was conditional and man must keep his part of the agreement. This was the weakness of the Law; it called for obedience from those who did not have the power to give it. When God made His promise to Abraham, He was the sole contracting party. This was the strength of the promise: everything depended on God and nothing on man. No mediator was involved because none was needed.<sup>2</sup>

**What is the relation between the Law and the promises of God (v. 21)?** The law is not something evil, opposing God's promise. The problem with the law is found in its inability to give strength to those who desire to keep it. If the law could have given life, then it could have brought righteousness. But the Law of Moses brings no life; it simply states the command, tells us to keep it, and tells us the consequences if we break the command.

**Do the Law and the promises contradict each other (vv. 21-22)?** Never! God designed them for two different purposes. The purpose of the Law was never to provide justification. It served as a mirror to show people their sinfulness, and that they are slaves of sin: "*But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin.*" When they realize they cannot save themselves, they will be open to receiving salvation as a gift by faith.<sup>3</sup>

**What is the dilemma the world faces and the solution (v. 22)?** We are in prison. The bars of the cell are sin, keeping us confined. The Scripture put us in the prison, because it pointed out our sinful condition. So, we sit imprisoned by sin, and the law cannot help us, because the law put us in the prison.

Only faith can break us out of our confinement to sin. The Law of Moses can show us clearly our problem and God's standard, but it cannot give us the freedom that only Jesus can give. The freedom is "*given to those who believe.*"

The bars of our sin are strong; we can't see through them. There is no chance of a jailbreak. But, an offer is made by the warden Himself to simply open the door and walk out – but you have to acknowledge you are confined, that you deserve to be in the cell, and ask Him to free you. When the prosecutor accuses the warden of not being just, the warden simply points out that the freed prisoner's sentence was completely fulfilled – by Himself!

**What was our prior relation to the Law (v. 23)?** We were prisoners fenced in by the Law's requirements which we could not fulfill, until the glorious news of deliverance from the bondage to the Law was announced in the Gospel. The Law of Moses prepared us to come to Jesus by the way it revealed God's character and by the way it exposed our sin.

**What was the purpose of the Law (v. 24)?** The law was our tutor or guardian, put in charge to bring us to Christ, in order that we might be justified by faith. The *purpose* of the Law of Moses is fulfilled when we stop trying to justify ourselves and come to faith in Jesus.

**What was the end result (v. 25)?** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian (the Law), for in Christ Jesus we are all sons of God, through faith.

In Paul's day, it was common for children between age six and 16 to be under the care of a pedagogue ("tutor"). The pedagogue protected them from evil influences and demanded their obedience. The Law did just that for Israel. However, the need for that kind of assistance ended when Christ came. The Mosaic Law was never intended to provide salvation for lost Israelites. God gave it to His redeemed people, after the Exodus, to let them know their responsibilities as redeemed people. It had a regulatory purpose and a revelatory purpose, but never a redemptive purpose. It led them "to Christ" in the sense that it prepared them for the coming of Christ, by showing them that human righteousness was inadequate, and that they needed a righteousness that only God could supply.<sup>4</sup>

**What is our new identity and how did we get it (v. 26)?** By faith in Christ, we find our identity as sons of God. To be among the sons of God means that we have a special relationship with God as a loving and caring Father.

**What is Paul's illustration and point (v. 27)?** Using the picture of baptism, Paul illustrates what it means to be a son of God through faith in Christ. He doesn't say we were baptized into water, but baptized into Christ. Just as in water baptism a person is *immersed* in water, so when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, we are *immersed* in Jesus.

Union with Christ which takes place at conversion is confessed in water baptism. Just as a soldier proclaims himself a member of the army by putting on his uniform, so a believer identifies himself as one who belongs to Christ by being baptized in water. He portrays visibly that he is a son of God.<sup>5</sup>

**What is our standing with others who come to God through faith (v. 28)?** We all have equal value before God. This was an amazing revelation. The whole problem among the Galatian Christians is that some wanted to still observe the dividing line between Jew and Gentile. Paul writes, "In Jesus Christ that line is done away with."

Sadly, some Christians still draw lines today. Some draw lines between denominations, some draw lines between races, some draw lines between nations, some draw lines between political parties, and some draw lines between economic classes. These are all lines that Jesus died on the cross to erase.

**What is the end result (v. 29)?** Those joined "to Christ" by faith have become spiritual "descendants of Abraham," and beneficiaries of some of God's promises to him. This does not mean Christians become Jews.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 46

<sup>2</sup> Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 1884

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 48

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 49

<sup>5</sup> Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 1885

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 52