

INTRODUCTION.

A. The arguments:

1. The Personal Argument (3:1-5); in which he asks the Galatians to recall their personal experience with Christ when they were saved.
2. The Scriptural Argument (3:6-14), in which he quotes six OT passages to prove his point.
3. The Logical Argument (3:15-29), he reasons with his readers on the basis of what a covenant is and how a covenant works.
4. The Historical Argument (4:1-11) explaining the place of the Law in the history of Israel.
5. The Sentimental Argument (4:12-18), is where the apostle appeals to them to remember his love and their happy relationship in days past.
6. The Allegorical Argument (4:19-31) which is based on the life of Abraham and his relationships with Sarah and Hagar. [WWW]

B. In this section, Paul makes four statements that help us understand the relationship between *promise* and *Law*.

THE INTENT OF THE LAW.

A. THE LAW CANNOT CHANGE THE PROMISE (3:15-18).

Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is *only* a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. **16** Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. **17** What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. **18** For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.

1. The word promise is used eight times in these verses, referring to God's promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). This promise involved being justified by faith and having all the blessings of salvation (3:6-9). It is obvious that the promise to Abraham (and, through Christ, to us today), given about 2000BC, preceded by centuries the Law of Moses (about 1450BC). [WWW]
2. But Paul reveals another wonderful truth; God made this promise, not only to Abraham, but also to Christ. "And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (3:16). [WWW]
3. The Bible concept of "the seed" goes back to Gen. 3:15, after the fall of man. God states that there will be a conflict in the world between Satan's seed (children of the devil, see Jn. 8:33-44) and the woman's seed (God's children, and ultimately, God's Son). The Scriptures show this conflict:
 - a. Cain vs. Abel (see 1Jn. 3:10-12).
 - b. Israel vs. the nations.
 - c. John the Baptist and Jesus vs. the Pharisees.
 - d. The true believer vs. the counterfeit (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43).Satan's goal was to keep the Seed (Jesus Christ) from being born into the world, for Satan knew that God's Son would one day crush his head. [WWW]

4. ALS on 3:17

There was 430 years between Abraham and Moses receiving the Law. There were 6 generations from Abraham to Moses: Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses (1Chr 23:6-13). (2) There is quite a bit of confusion out there based on Ex 12:40. In the Masoretic Hebrew, it says the Israelites lived in Egypt 430 years. Most people want to add years on to that for the lives of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. However, the Masoretic Hebrew is corrupt here. The Greek Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch say that the Israelites lived in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan 430 years. In other words, these two more ancient texts combine all those generations into 430 years. Paul does the same thing here. (See also Acts 7:6.)

5. For comment on the variation in this figure from that given by Stephen in Ac. 7:6, see my Commentary on Ac. 7:5-8. Paul used the figure also found in the LXX, and Stephen used a round number. [JBC]

B. THE LAW IS NOT GREATER THAN THE PROMISE (3:19-20).

1. The Law was temporary (3:19a).

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

- a. "It was added... until the Seed should come." Now it is obvious that a temporary law cannot be greater than a permanent covenant. [WWW]
- b. Furthermore, the Law had a terminus point: "until the Seed (Christ) should come." With the death and resurrection of Christ, the Law was done away and now its righteousness demands are fulfilled in us through the Spirit (Rom. 7:4; 8:1-4). [WWW]

2. The Law required a mediator (3:19b-20).

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. 20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

- a. When God gave the Law to Israel, He did it by means of angels and through the mediation of Moses. Israel "received the Law" by the disposition of angels" (Ac. 7:53). But when God made His covenant with Abraham, He did it personally, without a mediator. [WWW]
- b. The Law was temporary and required a mediator. The covenant of promise was permanent, and no mediator was required. There could be but one conclusion: the covenant was greater than the Law. [WWW]

C. THE LAW IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE PROMISE (3:21-26).

1. The Law was not given to provide life (3:21).

Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

- a. You can almost hear the Judaizers shouting the question in 3:21: "Is the Law then against the promises of God?" As Paul replies to this question, he reveals his deep insight into the ways and purposes of God. [WWW]
- b. Certainly the Law of Moses regulated the lives of the Jewish people, but it did not and could not provide spiritual life to the people (3:21 should be matched with 2:21). If life and righteousness could have come through the Law, then Jesus Christ would never have died on the cross. [WWW]

2. The Law was given to reveal sin (3:22).

But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

- a. What is the true rendition? The Authorized Version gave the correct translation thus: "That the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Even without the authority of the KJV, however, it is absolutely clear that sinner's faith is in the last clause of this verse, and it has to be the "faith of Christ" in the preceding clause. [JBC]
- b. It is here that we see how Law and grace cooperate in bringing the lost sinner to Jesus Christ. The Law shows the sinner his guilt, and grace shows him the forgiveness he can have in Christ. The Law is "holy, just, and good" (Rom. 7:12), but we are unholy, unjust, and bad. The Law does not make us sinners; it reveals to us that we are sinners (Rom. 3:20). [WWW]

- c. There is a lawful use of the Law, and there is an unlawful use (1Tim. 1:8-11). The lawful use is to reveal sin and cause men to see their need of a Savior. The unlawful use is to try to achieve salvation by the keeping of the Law. [WWW]
 - d. One great purpose of the Law of Moses was to convict Israel of sin and make the nation conscious of their need of salvation from it. As used by them, however, it became a source of greater pride than ever on their part. The Law's holy commandments were nullified, expanded, contradicted and perverted in countless ways; as Jesus himself revealed to them (Mk. 7:13). If Israel had properly responded to the Law by realizing and confessing their inability to keep it, and the crying need of their souls for redemption from sin, there would have been a far different attitude on their part when the true Messiah came. [JBC]
3. The Law was given to prepare the way for Christ (3:23-26).
 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. **24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. **25** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. **26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- a. Paul uses the term "tutor" or schoolmaster" or "child conductor" in referring to the purpose of the Law. The Law was to bring us to Christ, as a school bus driver would bring students to school.
 - b. The Greek word is "pedagogue." He was not a schoolmaster (nor a tutor), but the servant who had the care of the children to lead them to and bring them back from school, and had care of them out of school hours. [JBC]
 - c. The work of this guardian was preparation for the child's maturity. Once the child became of age he no longer needed the guardian. So the Law was a preparation for the Israelites until the coming of the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. [WWW]
 - d. The Law separated Israel from the Gentile nations (Eph. 2:12-18); it governed every aspect of their lives. During the centuries of Jewish history, the Law was preparing for the coming of Christ. The *demands* of the Law were to remind the people that they needed a Savior. The *types* and *symbols* in the Law were pictures of the coming Messiah (Lk. 24:27). [WWW]
 - e. The Law has performed its purpose: the Savior has come and the guardian is no longer needed. It is tragic that the nation of Israel did not recognize their Messiah when He appeared. God finally had to destroy the temple and scatter the nation, so that today it is impossible for a devoted Jew to practice the faith of his fathers. He has no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifice, no temple, and no king (Hos. 3:4). All of these have been fulfilled in Christ. [WWW]

D. **THE LAW CANNOT DO WHAT THE PROMISE CAN DO (3:27-29).**

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

- 1. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ ..." is only another way of saying that "all of the Galatians" had been so baptized. Howard was certain "that this refers to the initiatory rite of water baptism." Ramsay correctly read Paul's meaning here as follows: "Beyond all doubt Paul considered that, practically, to become a part of Christ implied membership in the church of Christ." The use of "As many of you ..." means that any who might not have been baptized were not in Christ. [JBC]
- 2. Every possible kind of racial, economic and sex distinction finds its great equalizer "in Christ." The bond of love and fellowship in the Lord is sufficiently strong to contain all outward differences among God's children. [JBC]
- 3. This is not merely a continuation of the argument Paul has been making, but it is continued into Galatians 4. The true seed of Abraham (in the plural sense) are all of those who, believing the gospel, have been baptized into Christ, comprising in their corporate totality the seed singular which is Christ, in the sense of his spiritual body. This enabled the Gentiles to be accounted the true seed of

Abraham, bypassing the Law of Moses altogether, thus inheriting through the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). [JBC]

4. Huxtable: Those who believe in Christ and are baptized in him are to be understood as here being affirmed to be "Abraham's seed," because, being clothed with Christ, they share his position. "Heirs ..." They are heirs, not of Abraham, but of God; for the idea connects to that of the sonship to God (3:26), of believers in Christ. [JBC]
5. Summary:
 - a. To begin with, the Law could never justify the guilty sinner.
 - b. Furthermore, the Law could never give a person a oneness with God; it separated man from God.
 - c. Finally, the Law could never make us heirs of God (3:29). God made the promise to Abraham's Seed" (singular, see Gal. 3:16), and that Seed is Christ. If we are "in Christ" then we too are "Abraham's seed" spiritually speaking. This means we are spiritual heirs of the spiritual blessings God promised to Abraham.
6. In the Old Testament we have *preparation* for Christ;
in the gospels we have the *presentation* of Christ;
in Acts through Revelation we have the *appropriation* of Christ. [WWW]

NEXT LESSON.

Our next lesson on Oct. 24, is entitled, "Sonship in Christ." See Gal. 4:1-20.

- I. **Personal: Grace and the Gospel (Chapters 1-2).**
 - A. Grace declared in Paul's message (1:1-10).
 - B. Grace demonstrated in Paul's life (1:11-24).
 - C. Grace defended in Paul's ministry (2:1-21).
 1. Before the church collectively (2:1-10).
 2. Before Peter personally (2:11-21).
- II. **Doctrinal: Grace and the Law (Chapters 3-4).**
 - A. The personal argument (3:1-5).
 - B. The scriptural argument (3:6-14).
 - C. The logical argument (3:15-29).
 - D. The historical argument (4:1-11).
 - E. The sentimental argument (4:12-18).
 - F. The allegorical argument (4:19-31).
- III. **Practical: Grace and the Christian Life (Chapters 5-6).**
 - A. Liberty, not bondage (5:1-12).
 - B. The Spirit, not the flesh (5:13-26).
 - C. Others, not self (6:1-10).
 - D. God's glory, not man's praise (6:11-18).