

## Study: Galatians 3:15 - 4:7, The Covenant and The Law

Do you tend to be someone who carefully follows “the rules,” or someone who challenges “the rules” regularly?

### Part 1 - The Covenant (Galatians 3:15-16)

<sup>15</sup> *Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.* <sup>16</sup> *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.*

#### Key Terms

##### **Covenant**

An irrevocable agreement between parties.

##### **Promise**

When used in this text, it refers to the ultimate benefits of the covenant God made with Abraham (land, descendants, righteousness, and blessing/inheritance).

##### **Seed**

This word in the original context of Genesis 12:7 could be singular or plural. Here, however, Paul is interpreting it as referring explicitly to Jesus.

Describe the covenant between God and Abraham. What did Abraham do? What did God do?

Is there anyone in your life with whom you have made a covenant, or something like it? What were the conditions of that covenant?

### Part 2 - The Law (Galatians 3:17-18)

<sup>17</sup> *What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.* <sup>18</sup> *For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

### Key Term

#### **Law**

In the New Testament, the term law is used to refer to the code that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai and, at times, to the entire Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).

What is the inheritance that is mentioned here? What is it based on?

Oftentimes we lose sight of what our inheritance in Christ is based upon. Can you think of a time when you tried to earn God's favor?

- What led you to do so?
- How do we fight against the desire to pursue an approach to God that's based on the "law"?

### **Part 3 - Why the law? (Galatians 3:19-20)**

<sup>19</sup> *Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator.* <sup>20</sup> *A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.*

Note: The phrase "It was added because of transgressions" linguistically could also mean "it was added for the purpose of revealing transgressions."

Put the following events on a timeline. When does the law's "effectiveness" end? What implications does this have?

- Jesus comes
- Abraham receives the promise
- Israel commits transgressions
- The law is given

#### **Part 4 - Law vs. Covenant? (Galatians 3:21-22)**

<sup>21</sup> *Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.* <sup>22</sup> *But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

What is the purpose of the Old Testament laws?

- What value do they hold for us as believers in Jesus today?

#### **Part 5 - It all comes back to Jesus (Galatians 3:23-29)**

<sup>23</sup> *Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.* <sup>24</sup> *So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.* <sup>25</sup> *Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

<sup>26</sup> *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,* <sup>27</sup> *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* <sup>28</sup> *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* <sup>29</sup> *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

How does Jesus fulfill God's promise to Abraham?

Paul says that, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"*. In light of Paul's argument with the Galatians, what does this mean?

#### **Part 6 - Who's your Daddy? (Galatians 4:1-7)**

<sup>1</sup> *What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.* <sup>2</sup> *The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.* <sup>3</sup> *So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.* <sup>4</sup> *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* <sup>5</sup> *to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.* <sup>6</sup> *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."* <sup>7</sup> *So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

Describe a time when you received a meaningful gift. Why do you think the gift was given at that time, and not earlier?

Key Term

**Abba**

An intimate term for God as Father.

Do you have the kind of relationship with God that allows you to call Him “Abba, Father”?

- What gets in the way of you having that kind of relationship with God?
- What is one step you can take towards pursuing greater intimacy with God this week?

What is our community application of this passage?