

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
November 15, 2015
Galatians 3:15-29
“In Jesus, not the Law!”

Memory Verse:

Gal 3:28 NIV - There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: The sermon will be the ninth in a series of expository sermons on Galatians.

SS Scripture: Galatians 3:15-29

ESS: Christians receive the Holy Spirit by faith in Jesus, not the Law, as the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham!

Preparation:

Read through this passage at least twice, slowly. Read from two different Bible translations. NIV is below:

¹⁵Brothers 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. ¹⁶The 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. ¹⁷What 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. ¹⁸For 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.

¹⁹Why, 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. ²⁰A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

²¹Is 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. ²²But 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.

²³Before 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. ²⁴So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

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

Presentation:

Engage: How would you feel if you were notified of a large inheritance coming your way? What if you had to share that inheritance with one or more other people?

Today we are learning that we do share our spiritual inheritance with other believers! Instead of being a burden, this is a blessing! We also are reminded that we are now able to leave behind the guardian who

prepared us for the inheritance. The blessing of God's presence in our lives is now ours to enjoy with all those others who believe!

1. We receive our inheritance in Jesus, not the Law! Verses 15-18

- Verse 16 One person is the true recipient of the promise, one seed, Jesus Christ. We inherit the promise through Jesus. Jesus is the "seed of Abraham"
- Verse 17, The covenant God made with Moses at Sinai was a real promise. However, it came 430 years after God's promise to Abraham. So the promise that has priority in the plan of God is the first promise. The promise to Abraham is the basis for all else that was happening. Therefore, the covenant God made with Moses at Sinai has to be understood on the basis of its meaning within God's covenant with Abraham. The first covenant defines the second covenant and provides its context. The Jews were trying to live life based only in the Covenant with Moses. In Galatian, Jews who had believed in Jesus were now trying to interpret their belief in Jesus based on this covenant of Law given to Moses. However, Paul continues to force them to grapple with the truth of the Abrahamic covenant, which had not been superseded or set aside for anything else.
- Verse 18, Paul begins to show that an inheritance from God either comes to us through a Law or through a promise. It is one, or the other but not both. In fact of we try to make the inheritance of God dependent upon the Law then we are saying that it is not from a promise. Paul is painting them into a corner of decision. Law or promise, but not both!

2. The Law has its place! Verses 19-25

- Verse 19, 22 If you are like the audience in Galatia, you are probably asking a simple question. "Why did God give the Law, if He wasn't going to use it?" Paul anticipates this question and addresses it. Certainly the Law is from God. Certainly God used it and continues to use it today! But how? Let's study and see!
The Law was given for a period of time! It served the people of Israel until the "seed of Abraham" had come. That seed, as we have already studied is Jesus. Jesus has come and so now the purpose of the Law has been completed.

The Law was given for a purpose! The purpose of the Law has to do with the sinfulness of mankind. But specifically the sinfulness of God's chosen people, Israel. The Law was given to Israel to set them apart and to keep them from blending into oblivion. Distinction and separation were key aspects of the life if Israel and the usefulness of the Law. The word used here, "because of transgression", and the way that it is used can be hard to understand. In reality Paul seems to be saying that the Law was given for the purpose of defining the Israelites as sinners, more than just helping them to not sin. In verse 22, the description is even more vivid. Jews are said to be "locked up under the control sin" by the Scripture. One meaning does not necessarily negate the other. But it is helpful to keep both in mind. There was a way in which the Law helped Israel live a better communal life before God and with one another. It did reveal God's perfection and holiness. However, whenever people endeavor to live by that standard, the imperfection of human beings rises to visibility quickly. So we must understand here that Paul is not in any way indicating that there was a time ever when God saved people through the Law. The Law always bound people in their sin, or showed them to be sinful. Even after the ministry of Moses, Israelites were saved and made righteous by their faith. They may have expressed their faith by keeping the ceremonial and sacrificial system and feast days, but it was their faith not the Law that made the right with God.

Paul says that the Law was given by God through angels and entrusted to a mediator. Moses mediated the Law to Israel. He wrote it, taught it, and integrated it into the community!

The Law is given through a mediator, Moses. But the promise is given by God himself. God makes the promise and Jesus fulfills it. The promise is all God from start to finish. There is no angel or mere human

mediator of the promise. Jesus, God in the flesh, is the one mediator between God and Man. Hebrews takes this thought and amplifies it powerfully by showing all the ways that angels and priests and requirement of Law were merely types of what Jesus truly is. Those things were pictured on earth because of the requirement of the Law but Jesus has and does enact them in heaven for us! Take time and **read 1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV** - *For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.*

Read Romans 7 out loud. This chapter is a reflection by Paul backwards to his experiences of trying to live out the holy and righteous requirements of God by keeping the Law. This is contrasted in this chapter to the fact that he as a believer is now dead to the Law and alive in the Holy Spirit. What he could not accomplish in the Law, he now has hope to accomplish through the Holy Spirit.

Make sure to **read Romans 8:1-2!!!!** Highlight that Paul is not despairing of the hopelessness of the Christian in the face of sin. Paul is trying to lead people to acknowledge the hopelessness of overcoming sin through the Law. The victory from Jesus comes to us as a promise! We are able to live above our sin nature in the Holy Spirit which bring life and not death, victory and not defeat!

- Verse 21, The Law cannot give life and does not give life. It wasn't given for that purpose. It is not in opposition to God. God gave it to make Israel know their need for Him. To crave the promise. The Law was supposed to prepare Israel for the promise of God. Instead, for some, it became a substitute for God's promise. How many people today are satisfied with half steps, and partial measures? God really does want to give you Himself and live in you through His Holy Spirit!
- Verse 22, The language here of locking up until a promise is fulfilled is very powerful. The Scripture, or Law, was like a chain and lock that God used to bind people under sin. We often think of that as something Satan would do, not God. But God is the one working our salvation out for His own glory. God used the Law to bind Israel, knowing that their nature as sinners would not allow them to access the promise through their works. His goal was to release them and through them to release the nations of the world into the arms of the only true Liberator and Redeemer, Jesus! He is the knight on the white horse, the ultimate kinsman redeemer, a Second Adam, a first fruit of resurrection, the elder brother! The Law is the restraint used to corral the rebels until their Lord was revealed to transform their hearts, minds and loyalty unto Himself!

The promised Holy Spirit of God, His blessing to the nations, is now available to all those who will believe in Jesus Christ. Notice the double emphasis upon faith even in verse 22. First, the promise is given through faith in Jesus Christ. The promise is given to all those who believe. Why is this significant? It emphasizes "faith in Jesus Christ." We aren't save by having "faith" in general, or in believe in just any god or gods. Some people miss this and think that faith as a principle is what life is about. "Just believe", they might say. That is not Christian faith. Secondly, some people worry needlessly over whether some can believe and others cannot believe. They fear that salvation is shut off to some groups of people. While there are verses that indicate that faith, or the ability to believe, is a gift from God. They might then think that some have the gift of faith and others never do. However, the vast majority of verses and weight of Scriptural evidence leads us to focus in a more positive area. God wants people to believe. People are told, or invited to believe, and follow, and stand, etc. Folks are even asked if they want to be healed. The invitation to faith or to believe in Jesus seems to be very open and very sincere on the part of God and of His evangelists in the Bible. So, do not ever get hung up in the idea of not being able to believe. Simply believe in Jesus! God invites you to because He wants you to. Your belief is not a work that earns your salvation. Your belief or faith in Jesus is simply the childlike acceptance of a truth God has revealed to you! He wants to live in you through His Holy Spirit!

- Verses 23-25. These verses continue the idea of being confined or hemmed in by the Law for a time and purpose. The ending of this time and understanding of this purpose for life apart from the Law was known though revelation. God showed it, man did not discover it. The move away from Law is not a religious evolutionary advancement. It came because God disclosed it through Jesus according to His own prior promise to Abraham. Paul had been adamant in Chapter 1 that the gospel he preached was this revelation from God and not men!

The Law is the παιδαγωγός *paidagōgos*, “tutor” i.e. “a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans the name was applied to trust worthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.¹”

With this in mind we can understand that the Law functioned for a period of time in Israel for their guidance and restraint. It functioned because of their sin and made them to know sin. All of this was in order that they could come to know God’s grace through faith. The guardian lead to the mature life of faith in Jesus, the promise fulfilled. The job of the guardian is over now that revelation of the promise through faith has been revealed.

3. We have a new identity in Jesus, not the Law. Verses 26-29

- Verses 26-27, These verses also emphasize the openness of God’s promise to all by faith. Two things stand out here. First, all those who believe have a new parentage. All believers in Jesus have a new spiritual father! God is our father and we are His children. As his common spiritual children, we are now brothers and sisters together in a new family. Discuss the difference that these two truths will make in worship!

How does being a spiritual child of God change the way you think of worshipping Him?

How does being a spiritual family with other believers change the way you think of ministry to other Christians, and fellowship in the church?

The second “stand out” principle is the identification with Christ for those who believe with the act of baptism. Baptism identifies us as “clothed with Christ.” Consider now that Paul has basically forbidden Gentile Christians from taking the outward sign of the Law which is circumcision. He did not forbid Jewish Christians from this practice or condemn those who had already been circumcised. So he now lifts up a new sign of grace, baptism. Baptism is not a work that saves us. It is a sign of grace that unifies us! It shows those who have come into faith in Jesus. As such it is a universal sign and should be practiced by all Christians for all time as an act of faith. It is for all people who believe. Because those who are baptized should be believers, the sign is a statement of our union with Christ. We have put him on like a robe! The water of baptism surrounds us completely and we are to be completely immersed and covered with Jesus! But never be confused, the baptism itself doesn’t accomplish this union with Christ, your faith in Christ does! The sign signifies the truth, but it by itself isn’t the truth! You must believe in Jesus for your baptism to be truthful. Additionally, you must continue to live out our baptismal declaration. Since baptism isn’t to be repeated, it should be a lifelong statement of our faith.

Ask yourself, “Am I living out my baptismal statement?” By faith, I put on Jesus and declared that to other. Am I know living for him by faith? Have you stopped actively believing? Do people see Jesus in your life? Is your faith evident like a garment your wear?

- Verses 28-29, Paul finally declares that the promise absolves all division among people who believe in Jesus. The absolute categories of distinction fade into irrelevance because of the unifying power of Jesus’ promise to those who believe. Since we are spiritually united with Christ, clothed in Him, and God’s

¹ <http://www.blbclassic.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3807&t=NIV>

children together, then we must acknowledge our equal standing before God. We do not stand above one another, but alongside one another. The ethnic/religious, social, and gender distinction that causes some to feel “better than others”, or more loved and important to God is not spiritually true for those “in Christ” by faith. We are those who “belong” to Him and we therefore, belong to one another. We receive His promise as our common inheritance because we are all Abraham’s seed!

Thank God today for His gracious inheritance given to you by faith in Jesus!

Is there a spiritual brother or sister that I need to be reconciled with today? Is there a category of believing Christians that you not want to extend Christian fellowship with based on ethnicity, color, gender?

Apply:

- Pray for a deep and biblical love for your Christian brothers and sisters. Focus on this church in your praying.
- Examine your life and seek to live out your baptismal profession with faithfulness.
- If you have never symbolized your faith through baptism, make that commitment today.
- Reject the Law as the path to salvation and maturity! Recommit to live in the promise of God’s Spirit!

For additional study helps go to this link at blueletterbible.org.

http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=20172&commInfo=31&topic=Galatians&ar=Gal_3_1