

## Heirs According to the Promise (Galatians 3:15-29)

### I. The Covenant of Abraham Established by Promise (15-18)

#### A. Covenants by Nature are Unalterable (15)

1. Paul uses a human example – even worldly covenants, once ratified, cannot be changed
2. Paul speaks of “covenant” in terms of a last will and testament. Once the terms are settled, nothing can change that. – nor can anyone add to it

#### B. The Promise to Abraham Spoke of Christ (16)

1. God promised to give the promise to his “seed” (offspring)
2. Paul makes sure we understand that the promise was not given to “seeds” plural, but to a singular seed
3. The “seed” who would receive the promise is Christ
  - a. God made this promise to Abraham repeatedly
  - b. God promised to his seed repeatedly in Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7

#### C. The Promise Cannot be Altered by the Law (17)

1. The promise came first and the law was “added” (v.19a)
2. The Law did not come through Moses until 430 years after Abraham.
  - a. The law cannot invalidate the promise
  - b. The law cannot nullify a covenant that was already ratified

#### D. The Promise is What Gives the Inheritance (18)

1. Being Sons of God can’t come through law and promise
  - a. It must be one or the other
  - b. If it comes by keeping laws, the promise is nullified because it no longer depends on God, it depends on you
  - c. If it comes by promise then it doesn’t depend on you but on God.
  - d. In the promise God says, “I will...I will.” But the law says, “you must...you must.”
2. Being a Child of God came to Abraham by promise
  - a. There was no law at the time of Abraham so he couldn’t be justified by law
  - b. If justification comes by law then Abraham was left out!

### II. Why Then Do We Have the Law? (19-25)

#### A. The Law is Inferior to the Promise (19-21)

1. The Law was Added to Reveal Sin (19a)
  - a. It is a mirror to show us our sinfulness
  - b. It was added so men would recognize their wickedness before God
  - c. Paul said, “I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” – Romans 7:7

2. The Law is Subordinate to the Promise (19b-20)
  - a. The Law was given to the people through the agency of a mediator
    - i. The Law was given to Moses at Mount Sinai and there is no explicit reference to God giving the law to Moses through angels in Exodus but it does say it in
      - Deuteronomy 33:2 - The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints (*holy ones*): from his right hand went a fiery law for them
      - Acts 7:53 – Stephen says the people “have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it”
      - Hebrews 2:2 (Speaking of the law) For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation
    - ii. Therefore, the Law was given to men through two mediators – God gave it through the angels to Moses and Moses gave it to the people
  - b. The Promise was not given like this. The Promise was given directly to Abraham by God Himself.
  - c. Why does it say, “Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.” – v. 20
    - i. A mediator is needed when two parties make a covenant – each party agrees to certain conditions and the covenant is ratified. This is how the law was given

There was no mediator when God made a covenant with Abraham because there were no stipulations put on Abraham. God made the covenant with himself and gave the promise to Abraham. NOTE: In the ancient Near East, covenants were made by cutting animals in two, deciding on the terms of the covenant, and then the two parties making the covenants would walk between the animal halves. This was like saying, “If I break my end of the covenant, may I end up like these cut up animals” (See Jeremiah 34:18). That is why the bible refers to it as “cutting” a covenant.

When God made the covenant promise to Abraham. God walked through the pieces by himself. Abraham had no part in the covenant. In essence, God was saying, “I swear by myself that I will fulfill the covenant alone.” This is why Paul says, there is no need for only one part to have a mediator.

- d. The Law is not Contrary to the Promise (21)
  - i. Those reading this would probably think that Paul was saying the Law of Moses was a bad thing.
  - ii. The Law and the Promise are simply given for two different purposes
    - The Law cannot impart life – because we cannot keep it. The law can only show us our sin and reveal God’s righteous standard
    - If Law could give life then the law would be the way to get righteousness.
- 3. The Law Imprisoned All Under Sin (22-23)
  - a. The Promise of Abraham was given to all who have faith (22)
    - i. Scripture determined everyone up under sin – both Jew and Gentile alike.
    - ii. The reason the law condemns everyone is so that the promise through Jesus also is available to all – both Jew and Gentile
  - b. The Law kept us captive Until Faith was Revealed
    - i. The Law could only imprison (“Shut us up”) because no man could keep it
    - ii. When faith (which was the promise) was revealed in Jesus, the law no longer imprisons those who believe
- 4. The Law is Meant to Bring Men to Christ (24-25)
  - a. The Law functions in Leading us to Christ (24)
    - i. The law is our schoolmaster (tutor, guardian)
      - It shows us where we are wrong
      - It teaches us what God expects
      - It shows us our need for a savior
    - ii. The law’s function as schoolmaster has ended (25)
      - For those who believe, we no longer fear the law
        - The law still shows sin
        - The law still teaches God’s expectations
        - The law had fulfilled it’s purpose in bringing us to the savior

### III. Believers are Heirs to Abraham’s Promise (26-29)

- A. Believers are the true Sons of God (26)
  - 1. We are sons by faith in Jesus
  - 2. All men receive the promise (Jew or Gentile) who believe
- B. Believers are clothed with Christ (27)

1. All the promise to physical Israel were fulfilled in a physical Israelite (Jesus Christ)
  2. When we are clothed with Him, we are the true Israel
- C. Believers are all one in Christ (28)
1. There is no longer a separation between Jew and Gentile
  2. There is no longer any distinction in God's sight for those who are in Christ
- D. Believers are heir to Abraham's Promise (29)
1. Those who belong to Christ are Abraham's descendents
  2. Those who are Abraham's descendents by faith are heirs to the promise of Abraham
  3. Regardless of Jew or Gentile, the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ. Not in a nationality or a certain people group.