

2016: Week 20

Sunday, May 15th 2016

“Law or Promise? So What?”

Galatians 3:18

“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.”

Who came first: Moses or Abraham? Let’s get down to the next question you’re asking yourselves: *Why does it matter?* This past Sunday John continued leading our church through a study of Galatians. In Galatians 3:15–22, the chronology of God’s interactions with Moses and Abraham becomes very important. The promises that God made to Abraham earlier (2100–2000 B.C.) were not negated by His interactions with Moses later (1440 B.C.). God made a covenant with Abraham that would ultimately find its fulfillment in Jesus. Of critical importance is that this promise to Abraham was not voided when God established the law with Moses at Mt. Sinai.

With Moses, God established a code of law by which He expected His people to obey. However, the law God gave to Moses was never intended to provide a means of salvation, forgiveness of sins, a reception of God’s divine righteousness, or an assurance of eternal life. Throughout the different eras of history and amidst the various responsibilities He expects of His people, God’s plan of salvation has always been the same: *by His grace through faith on the basis of the shed blood of Christ.*

READ Galatians 3:15–22

In 3:15, Paul states that when a covenant is made, it cannot be changed.

- Can you think of an example in which someone tried to change the conditions of an agreement?
- Why doesn’t that work?

In 3:16–18, Paul expounds upon the chronology issue. In Galatians 3:17 Paul says the Law was given 430 years after the promise made to Abraham¹. God’s promise was multi-faceted, but the particular promise that Paul targets is the one found in Galatians 3:8 “*All the nations will be blessed in you.*”

- How are the nations blessed “in Abraham”?
- Why is it so important that Christ is the “seed” of Abraham?

In 3:19–22, Paul reminds the reader/listener that the purpose of the Law is to show people their problem: sin. If we’re honest with ourselves, we all must admit that we’ve “broken” God’s law. Realizing our own shortcomings before God is an important part of the process by which God “breaks” us.

- Is it a good thing to “break” God’s law? Is it a good thing to be “broken” by God’s law? What’s the difference?
- Being broken by God illustrates a Biblical idea known as repentance (“I have sinned, and I need help”). Genuine repentance should lead us towards sincere faith in God, specifically in Jesus and His accomplishments on the cross (“I trust You and what You’ve done for me”).

Has God ever broken you?

Does He need to break you today?

FAMILY PRAYER: Ask the Lord to “break” you in areas of your heart that need to be broken. Thank Him for being ready to forgive you when you mess up. Praise Him for His goodness, faithfulness, and lovingkindness.

¹ If you’re scratching your head with the math, remember that God made the same promise to Isaac and Jacob that He made with Abraham. From the time that Jacob’s family entered Egypt to the time of the exodus with Moses, it was a period of approximately 430 years (“430” in Exodus 12:40; about “400” years in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6; “450” years in Acts 13:19 from the beginning of Israel’s bondage to the time of the conquest). Therefore the “promise” God reiterated to Jacob was probably around the time of 1870 B.C.