What is in view

We've been looking closely at many of Paul's specific concerns in Galatians 3. In this discussion, we want to step back and make sure that we have a grasp of the "big picture" of what he is driving at. And that big idea is wrapped up in the words found in 3:29: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."
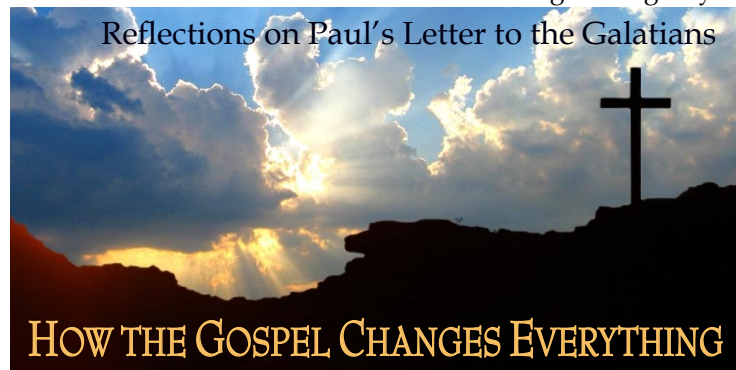
What is helpful to note

There is a great deal in this passage that warrants comment, but we will just highlight some of the major ideas that help move Paul's argument along. In contrasting "Law" to "promise" (3:15-20), there are a number of things that Paul highlights about the Law that we need to note.

To speak of the law being added because of transgressions (3:20), might seem that Paul is saying that the Law was added because transgressions were increasing and the Law was intended to restrain sin (which is one of the popular ways of understanding what Paul is saying in Galatians 3:19). However, reading carefully, it would appear that–as challenging as the idea might initially seem–*the Law was intended to expose and uncover and provoke sin so that all would come to see themselves as sinners.* In this sense, the Law "awoke" sin and, thus, made all men aware of their need for the "promise." This view is confirmed by what Paul writes in Romans 4:15; 5:13 and 5:20.

In 3:20-21, Paul makes reference to both angels and a "mediator." This word, "mediator," was widely used by Jews to refer to Moses, the "mediator" of the covenant established in Exodus. The reference to angels is an allusion to the idea that Moses received the Law through the agency

> *"The law was given not so much to take away sin as to show how greatly we need salvation. The function of the law was to point people to Christ . . . . the law was never meant to be a permanent guide to the people of God showing them the way of salvation. It was there to point people to the Son of God."*
> Leon Morris

Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians

southside
FELLOWSHIP

HOW THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

---

of angelic messengers. Note Deut. 33:2, Acts 7:53, and Heb. 2:2. The idea behind verse 20 appears to be that the promise God established was unilateral; it depended on Him only for fulfillment. This differs from the Law that was "mediated agreement" between two parties.

Paul uses a colorful word to further help us understand the relationship between the Law and our life with God through faith in Christ. He says that the Law was a "tutor." The word "tutor" (NASB and NKJV; "in charge to lead," NIV) refers to a trusted slave who was put in charge of the discipline and training of a young child to ensure both his safety as well as provide necessary moral training.

Perhaps we could summarize Paul's thoughts in these few verses this way: The Law exposed sin for what it was, the Law was granted through mediators rather than "in person" by God Himself, and the Law was only temporary. These ideas underscore the ineffectiveness of the Law to "invalidate" (3:17) the promise God had made to Abraham.

This all drives to bringing home the points Paul had already been seeding in the letter to the Galatians. Specifically, the heart of the issue is; 1)whether one belongs to Christ through faith, 2) which makes one a true "son" of Abraham (apart from rules-keeping), 3) which is founded on the grace-promise of God Himself. Point 1 is at the heart of Galatians 1:1-10; point 2 is rooted in 2:15-3:9; and point 3 is what Paul was stressing in 3:10-18. In this way, Galatians 3:29 sums up what Paul has been driving toward in the first part of this epistle.

What to talk about with your group

This week, the intent is to help your group see the flow of thought and travel with Paul in his argument to his intended destination. Basically, the questions will help your people tie together what they have been studying throughout the early chapters of Galatians with the concluding thoughts found in the end of chapter three.

You won't be able to bring all the threads into your hand; you won't be able to answer all the questions. Try, however, to help them see that Paul is going somewhere with his argument and that he arrives at 3:29 as a powerful and significant "destination."

> *"God's promise to Abraham was neither set aside by the law nor contradicted by it; rather, that promise continues to be in effect until this very day. On the other hand, it must be clearly understood that the promise of God does not find fulfillment in all of Abraham's [physical] descendants without distinction, but only in those who, like Abraham, are people of faith."*
> David Huttar

Questions for Reflection and for Group Discussion

Thinking . . .

Why is it that we can sometimes be so attentive in a conversation and miss what the other person was saying?

What helps you stay on track with someone when you are in conversation with them?

Reflecting . . .

We want to make sure we are listening well to what Paul is saying and not get lost or overwhelmed in the details.

What is the idea that Paul launched in Galatians 1:6-10?

How is that developed further by what Paul says in 3:26-29?

What is Paul's main idea in 2:15-3:9?

How is that idea developed further by what he says in 3:26-29?

Contrast and compare Paul's thoughts in 3:14-18 with his concluding comment in 3:26-29?

Try and "hear the music" of what Paul is driving at in this chapter. How would you explain each of these climactic phrases drawn from 3:29?
  "If you belong to Christ":
  "Then you are Abraham's descendants":
  "You are . . . heirs according to promise":

Responding . . .

Try and put into your own words what it is that God has done for you in Christ . . . and talk with Him about what you are trusting Him to do in your life.

"God's promise to Abraham was neither set aside by the law nor contradicted by it; rather, that promise continues to be in effect until this very day. On the other hand, it must be clearly understood that the promise of God does not find fulfillment in all of Abraham's [physical] descendants without distinction, but only in those who, like Abraham, are people of faith."
David Huttar

Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians

HOW THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING

southside
FELLOWSHIP