

## Grace for Kids

Today is *the beginning of the end*. We are taking Galatians in 10 pieces here throughout the summer. Dr. Vertefeuille gave us the fifth in our series two Sundays ago, so with today's sermon (sixth in the series) we are beginning the *last half*.

John Baker read the last bit of the portion assigned today; we're actually picking up at Galatians 3:15 and moving through Galatians 4:7.

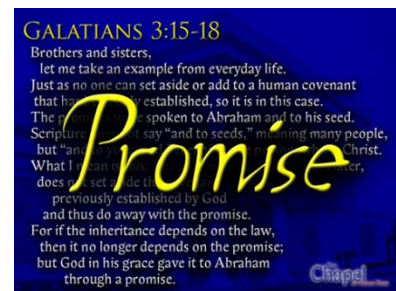
Let's walk through this entire passage of Scripture.

### Galatians 3:15-18

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. 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. 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. 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**.

I try to be a man of my word; when I make a promise, I mean it. Even when I later regret the promise, I do my best to work to follow through. Sometimes I learn the hard way, making a promise without fully realizing what I'm getting myself into. I often make a promise without entirely understanding what it will take, but confident that I can pull together the resources and figure it out along the way. Many promises are easy to keep; others take time and sacrifice.

And then there are times when I simply fail to live up to my promise. Sometimes I forget, or don't have what it takes, or just get lazy. I haven't kept a "batting average" of promises made and kept; I'd like to think it is pretty high (higher than average)... but I know that I don't have anything near a perfect record of keeping promises. My promises are reliable, but not **entirely** reliable.

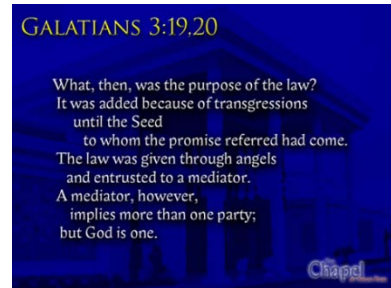


God's promises are entirely reliable. When He made the promise to Abraham, He knew what it would take and He knew that He would deliver on His promise. God's promises are 100% reliable and in order to keep the quality of His promise 100% pure, He could not leave any part of it up to us. In regard to God's promise to me, the only way it could be 100% reliable is to keep me out of it.

The *Gospel of Grace* is a promise first, not a contract or deal... a **promise**.

Galatians 3:19,20

What, then, was the purpose of the law? 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. A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

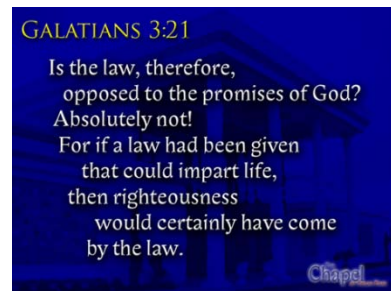


Warren Wiersbe summarizes this short passage well:  
“The Judaizers were impressed by the incidentals of the Law—glory, thunder, lightning, angels, and other externals. But Paul looked beyond *incidentals* to the **essentials**. The Law was temporary, and required a mediator. The covenant of promise was permanent, and no mediator was required. There could be but one conclusion: the covenant was greater than the Law.” [Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989)]

The *Gospel of Grace* is rooted in God's promise to Abraham; the *grace+* gospel was working to preserve the vitality of the Law. Paul shows us that God's promise is eternal, but the Law was temporary. The promise is unmediated (we *do* have a personal relationship with Jesus), while the Law came through mediators like Moses and angels. God's promise, and the *Gospel of Grace*, is greater than the Law.

Galatians 3:21

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.



Was the Law a **mistake** or some sort of failed attempt? Did God take a wrong turn with the Law? Is the Law “opposed to the promises of God? **Absolutely not!**”

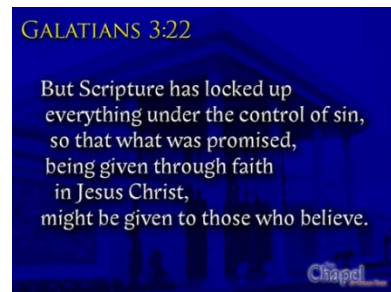
The problem was more that the Law had become the **object** of worship rather than the **means** of worship.

The Promise was given first, and then the Law was given as a means for the *promise people* to worship God with their behavior. The Law was filled with rules for this life, but the rules could not impart spiritual, or eternal, life. The Law could not give righteousness, especially the kind of righteousness that could stand before our Holy God. The only way righteousness, deep and lasting righteousness that restores our fellowship with God for eternity, could come to us humans was through God's sovereign act: the *Gospel of Grace*.

### Galatians 3:22

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.

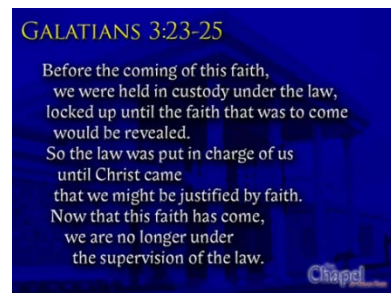
The best use of the Law is to reveal sin; Scripture makes it clear to us that everything is *locked up* under the control of sin. Our worst use of the Law is to use it to attain righteousness.



The *Gospel of Grace* is the good news that we don't need to earn what we can't earn; the *Gospel of Grace* is knowing that we are given God's promise of righteousness through faith in Jesus.

### Galatians 3:23-25

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. So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.



The Law rightfully exposed our sin, judged us guilty, and **put us in jail**... but "now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." This is the Good News! This is the *Gospel of Grace* that the new Christians in Galatia received through Paul's preaching.

Once freed, why do we so readily go back to jail?

I think it is mostly about control. The *Gospel of Grace* calls us to place God in supreme control of our lives... everything from our direction to our destiny, our todays and tomorrows, our inner lives as well as our circumstances, our health, wealth, needs, desires. Relinquishing control to God may be easy to say, but it is not so easy to do.

Putting ourselves back in jail (back to following rules in order to try to attain righteousness) gives us some sense of control. Even if the rules and surroundings are harsh, at least we have some control over how we behave while *incarcerated*. We can keep score. And while in jail, we may get some satisfaction in controlling others too.

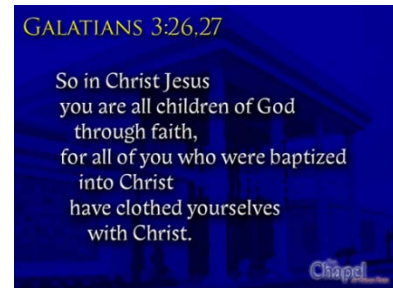
We need God's power in order to continually choose the *Gospel of Grace*, being freed from judgment and to this full life of faith, by relinquishing full control of our lives to Him.

Galatians 3:26,27

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

We are called "***children of God***"!

No longer prisoners, and not slaves or subjects, we are children. Heirs, not because of anything that we've done, but entirely due to God's grace and love for us His children.



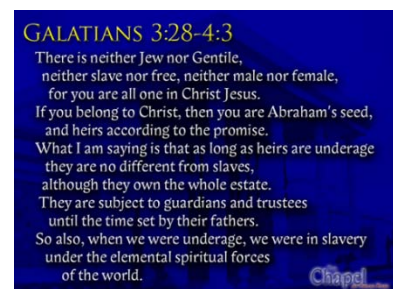
One of my most clear memories is the new realization I had regarding God's feelings about *me* when *I* first became a father. I wasn't prepared for the intense emotions that hit me when my son Alex was born; **there is nothing like being a parent**. I especially remember being struck by a wave of emotions during the drive to the hospital early in the morning after getting a bit of sleep after Alex's birth. While processing just how deeply I loved my newborn son it struck me that God calls me His son. I probably should have pulled off the road because the weight of that realization was nearly too much to bear.

It struck me that Alex hadn't done a thing to yet earn my love... yet I loved him more than anyone or anything I could imagine. And God calls me His son.

Think of it. My sons Donny and Alex didn't merit my overwhelming love for them as their father. They didn't (couldn't) do anything to earn their standing with me. So how could they do anything to lose the love I have for them? They didn't do anything to get it, what could they do to lose it? And God calls me His son.

Galatians 3:28-4:3

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. What I am saying is that as long as heirs are underage they are no different from slaves, although they own the whole



estate. They are subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by their fathers. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

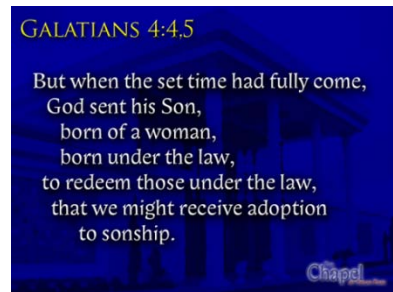
There is a handy tool used by theologians that goes something like this: *already/not-yet*. God's promises are ours, but we don't always enjoy the full realization of God's promises in our everyday lives. Is there Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female today? Are there divisions, let's say, between black professors and white cops? God's promise for the dropping of barriers is already, but our realization is clearly not yet.

God has made us His children; that promise is true and entirely fulfilled... but are we still "subject to guardians and trustees"? Paul's answer is **no**. "We **were** in slavery," says Paul. "We **were** underage."

The time set by our Father has come. We are not only heirs, but Paul says that the time for us to enjoy our inheritance has begun.

Galatians 4:4,5

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.



Here are at least two significant points in these few verses:

1. Jesus was not merely born a man, and
2. God gave his Son so that we could "receive adoption to sonship."

I generally focus on the wonder of how Jesus was born, in the regular way, as a human (I love Christmas). With God as His father, Jesus was born as a human baby in humble circumstances.

Jesus was also born, in the regular way, as a Jewish baby "under the law." His circumstances obliged him to the law; Jesus was raised to be a **law follower**. Jesus was born as a human so that he could redeem humans... and he was born under the law so that he could "redeem those under the law."

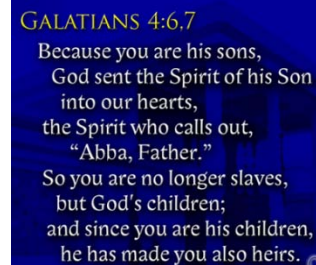
I'm also noting that we are promised to "receive adoption to **sonship**." I've used the TNIV (Today's New International Version of the Bible) since it was published, specifically because the translators were careful to not use gender specific language whenever possible. As a preacher, I want to be careful to not alienate women.

In this case, the translators had to use **sonship** because the meaning is specific. In ancient culture, only sons were true heirs; only sons were awarded assets. The translators couldn't say "that we might receive adoption" as children. In this case (sorry ladies) sonship is **better**. All of us (women, men, and children) receive the full benefits of sonship because God gave His Son so that we all could be sons.

Galatians 4:6-7

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer slaves, but God's children; and since you are his children, he has made you also heirs.

Thank You, Father, that You have put Your Spirit in my heart. Thank You that with Your Spirit comes an extraordinary knowing that You are real, Your grace is true, and Your faithfulness is everlasting.



GALATIANS 4:6.7  
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What does it mean to be God's heir? What is our inheritance? More than anything else, the most prized inheritance we receive from our Heavenly Father, the gift we receive now as heirs is the Spirit of His Son, the Holy Spirit. Whatever inheritances we might receive in Heaven (mansions, feasts, streets of gold, etc.) pale in comparison to the inheritance we are given now in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit has such great power that we are now acquainted with God on the most personal terms. Because of the gift of the Spirit, we are not only the heirs of His fortune, but the beloved children who call him "Abba." We don't just merely fear Him and hold Him in awe... we are invited to experience Him as "Daddy."



EVERYDAY  
Grace  
messages from Galatians  
Grace  
for Kids

When I put this series together, I called this passage "Grace for Kids." It is that and so very much more. The Gospel of Grace calls us to understand that we are His children, His heirs (sons), and His beloved "kids."

Wow! This is a lot to digest in just one meal... but we can't allow ourselves to get away without asking "so what?"

I mentioned that right after the service today, as soon as we can get out the door after I pronounce the benediction, we'll be heading to the airport. Laurie, Donny, and I will get on a Delta flight to Atlanta to catch a connecting flight to Orlando. We'll be there at the Orlando convention center for a week as Donny participates in the National Fine Arts Conference, I represent the



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University at the Assemblies of God biannual meeting, and we all participate in the business and services of the General Council. Laurie, Donny, and I are heading off... but Alex is staying home. What makes matters worse is that as we'll be traveling home, Alex will be traveling east of the mountains for a week of camp with his youth group. When Alex drops us off at the airport, we won't see him for two weeks. It is really strange (and especially hard on his mom)!

So yesterday, as I was finishing up this sermon, what was the one thing I wanted to be sure to do on Saturday before the family is split up for a few weeks? Have dinner together. As is common with most families, the dinner table is a time for families to reconnect and strengthen their bonds as family. We talk and laugh and catch up... we often make decisions as a family around the dinner table... we make plans for the future and we make memories around the table.

So as we reflect on this passage of Scripture today, let's take it to the dinner table. With communion, God is inviting His children (His heirs, His kids) to come to the table. While we have made arrangements for the bread and the cup... it is really a table that God himself has prepared.

When we come today, let's be especially sure to come as His children. Let's ask Him to help us grasp, just a bit more, what it means that He has prepared the table, and invited us to come as His kids.

This is the Gospel of Grace. God did the work to make us His own. Jesus paid the price that we couldn't pay so that we rightfully come to God's table. The Holy Spirit draws us to enjoy the table set before us.

