

Freedom and the Law

(5/15/22; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: Galatians 3:18-29

Summary Highlights: In vss. 18-19a Paul talks about the inheritance (i.e., eternal life and righteous status) being based on the promise. It is not based on the law. This raises the question, “Why was the law given at all”?

In vss. 19b-21 Paul talks about the law being added because of transgressions. And the law was given “until the Seed comes (i.e., Jesus Christ).” The law was given through angels and a mediator. The promise was given directly by God. The law is not opposed to the promises of God.

In vss. 22-29 the promise is for those who believe. The law was like the guardian for humankind. However, when “being justified by faith” came, we no longer needed the law. In Christ, all believers are children of God. By being baptized into Christ, there is no more Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. We are all one in Christ, Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Introduction: A key idea in today’s lesson is that through Christ, believers are heirs to God’s promises and are called to live in unity. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to appreciate the promises of God as we live together in Him.

Applications:

1. Inherited promises. Notice in vs. 18, 22 that there is mention of the inheritance and what was promised. Both of these are talking about eternal life and having a righteous status for those who believe. As believers in the substitute death payment of Jesus Christ for the penalty of our sins, we inherit and are promised the great blessings of eternal life and having a righteous status before God. We never work our way into being right with God. We are given the promises of God based on God’s grace. *Let’s live like we appreciated our promised inheritance.* This calls for striving to love God with all that we have and to love others as we should love ourselves.

2. The purpose of the law. Notice in vss. 19, 22 that the law was added because of humankind’s transgressions. One of the major purposes of the law was to show us that we cannot save ourselves. In fact, if the law could give life, righteousness would have come by it. A key point for us to remember is that in reference to living by the law, there is none righteous, no not one. That is why we needed a savior. *Let’s live like we know that we are saved by grace, not by keeping the law.* This application should help us live humbly among one another. None us would be here without the grace of God.

3. Seasons. Notice in vss. 19-21, 23-25 that the law was temporary. It was in effect until the Seed to whom the promised referred had come – Jesus Christ. The law was inferior to the promise in that the law came through angels, but the promise came from God Himself. The law was the guardian, until the guardian was no longer needed. We should strive to appreciate that God has a master plan. Just as there was a dispensation of law and dispensation of grace, God works a master plan for the lives of His people. This plan includes some high mountains and low valleys, but if we keep the faith, the end makes the journey worth enduring. *Let’s keep the faith like we believe that God is working things out for our favor.* This kind of living should include obedience, joy, and confidence.

4. Baptized believers. Notice in vss. 26-27, 29 that in Christ, all believers are children of God. They are baptized into Christ and clothed with Christ. They are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. In other words, all believers are special to God. There are no big "I"s and little "U"s. Christian baptism is supposed to symbolize our dying to our selves and the world as well as our being resurrected to live for Jesus. It is to signal our being clothed with Christ to live by His will. This text should urge us to live as if all believers are special to God. And it should move us to live like those who are clothed with Christ. This means living by biblical principles in every area of our lives. *Let's work on living like baptized believers.*

5. Unity in Christ. Notice in vs. 28 that among those who are baptized into Christ, there is no more Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. Being in Christ makes those things that used to divide us so much less relevant. We should be more concerned with Christ and the gifts that He has given us than being divided by things like ethnicity, social economic status, and gender roles. Our goal should be to focus on being united in living for Christ, instead of being divided by the items listed. Think about how this application speaks to what divides us today (e.g., gender roles, racism, classism, denominationalism, etc.). *Let's work on living in unity as baptized believers.*