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Sermon Notes

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The Promise is Superior to the Law

Galatians 3:15-22

A Black Diamond passage:

I learned to ski on a small hill in central Massachusetts... Ward Hill in Shrewsbury, MA... vertical drop 220 feet; went to Sugar Loaf Ski resort in Maine; second longest vertical drop east of the Mississippi—2,820 feet. I knew nothing of this... all I knew is “I can ski!!” I went immediately to the summit of the mountain and there were five or six trails going off the summit... I decided to take one of the BLACK DIAMOND trails—Advanced; it was called “Headwall”, and I started off confidently... soon, I came around a bend, and there were all these expert skiers, and they had their equipment off and were stretching out, and getting ready. I stopped, looked over the trail and saw it was nothing more than a snowy cliff!! I was in WAY OVER MY HEAD!! I had two choices: 1) take off my skis and walk back up to the summit and ride one of the chair lifts down in defeat; 2) go and hope for the best! I ended up falling down the mountain, but somehow not getting injured! I spent the rest of the day in conservative humble safety on intermediate trails on the lower half of the mountain!

Friends, this morning, we come to a BLACK DIAMOND passage in Galatians... it contains some of the hardest verses to interpret that Paul ever wrote. The difficulty lies in the WAY THAT PAUL ARGUES... not in the overall argument Paul is making. The big picture is clear—salvation from sins is by grace through faith in the promise, not by human effort based on the Law. We will reemphasize that again today... and rejoice again that our salvation is secure, guaranteed, based only on the promise of salvation through faith in Christ!! But we must dig deeper and honor God by trying to understand the details of Paul’s logic, of his argumentation... and that’s where we go BLACK DIAMOND... 1) how do we understand Paul’s “seed” vs. “seeds” argument in vs. 16; it doesn’t seem right, and if I were one of Paul’s debating opponents, I would jump all over that one; 2) how do we understand the 430 years statement, when the real count from Abraham to the Law is 645 years? 3) what in the world does verse 20 mean?

Galatians 3:20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

One excellent scholar says that he has counted 430 possible interpretations of that one verse! So NO ONE REALLY KNOWS FOR CERTAIN what Paul meant there!

These are just some of the DETAILS that scholars wrangle over!

But even the big picture train of thought is hard to follow...

So WHY MAKE THE EFFORT?? Well, because we believe this:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And we want to listen carefully and seriously to all Scripture to understand what God is saying to us... so we can be taught, rebuked, corrected, trained in righteousness, and then be thoroughly equipped for every good work

And we listen to Scripture like sons and daughters listening to a loving heavenly Father who is pouring out words of wisdom to us:

Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, ² turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, ³ and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, ⁴ and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, ⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

So today, we are going into the SILVER MINE of God's word; we are going to put on our helmets with their headlamps; we are bringing some shovels and picks, water bottles and some energy bars; some towels to wipe the sweat from our foreheads and we are going to try to understand these amazing verses... we are going to WORK HARD MENTALLY so we can search for insight and cry aloud for understanding... so we can UNDERSTAND THE FEAR OF THE LORD and FIND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD... and trust that God will GIVE US WISDOM as a gift... that we may KNOW HIM and JESUS CHRIST... that we may LIVE!!!!

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

I. Paul's Overall Argument: Salvation Covenant Based on Promise Not Law

A. The Judaizers were arguing for Salvation by Works of Law

1. Faith in Christ is good... but NOT ENOUGH!!
2. The Gentiles had to be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses

B. Paul Rejects This Powerfully

1. By stating the gospel directly (Galatians 2:16)

Galatians 2:16 [We] know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

2. By citing their own example of receiving the Spirit by hearing + faith, not by works

Galatians 3:2-3 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³ Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

3. By proving from the Old Testament the justification is by faith, not by Law

C. Paul Has Proven that Abraham was Justified by Faith in the Promise

Galatians 3:6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." [Genesis 15:6]

He also says that God foresaw that ALL NATIONS would be blessed through Abraham... and the implication is that they will be blessed IN THE SAME WAY as Abraham: by faith

Galatians 3:8 "All nations will be blessed through you." [Genesis 12:3]

- D. Paul Also Shows the Two Ways to Life (by Law or by Faith) are Addressed in the Old Testament

Galatians 3:10-12 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." [Deuteronomy 27:26]

¹¹ ***Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." [Habakkuk 2:4]***

¹² ***The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." [Leviticus 18:5]***

- E. Beautiful Resolution to Paul's OT Assertions

Galatians 3:13-14 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." ¹⁴ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

F. The Judaizers Possible Answer: The Law Came Later and Supplants the Example with Abraham

1. Maybe they can grant that Abraham was justified by faith in the promise
2. But, they might argue, it is clear that God did give the Law centuries later through Moses... why would He do that except to show that there is a new arrangement, and that law-keeping is required for salvation?
3. Paul is taking that argument head on and refuting it...
4. The Law WAS given centuries later, but that shows it wasn't given to change the earlier covenant made with Abraham...
5. It was given for a different purpose

G. Why is Salvation Based on Promise Superior to That Based on Law?

Two reasons, based on John Piper's assertion: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."

Salvation based on Promise rather than Law is superior because it GREATLY GLORIFIES GOD!!! God gets all the glory for it, for keeping His promise to us in Christ!!

And, salvation based on promise is superior to salvation based on Law because it GUARANTEES OUR SALVATION, and this brings us joy, not burden

1. Simply put: salvation based on law CANNOT SUCCEED and salvation based on promise CANNOT FAIL
2. God was not trying to torment Abraham and his descendants... he was trying to save them
3. A covenant based on Law cannot succeed because we cannot meet its requirements... our hearts are so corrupt that we cannot be righteous in God's sight by our own law-keeping... such a covenant only brings failure
4. A covenant based on Promise cannot fail, because it totally depends on God to achieve it... it is GUARANTEED!!!

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring-- not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

II. The Superiority of the Promise to the Law (vs. 15-18)

Galatians 3:15-18 *Brothers, 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.* ¹⁶ *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.* ¹⁷ *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.* ¹⁸ *For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

A. Abraham's Salvation Covenant Was Based on a Promise

1. Stated twice in our text

Galatians 3:16 *The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.*

Galatians 3:18 *if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.*

2. Already established earlier in this chapter

Galatians 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

3. The background: Genesis 12, then Genesis 15

Genesis 12:2-3 *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.* ³ *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

Genesis 15:1 *After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."*

Genesis 15:5-6 *He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

B. The Promise Came First... and it was NOT based on Law

1. God made a promise to Abraham concerning his offspring, that they would be as numerous as the stars in the night sky
2. Paul is making his whole argument based on chronology... on history

3. This came first, THEN that; the sequencing was vital
4. Secondly, the promise came as a UNILATERAL ACTION from God... a blessing that God was choosing to pour out on Abraham from his own grace and mercy; there was nothing Abraham had to do to earn it... he simply received it by faith
 - a. The Promise was God saying "I will, I will, I will..."
 - b. The Law is God commanding, "You shall..." "You shall..." "You shall..."
5. Circumcision came years after that (Genesis 17)
6. Moses wouldn't be born until centuries later; the Law was given 645 years after the Call of Abraham
7. God then followed up with another promise... the LAND

Genesis 15:7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

C. A Covenant Once Ratified Cannot Be Changed

1. At that time, God made a unilateral covenant with Abraham
2. Abraham asked God, "How can I know that I will receive the Promised Land?"
3. The answer was a magnificent covenant-cutting ceremony:

Genesis 15:9-18 So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹ Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹² ¶ As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." ¹⁷ ¶ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates

4. This covenant was God's unilateral promise to Abraham that He would give the Promised Land to Abraham and to his seed
5. This promise, like the earlier one, was not based on Law but simply on grace
6. All Abraham had to do was to believe it... no law-keeping was ever in view
7. Now, like any human covenant, once it has been made, it cannot later be changed

Galatians 3:15 Brothers, 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.

8. Common, everyday life experience
 - a. When someone makes a "Last Will and Testament," and has it ratified, it is a legally binding document
 - b. If after the person's death, someone tries to add to it or take away from it, that effort would be discovered and rejected in a court of law
 - c. If this is true with a human covenant, how much more true is it of this covenant... the covenant of God for the salvation of the human race!
 - d. God made it plain in two key places that no one can add to or take away from his word:

Deuteronomy 4:2 Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

Revelation 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

9. The which was added centuries later did not add anything to this covenant
10. Imagine what you would think of a father who said to his kids on Monday, "No matter what, this weekend, I'm going to take you to the beach." Then on Wednesday says, "Only if you finish this list of chores will I take you to the beach." There would be a feeling of injustice!!
11. Once God made His solemn covenant with Abraham, he could not and would not add anything to it, or take anything away from it

12. Therefore, the Law of Moses, added centuries later, did not change the covenant of salvation God made with Abraham
13. If God promised Abraham and his descendants all these blessings by faith, and then later ADDED the Law, it would END the Promise!! Promise and Law are opposed in this sense; If you make an unconditional promise to give an inheritance, and then later say “To get the inheritance, you must do the following ten things,” you’ve removed the Promise altogether... Promise shrinks to nothingness, and all you have is Law
14. The IMMUTABILITY of the PROMISE OF GOD is an awesome source of encouragement to us!!! Like a solemn, legally-binding document, it can never be added to or taken away from!

D. Secondly: The Covenant with Abraham was Made Ultimately with Christ

1. Paul makes a rather stunning argument at this point in Galatians

Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

2. The promise spoken to Abraham was ultimately a CHRIST-CENTERED promise
3. Fundamentally, the Apostle Paul is saying that the salvation promise was always made in light of the work of Christ on the Cross...
4. The statement is difficult to understand and the argument difficult to follow
 - a. The word for seed both in the Hebrew and the Greek is a collective noun... like the word “hair”—it can either refer to singular or plural
 - b. Suppose I said “I want you to cut off your hair and give it to me” and you come back with your head looking like a shiny bowling ball, and with a large back filled with hair. Suppose I then say “No, no!! I said ‘hair’ meaning one hair, not ‘hairs’ meaning many!!”
 - c. That’s the problem many have with Paul’s argument here
 - d. Sometimes the Hebrew word translated “seed” or “offspring” does refer to PLURAL:

^{ESV} Genesis 22:17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

Clearly in that verse, the word “seed” or “offspring” is COLLECTIVE... it is PLURAL in essence

e. BUT “seed” or “offspring” CAN be singular

In Genesis 4:25, the word “seed” refers to Seth, and Seth alone

In Genesis 21:13, the word “seed” refers to Ishmael, and Ishmael alone

So... the Hebrew word CAN BE either singular or plural... like “offspring”

f. So... what is Paul saying here? It seems like Paul is getting very technical here in a way that his Jewish opponents would have torn to shreds

g. It is that, when God made the promise to Abraham, it was not concerning ALL his offspring, but ultimately only in Christ

h. ALL OF GOD’S PROMISES FOCUS ON CHRIST... and this is VERY MUCH IN THE SPIRIT OF WHAT GOD WAS DOING WITH ABRAHAM

i) Abraham had two sons... Ishmael and Isaac... but only ONE was the focus of God’s promise:

Genesis 21:12 ... through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

ii) Abraham also had many sons through Keturah, the woman he married after Saraj died

Genesis 25:2 Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

BUT:

Genesis 25:5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac.

i. Later in Galatians, Paul will discuss the two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, and say the promise only referred to Isaac NOT to Ishmael

Galatians 4:22-23 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³ But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

j. Ultimately, in the same way, the promise to Abraham was spoken in reference to Abraham’s perfect seed, Jesus Christ

k. This earliest indication of this manner of speaking is in Genesis 3:15

^{CSB} Genesis 3:15 I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.

Though Eve would be the ancestral mother of every human being that ever lived, these words were spoken about only ONE seed of the woman, of Jesus Christ, who crushed Satan at the cross

- l. In the same way, Paul is saying that the promises made to Abraham were made ultimately to Jesus Christ, and through Him, to all believers

2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

- m. Jesus is Abraham's Son

Matthew 1:1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham

- n. Only in Christ can anyone receive this promises... God had Abraham's Son, Jesus, in mind, when He spoke these promises

Genesis 22:18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"

So Ephesians 1 makes it plain that every promise of salvation comes to us IN HIM, IN CHRIST, IN THE BELOVED

Ephesians 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Christ is the SEED OF ABRAHAM in whom all peoples on earth are blessed

God was doing nothing through Abraham that He wasn't really doing through Jesus Christ

5. So, the Promise Comes through Jesus Christ... but it has nothing to do with the Law of Moses

E. The Law Which Came 430 Years Later Does Not Nullify the Promise

Galatians 3:17 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.

1. The time sequence is at the center of this argument, just as it was in Romans 4 with the circumcision argument:

Romans 4:9-10 We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before!

2. So also here, the Law of Moses came CENTURIES LATER... and it could not change the certainty of what God was intending to do in the promise
3. Problems with the “430 years” statement
 - a. Biblical scholars tell us that Jacob entered Egypt 215 years after this promise had been made; then the Exodus (and the giving of the Mosaic Law) happened another 430 after that... so that means the Law was given 645 years after this Promise was initially spoken to Abraham
 - b. Did Paul make a mistake? No... not hardly
 - c. Instead, the best answer on this is that the identical promise made to Abraham was also spoken to Abraham’s son, Isaac (Genesis 26:4) and to his son Jacob (Genesis 28:14)... 430 years after this statement of the Abrahamic promise to Jacob, the Law was given
4. In any case, the giving of the Law, with all its terrifying threats and curses, could not affect the Promise made centuries earlier to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... it was not by Law that they were justified, but by believing the promise of God!!
5. God had RATIFIED this covenant with the firepot and the bloody sacrifices... it could never be revoked or NULLIFIED (made not to exist)... set aside, abolished, etc. The covenant made with Abraham was timeless, because it had CHRIST in mind

F. The Inheritance is Either Based on Promise OR Law... It Can’t Be Both

Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

1. Promise and Law are set up as opposites here... it’s EITHER/OR... it can’t be both
2. Either God was giving the promise to Abraham on the basis of a promise or on the basis of the Law
3. The “inheritance” referred to is God Himself in the Genesis 15 account:

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

I AM YOUR INHERITANCE!!!

4. How could anyone ever EARN such an infinite inheritance??!!

5. Beyond this, there are other aspects of the inheritance: a Kingdom with all of its land and holdings:

Romans 4:13 It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

Revelation 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit all this [i.e. the New Heavens and New Earth, the New Jerusalem], and I will be his God and he will be my son.

- G. Summary: God promised to Abraham and to his Seed (Jesus Christ) an eternal kingdom, with Himself as the central blessing... through faith in the Promise in Christ, we become heirs with Abraham... the covenant of salvation depends totally on God, because it is based on a PROMISE; the Law could not be added to this ratified covenant... the inheritance does not come by LAW!!

III. So Why Was the Law Given at All? (vs. 19-22)

Galatians 3:19-22 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 put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰ A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one. 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. ²² But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

- A. The Question Asked: Why the Law If Not for Salvation?

1. The question plainly stated:

Galatians 3:19 What, then, was the purpose of the law?

2. Vital to understand God's purposes in the Law of Moses... because it is plain that He gave it with great solemnity at Mount Sinai
3. At that time, God descended from heaven in a dark cloud; He assembled the Jewish nation around the mountain and spoke the Ten Commandments in a voice so terrifying that the people trembled with fear and begged Moses to go up and hear the rest of what God willed to say to the people
4. Moses came down from the his encounter with the living God with the Ten Commandments written in a tablet of stone

Exodus 32:16 The tablets were the work of God; the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets

5. We could not imagine all of this would be done for NO REASON... why then did God give the Law if it was not to establish a new basis for the inheritance? A new path of salvation... a new covenant in the Law?

B. Answer: The Law Was Added Because of Transgressions

1. Paul answers the question directly and plainly:

Galatians 3:19 It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

2. This is not a complete answer... for the Law has many purposes in the overall plan of God
3. But when it comes to salvation... this is the centerpiece of the argument
4. The Law was not given as a ladder by which we could climb to heaven by our own efforts in obedience
5. It was given “BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS...”
6. The purpose of the Law was to demonstrate to the human race our total sinfulness, our total inability to please God and to live a moral, upright life
7. The Law was added to DRAW OUT sinfulness from our hearts, and to make it plain how much hidden evil there is...

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase.

What a strange statement!! “The trespass” = Adam’s sin... God added the Law to draw out sin and make it plain to everyone how prevalent it is and how wicked

The Law makes it plain that our sins are actually transgressions against the ALMIGHTY GOD OF THE UNIVERSE... it’s to draw out the transgression and make it as obvious and loathsome to US as it is to GOD!!

8. The Law isn’t evil... it’s honest! We are evil, apart from Christ, but the Law is a gift from God

Romans 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

9. Later, Paul will make this argument plain:

Galatians 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

10. We will unfold this more plainly next time... by the Law we become conscious of sin... but the Law has NO POWER to save us

Romans 4:15 For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

Romans 7:5 For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.

Romans 8:3-4 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

C. The Law is Inferior Because of Its Mediators

Galatians 3:19-20 The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰ A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

1. Galatians 3:20 has over 300 possible interpretations, according to FF Bruce!
2. The Law was “ordained” or put into effect by two mediators: angels and Moses
3. The angelic involvement in the giving of the Law is not taught in the Old Testament, but it is stated here and by Stephen in Acts 7:53; also by the author to Hebrews in Hebrews 2:2
4. It seems it was they who gave the Ten Commandments to Moses to give to the people
5. But the promise needed no such mediators... it was a unilateral action on the part of God
6. God is ALONE in making the promise, and He needed no one to bring it to the people
7. God ALONE moved through the bloody pieces of the animals that Abraham had laid out... God said “MAY I DIE if I don’t keep this promise”... the Law says “YOU WILL DIE if you don’t keep this Law!!”
8. Thus the Promise is superior to the Law

D. BUT the Law is Not Contrary to the Promises of God

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.

1. The Law and the Promise are accomplishing different things in the plans of God
2. In many ways they are PARTNERS, with the same end in sight: salvation of the souls of God's elect
3. If the Law had been given as an alternate way to heaven, it would have been opposed to the promises of God...
4. But that was not its purpose
5. We've already made it plain that the Law could not IMPART LIFE, ONLY DEATH
6. And Galatians 2:21 makes it plain that righteousness could never have come from the Law:

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Note the wicked twisting of the Law that legalism does:

God gave the Law to show us that we are sinful

Legalism uses the Law to show God that we are righteous!!

How evil is that!!

E. The Law Aids the Promise, Not Supplants It

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

1. The Law Shuts Everyone Up Under Sin
2. The Law Leads Sinners to Faith in Jesus

IV. Application: Delighting in the Promise, Understanding the Law

- A. Incredible Good News!! God is Making a Promise to ALL SINNERS in my hearing: Salvation is a free gift of God through Jesus Christ to ALL WHO BELIEVE!!!

B. See the Value in HARD WORK over the Scriptures... Scripture is a SILVER MINE in which its treasures of wisdom and understanding come to those who will work to understand what God has said

C. Embrace the Promise of Eternal Life in Christ... Delight in It!!

1. Understand the security of salvation by promise

Romans 4:16 Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring

2. Understand the irrevocable nature of this covenant of grace!! God has been saving sinners by grace through faith since Abel!!

3. Understand how in Christ all the promises are made... He is the SINGLE SEED to which all the promises are made... He is the heir of the world by which we all get an inheritance

Revelation 5: The Lion/Lamb takes the scroll... the "title deed" for the earth

We get all our inheritance through Him... He is the one SEED to whom all the promises refer

So give Christ all the glory for this honor... and see your inheritance as coming through Him alone

D. Understand the Law

1. It cannot save our souls... it can only show us the wickedness of our hearts

2. Having done that, it has the power to drive us to Christ

3. The transformation of our hearts by faith in Christ by the Spirit enables us to meet fully the requirements of the Law day by day in Him

4. This is why God gave the Law... MORE NEXT TIME