

LESSON 5: GALATIANS 3:6-4:31

Law vs. Grace

1. Galatians 3:14 is one of the towering verses in a letter full of towering verses. In your own words, what point is Paul making here? Compare verses 3:5,9,11, and 14. What benefits come through faith?
2. What is a “human covenant,” and what does Paul mean when he says that “no one can set aside or add to” one that has been duly established” (v. 15)? Can you give some examples of “human covenant” relationships, and how are these distinguished from other, say, “contractual” relationships?
3. How many times does “promise” appear in this passage? To whom were these promises spoken? Explain the point Paul is making in verse 16. (*Extra credit:* Did God’s promises to Abraham point to fulfillment in one or in many? How are we to understand this?)
4. In verse 17, Paul writes “What I mean is this,” and proceeds to explain the point he established in verse 15. Explain, in your own words, what Paul is getting at here.
5. In verse 18 we learn the nature of the thing promised. What did God promise, and how will that promise come to pass? What does this indicate about the nature of God’s covenant with Abraham?
6. If God always intended that the blessings promised to Abraham would come through faith, “what, then, was the purpose of the law” (v. 19)? Why was it added? For how long? To whom did the promise refer?
7. What contrast does Paul draw between the way the promise was given (verse 18) and the way the Law came (verse 19)? How does this further show the inferiority of the Law to the promise? And while we’re at it, what on earth is Paul talking about in vv. 19b-20?!? What point is he making by mentioning that “the law was put into effect through angels by a mediator”?

8. Paul has been making the point that grace (given unilaterally by means of a promise) is a very different principle than law (added through a mediator because of transgressions). But “is law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God” (v. 21)? Explain.
9. According to Scripture, what has the law shown about every person, and toward what purpose? (See v. 22, 24; Rom. 3:19-20)?
10. What picture is given in verses 23-25 of the law and the Jewish people? In what way is the law a “prison?” What is the way to freedom in the presence God for which the law has been a preparation? How do you tell people about this?
11. What, therefore, is the relationship of the law to the gospel of grace? How long was the law to have impact on God’s people? (Careful!) (*Extra credit:* But if we are understanding Scripture rightly here, how are we to understand what Jesus means in Matthew 5:17?)
12. What are we through faith in Christ, and what do we have on account of our baptism (v. 26)?
13. What point is Paul making in verse 28? How does oneness in Christ affect differences among Christians in race, social status, and sex? What does the “face” of the true Church look like? What are we to make of “niche” churches, geared toward a particular slice of regional demographic...? And turning the question around: does this verse teach that there are no distinctions among believers? Defend your answer.
14. What is promised to Abraham’s heirs? How do we know that God counts us as such (v. 29)?

15. How does Paul use the position of a child who is heir to an estate to illustrate the position of the Jews under the Law (4:1-7)?

16. What are “basic principles of the world” to which non-Christians are enslaved (v. 3)?

17. List ten things you would know about the Gospel if only Galatians 4:4-7 was available to you?

18. What position did God’s son take by being “born under the Law” (v. 4)?

19. What evidence of sonship and what tremendous privilege does the Christian possess (vv. 6-7)? Compare with Romans 8:15-17.

20. What does it mean to you to say “Abba, Father” (v. 6)?

21. From what bondage have the Galatians escaped? How? What will they be doing if they submit now to domination of the Law?

22. Why is Paul so distressed about the Galatians’ return to spiritual slavery? What “gods” today hold men and women in bondage until they come to the freedom in Christ?

23. What does Paul mean by “become as I am, for I also have become as you are” (v. 12)?

24. Describe the interaction of Paul and the Galatians in their first contact (vv. 13-16). What has occurred to change the relationship?

25. What is the difference between the way Paul is treating the Galatians and the way they are being wooed by the false teachers?

26. Defend Paul from the accusation that he is being just as exclusive and possessive of the Galatians as he charges his opponents with being? Why is the kind of exclusiveness referred to in v. 17 usually involved when “leaders” want to gain full control over others spiritually? How can this be resisted?

27. Describe the allegory of Abraham’s two sons (vv. 21-31). List in two opposing columns the description of each son and his mother.

28. What is the point of the allegory?

29. Why are Christians easily pressured into the religious slavery of legalism, or are they?