

Living for God's Inheritance

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[0 : 0 0] from the book of Galatians. You'll find it in page 1169, is that? Yeah, 1169 in the church Bibles. We're in Galatians chapter 3, and we're reading from verses 15 to 25, which is for page 1170. Galatians chapter 3, verses 15 to 25. It says this, 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. But if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise. But God in his grace gave it to Abraham Abraham through a promise. Why then was the law given at all? 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.

Is the law therefore opposed to the promise of God? Absolutely not. For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

But Scripture has locked everything up under the control of sin so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

[2 : 1 0] 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 our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

That's a really long hour. Good evening. Brilliant to see you guys. Thanks for reading, Dave. I'm going to read. We've talked a lot about promises in Galatians, but I'm not quite sure we all know what the promises are. So I'm just going to read them for us right at the start, just so we're all on the same bat. And then we'll crack on with the sermon tonight. How does that sound? Big nods? Yes, brilliant, brilliant, brilliant. Great. And then we'll hear about some of those good inheritances that you're hoping to get later. So I'm in Genesis 12, and that's on page 13, right at the start. And these are some great promises that God promised to bless all people with, and they are given to Abraham. And we'll find out a bit more about them earlier. So I'll just read it for that. The Lord had said to Abraham, later he's called Abraham, go from your country, your people, and your father's household to the land I will show you. 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. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I'll curse. And all the peoples on the earth will be blessed through you. And those are some huge promises. So Father, we thank you that in Jesus those promises are yes and amen. We thank you that in Jesus all people of the whole world, wherever they come from, are blessed. We thank you that Jesus is our inheritance. Please help us tonight as we go through this passage to try and understand it. Please give me wisdom, Father, in trying to make it understandable, Father. There's lots going on here. It's quite tricky. So we pray that you'd speak to us despite the fog and the haze of the years in this passage. Amen. Great. So let me ask you, are you living to inherit something? Is there something that you're hoping to inherit? And maybe you had a good chat with some of your friends there over something that you're hoping to inherit.

And I heard some strange inheritances recently. You may have heard of these. William Shakespeare, he left Anne Hathaway, his wife, his second best bed. That was an insult. So he left her that.

And then in 1928, someone left, quite optimistically there, 500,000 pounds to the British government under the stipulation that it is used to pay off the entire national debt. The only problem with the thing is that that's never been enough to pay off the entire national debt. And so to this day, that 500,000 pounds still sits in a trust unable to be used to pay off anything towards the national debt. So it's probably about 350 million now just sitting there, can't be used. Brilliant.

So strange inheritances. I read some bits about dogs inheriting stuff as well, but that's a bit boring. And we see the theme for this inheritance in verse 18 of our passage. For if the inheritance depends on, and the topic here is an inheritance. And the inheritance that Paul, the author of the letter of the Galatians is speaking about, is thinking about here, is the one that were promised to the descendants of Abraham that we heard read earlier. And so the question then is, who are the true descendants of Abraham? Who are the people that will get these great promises? And they were promises to be God's people, to be right with God, to be a blessing to all people, to live with God forever.

[6 : 41] And in short, it was to be right with God. And how we are right with God and how we inherit is central to this letter of the Galatians. So I've come up with this amazing diagram. It's slightly complicated.

I spent way too much time putting this diagram together. There you go. So here we are in Galatians. We begin with Adam and Eve right at the beginning of Genesis. Noah and the flood, we moved on a bit from there. Genesis 12 that we heard read there. Abraham, and he was the first person that God spoke to.

Not the first person, but God gave great promises to Abraham. Abraham was really the first Christian, if you want. He believed God and was accepted by God simply on the basis of belief. And then we have, after Abraham, we've got the Exodus, and maybe you've seen some Exodus movies. Charlton Heston, if you're slightly older, Prince of Egypt, if you're slightly younger, of how the people came out of Egypt. They were imprisoned in Egypt for 430 years. And then as they came out, they got given God's law.

They were rescued by God. They were given God's law, how they should live with God by Moses, an older guy called Moses. And that was a long time after Abraham. And they both had big beards. And Moses met with God on a mountain, and God gave him his law. And then a long, long, long time, even further after that, is Jesus. And the letter of Galatians is really written after Jesus has come.

And so, what the Galatians were saying is how you inherit, this is the top box there, is how you inherit those promises is that you needed to still keep doing the law. Yes, you believed in Jesus, but you still needed to do the green box at the top as well. You still needed the law to inherit the promises and be right with God. So, it's Jesus plus the law and doing stuff. But what Paul says is, no, all you need is Jesus alone. In Jesus, the green box, the law, and the promises, those great promises that were given to Abraham are entirely and fully and finally fulfilled forever and ever and ever. Here's the ultimate. Here's the one who is the true son of Abraham, how you'll get inherit the promises. And so, the thing that we're going to look at and learn tonight and over the next week is that we inherit Abraham's blessings. We become right with God, not through law keeping, not through doing all the stuff in the green box, but by becoming a child of God through Jesus, in Jesus, simply by hearing and believing, by faith. And so, the Galatians, they've believed that the law has superseded the promises, has moved on, and Paul argues, no, the promises still stand.

[9 : 53] And in order to prove this, he takes us to Jesus as God's true son and as Abraham's seed or offspring, Jesus. And so, if you've got our handouts on the sheet there, we're on our first point there.

Jesus is God's true son, verses 15 and 16, Abraham's seed. He's trying to prove that the promises are still in effect by the time that Jesus comes around, and they haven't been superseded. And to prove this, Paul says that the promises still stand, and he gives a human example. He says, brothers and sisters, let me take you to an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so does in this case, with these promises that were given to Abraham all those years ago. And what he's saying is, once, to give an example from everyday life, even us, even humans who are here for a time and here, next minute are gone.

In some instances, when we make a promise, it still stands forever. So, I married Sarah, I love Sarah, brilliant. And on our wedding day, I promised her, I said, I promise, I cherish, I promise to love you, to cherish you, to be with you through thick and thin, through the good times, the bad times. But if one day, later on, as we went on, I came in with a set of rules, a fat document like that, and I said, I've been thinking about those promises, and I've invented these big rules, and you're going to have to do all these rules, otherwise the marriage is off, and they could be silly rules. I won't list any rules, because I know I'll get into trouble if I do that. Those rules are in no way going to supersede that promise, that covenant that I've made, that I promised to love, to cherish, to hold, and care for Sarah forever. It doesn't matter if I add rules, it's immaterial. The promise still stands, and that's what Paul is saying there in that human covenant that's established. So, likewise, Paul says that God has made a promise to Abraham, that we can be right with God, simply by believing and hearing, that if we have ears to hear and a heart to trust, then we can be right with God, and all people will be blessed through that. And even if the rules or the law, God's rules on how you should live, come later, it doesn't mean that those promises, those awesome promises, no longer counts. The promise still stands, and so the promise still stands.

But secondly, we see the promise has always been addressed, and this is perhaps the bigger thing to get from this first point. It's always been addressed to God's Son, to Jesus. Jesus is Abraham's seed. It was never addressed to us. It was never our promises to take. So just look down at verse 16, if you've got your Bibles open, hopefully they are. The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say, and seeds, or offsprings, meaning many people, but to your seed, singular, meaning one person, one person who is Christ. That is, so God makes a promise to Abraham and to God's one true Son, Jesus Christ, one seed. And Christ was really a title that was given to God's Son, who would reign over God's people forever. So Jesus is God's true Son, Abraham's seed. And what Paul is saying here is that God never promised you those blessings. They were never yours to take and think you could get simply by doing stuff, simply by keeping the law. It was never on offer to get outside of Jesus.

And so if you want God's blessings, if you want to inherit eternal life, if you want to be right with God, then you must go through Jesus. You must go through Abraham's seed. You can't go through other religions.

[14 : 22] Not all roads lead to God. You can't go through your own law keeping, your own good life record, all the recycling that you've done outside of Jesus, all the good things that you might do outside of Jesus.

And you can't go through your own rule bearing and law keeping at church on Sundays. Your regular church ascendance. Sitting in church is not going to get you those blessings.

Or giving to church. You can't get those outside of Jesus. You must go through Jesus alone. You have to go to Jesus personally. And so if verse 16 is true and we want to inherit those promises, then the question is, do we know Jesus? Do we go to Jesus? Do we personally trust Jesus?

And it's very easy to enter the Christian life, to come to church, to be in the center, to be involved, to do all the things associated at church, all the things that we love and enjoy. There's good buzz here on Sunday evenings, but to miss the main thing entirely. That it's all about Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

And so are we fixing our hearts and our eyes on Jesus? Or are we sidelining him out of being the main thing at church? Are we trying to get around Jesus? And so sometimes you might have gone to a couple of churches and trying to find a good church to go to. And you might go to one church and you think, well, that's the serious Bible church. They do Bible stuff there. And then you might go to another church and you go, well, that's the Spirit church. That's where I go to feel in touch with God's Spirit. And then you might go to, that's the liturgy church. They wear robes there and I like that.

[16 : 21] Or you might go to the African church or the Chinese church. And that's a brilliant experience. That's my cultural experience. But there is only one church, and that is the church with Jesus at the center. That's what makes a church, a church that is centered around Jesus, with Jesus at the center.

Anything that distracts from that is not a real church. And so Paul then, having stated that the gospel is all about God's Son, and that God's blessing comes through Jesus alone, Paul then goes on to show this with an argument, stating how the promise was given many, many years before the law.

And then addresses how the Galatians were meant to understand and apply the law to their own lives. So if you're following on the sheet there, it's our second point there, God's law and God's inheritance. And we're under the first bullet point there, God gives his inheritance through a promise.

And what Paul does here in verses 17 and 18 is that he builds on his example of a human covenant earlier. So just join with me and look down at verse 17 in our passage. 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. And so what he is saying is that the promise was set in place 430 years, actually even more than that, but we won't get into that just now, before the law was given.

And on our diagram there, we were seeing Abraham here, and he's many, many thousands years ago. And then he was given the promise that you can be right with God simply by hearing and believing. And then only later, much later, did God give his people his law, the rules on how they were to live. Many, many, many, many, many years later. And what happened in all that time in between those two gaps? God had been rescuing his people. He had been caring for them, even though they had never done anything to deserve it. So we didn't have it on our picture there, but he had brought them out of Egypt spectacularly.

[18 : 44] He had parted the Red Sea. He had done many other brilliant, amazing things, been rescuing his people through all this time without them ever having the law to obey, without them ever having to do, ever doing a thing that deserved that rescuing and that kindness. And so, but then, Paul, and so, likewise, in our lives, do we see that God blesses us and he rescues us and he gives us wonderful things in our life without us ever doing anything to deserve it, but simply because he loves us and he lavishes his mercy on us and he gives us his son, the greatest gift that he could ever give us, without us ever doing a thing to get it, simply because he loves us. The question is then, why was the law given? And the law there is referring to the first five books of the Old Testament there. It's all that bit there, and if you wanted to be really precise, you could probably include a lot more there. It's quite a bit there, lots of that. So it's all those, but you might not always read it at church on Sunday. But why were those laws given that told people how to live God's way? If God had been rescuing his people all that time and been doing things, why did God give them the law? Why did God give his law to Moses on Mount Sinai after God had already been rescuing and caring and loving his people? And the answer that the Galatians had been given and that the false teachers that had come into Galatia had been given was that the law was given to replace the promises that were given to Abraham a long time ago. That you needed the law to be right with God instead of that promise, simply, instead of simply hearing and believing. But Paul says, no, you've got it entirely wrong.

You haven't been reading your Bibles correctly. You haven't understand it. The law was given, firstly, to show our need for the promises, and that's the next bullet point that we're going to look at. And then one after that. It is given because it acts as a guardian. It protects us and cares us until the promise comes about in its fulfillment. So God gives his law to show our need for the promise. Why we need God's promises. Why they're important. Why we need those blessings. Why we need to be right with God simply through hearing and believing. Very quickly, so look down at verse 19.

The law is given because of transgressions. There's that word transgressions, literally sin, and it's a bit of a down word. And it probably highlights that the law was there to, was added because of transgressions until the seed whom the promise referred to had come. It probably highlights that this law there's meant to restrain our sin in some degree. So the law is like a speed camera. Who drives there? Maybe you drive. There's one thing that's guaranteed to slow you down on the highway on the road. And that's the speed. You see the little checkered box and instantly I go from Lewis Hamilton zooming, old man, 20, even under, driving really slowly. That's what the law is like.

The law is there and it restrains your sin. It stops you going off the rails and doing whatever you want to. And so if the law was meant to restrain wickedness, then it also points to our need for the promise that God will bless us simply by hearing and believing. It makes us acknowledge that if it was up to me and my efforts, there is no way I could ever be right with God. And it helps me see that the only way I can be right with God is by hearing and believing. So just look down there at verse 21.

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, that's being right with God, would certainly have come by the law. And what verse 21 is saying is that the law is not given so that we can be right with God by doing it, but rather, verse 22 of our passage, but scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin so that what was promised, being given through the faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. So verse 22, scripture, that is, the law tells you what sin is. It locks it up. And so that you'll know that you need the promise to be right with God. I wonder if this echoes with you. When I became a Christian, I was a pretty happy chap before becoming a Christian. I lived my life. I did whatever I wanted. But when I became a Christian, I became utterly miserable because I'd opened my Bible and I'd read just what a sinner I was. And I was devastated. I was utterly broken.

[24 : 04] I read it. I knew there was no way I could be right with God simply by trying to be a good person. I had to go to God. I had to plead with Him. I had to fall on my knees and go to Him. But what joy when I found out that my sin was washed away by Jesus dying for me. What joy. Well, maybe you're someone here tonight and you're struggling with a sin. And no matter how hard you try to get rid of it, you read the Bible and all you realize is you become more and more sinful. You don't become less sinful when you read it. It's as if you're becoming more and more sinful. And no matter what you do to get rid of that sin, you're stuck in it. And you're devastated. You're broken. But what joy, knowing that in Christ, your sins have been forgiven entirely. And what joy that you can fall on your knees and go to Him in your brokenness as you read your Bible and you realize how far you fall short. And you can know that outside of Jesus, you'd be absolutely hopeless.

But because of Jesus, your sins have been washed away. What joy. And so the verse goes on, so that what was promised might be given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. We're so grateful that what was promised has simply been given through faith, not through my efforts. What joy. And so the law firstly shows our need for a Savior, that we need to be rescued. And then next we see that it acts as a guardian until the promise. And that's our next bullet point. So just look down there, verse 24, we get that language of guardian. So the law was our guardian. I think the point is that what we see here is a sign of God's great love for His people.

You see, if the Old Testament Israelite, and they were sincere in their faith, and they tried to obey the law, they'd be absolutely broken. When they read about it, they read all the things they'd done wrong. They would be devastated by it. They'd be broken by it. But in another sense, it would be a very good thing reading that law. Because in it, they'd understand that they couldn't rescue themselves. They'd have to look to God, cry out to God daily. And it taught them to loathe their sin, to hate their sin, and to lean on God entirely. And so the law there, all those old books that we get at the start of the Bible that we don't always read, they are a guardian. They were a guardian to God's people of old. And a guardian is someone who protects or trains someone else in the absence of a parent, waiting for that day when they can live on their own two feet. And the law was protecting them from living their lives their own way, as if God wasn't there, in totally unrestrained sin.

Imagine if you could live your life as if God wasn't there. It would be absolute carnage. I won't tell you some of the stories of South Africa. It is absolute carnage when people live their lives as if God is not there. And so what more, and the law was protecting them from that carnage. It was protecting them from all that sin that would ruin their lives and wreck their people's lives around them. It was guarding them, protecting them. And the law was training them to live God's way in God's absence. It was training them to be right with God before they could be with God. But as loving and as good as God's law would, in training them to be right, it could never make them right. It could never give them the inheritance of God's blessings, those great blessings. It could not fulfill the promise of the blessings that would come from God. It was only ever temporary. It was only a plaster over a sinful heart.

It would never fix a sinful heart. So just look down there at verse 24 and 25. And so the law was our guardian that we might be justified. Justified, there's a fancy word that means be right with God simply by faith.

[28 : 41] And now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. And by faith there, what he is talking about is trusting and believing that Jesus died on the cross for our sins in our place. And that we are simply right with God simply by hearing and believing. So just turn back to chapter 2 and read how Paul describes this in verse 19 and 20 there. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live. But Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body. I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And so faith there is trusting that Jesus has died for you. And he's washed away all your sin, all the things that ruin life for you. And what he is saying is that the law and the promise have been fulfilled in Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. That is, before Jesus' death, we were held in custody.

We were locked up under the law. We weren't taking receipt of the promises just yet. We were still enslaved to it. But in Jesus, God's son, Abraham's seed, we have been released from the law. But not simply released. And this is our third and final point there. It's really a short point because we're going to speak about this more at length next week. Is that we are God's children in Jesus through faith.

And so, in Christ Jesus, verse 23, 29 even, you are all children of God through faith.

See, the thing about being a Christian is not coming to church and obeying rules and doing all the stuff. It's about becoming a child of God. It's not about trying to be a good person and work your way up the ladder. It's about living as a family member in God's family. And that's something that will take ages forever to understand fully. It's something that I'm still blown away by daily. It's something I still struggle with. Trying to live as a child of God. Trying to realize that I'm fully and finally and totally accepted. No matter how bad I mess up. Because I'm God's child. Because he has loved me.

[31 : 13] He's adopted me. He's cared for me. So later in Galatians, he'll talk how under the law, you were in slavery. You were enslaved. You were servants. You had to obey the rules. But now you are a child.

You are guaranteed an inheritance in Jesus through Jesus. You think about the orphan who might or someone who's in foster care. And they're forever trying to impress so that they might be adopted and stay in the family. And then you think about the child who is adopted fully and finally and in the family. It's perfect freedom. It's perfect joy. It's perfect comfort. It's perfect confidence knowing that you're fully accepted. No matter what you could do, you're fully accepted and loved by God. My cousin Merrick, I've got this cousin Merrick, and he was adopted by these railway workers in South Africa. And when he speaks of the joy that that made, it was a very humble home. But it was a brilliant home. Knowing that he had a family to belong with. And what greater joy is there for the Christian? Knowing that we have been fully adopted, not into an earthly family, but into God's family that we share and enjoy on Sunday. Knowing that we're accepted no matter what happens.

It changes everything, doesn't it? It changes everything we do at church. It changes how we relate to people. Everything absolutely. Great. Let me close in a word of prayer for us.

So Father, we thank you for Galatians, Lord. We thank you for this amazing message that we're right with God, not through the things we do, but through being your child. That in Jesus, those blessings that were given to Abraham, that eternal life, are ours completely. Please help us to latch onto that. Please help us to live for that daily. Please help us to yearn for that more and more. In Jesus' name. Amen.