

Grace Trumps Obedience

The Gospel of Grace 5: Galatians 3:15-25

Galatians 3:15-25 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. ¹⁶The 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. ¹⁷What 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. ¹⁸For 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.

In normal life we know that once a contract is made, you can't change it. If we have a contract that says you'll paint my house for \$5000, you can't change it to \$7000 after the contract is signed. It is the same thing here. God made a promise to Abraham that righteousness would come by faith. This promise was to Abraham and his offspring, even to the time of Jesus. That was the deal, the contract. The Law can't come along some 430 years later and change the conditions of the contract. The original deal still stands, righteousness is by faith. If after the Law came, our inheritance of righteousness depended on obeying the law, then it no longer would have been dependent upon God's promise to Abraham. That would be breaking the deal! God, in His grace, promised an inheritance of righteousness through His promise to Abraham.

¹⁹What, 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. ²⁰A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

If the promise to Abraham predates and supersedes the Law, then why was the law given at all? It was given to deal with sin (to make us conscious of sin (Romans 3:20) and to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24)) until the time of Christ. The Law came to Moses through the angel of the Lord. Moses was a mediator, and a mediator normally represents two sides in a contract. But technically, in a legal sense, God's promise to Abraham was not a contract as it did not demand performance on the part of the people. In other words, with the Law, the people were obligated to do certain things and God was obligated to do certain things. It's a typical contract. But with Abraham, there was no mediator; only one party of the deal had to do anything. It was one sided. It was not a contract, but a promise. It depended on God's faithfulness to His word, not on man's performance.

²¹Is 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. ²²But 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.

So are the Law and the promise of righteousness in opposition? Not at all. The promise of righteousness was given to bring us life. The Law was never intended to bring life. If the Law could bring life then righteousness would have come that way. Scripture teaches that the world is a mess of sin. Following the Law doesn't fix that and bring life. Instead, life and righteousness come through faith in Jesus. It's given to those who believe, not to those who follow the Law.

²³Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. NIV

Before this faith was clearly revealed when Christ came, we were controlled and constrained by the law. So the Law was to point us to Christ (perhaps by showing our inability to keep the law) so that we could be justified by faith. Now that we really get it, and we see that faith was God's plan from the beginning, the Law can't impose its rules upon us. It is irrelevant to us. In other words, if the purpose of the Law was to lead us to Christ, now that we've found Christ, the Law no longer serves a purpose for us.

You can't become right with God by your _____.

Galatians 2:16 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. NIV

Romans 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. NIV

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

Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. NIV

- Murder and anger
- Adultery and lust
- Don't make oaths ("I swear...")
- Don't resist an evil person
- Love your enemy

Matthew 5: 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. NIV

You can't _____ or _____ your _____ with God by obedience to the law.

Galatians 3:1-3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? NIV

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. NIV

Romans 1:17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." NIV

It is by _____ that you _____ and _____ in _____ with God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. NIV

Romans 4:1-3 "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about — but not before God. ³What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." NIV

1 Corinthians 1:28-29 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. NIV