

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

- › Every year thousands of high school football players make what's called a "verbal commitment" to play football for a particular college. Basically, they make a promise to the coaches at a school that's recruiting them that they will eventually sign a national "letter of intent" to attend that school when signing day rolls around. Once the letter is signed, there are penalties attached to not attending that school in favor of another one. Verbal commitments used to be honored much more than they are today. Student-athletes did not change their minds so often. We might say the recruiting system consists of a promise followed by a more formal agreement. In some ways, this process is similar to how God first made a promise to Abraham to bless the nations through him, and then later gave the law of God through Moses. Unlike a high school football player's promise, though, God's original promise was absolutely trustworthy and binding, and was not superseded when He gave the law to the people of Israel some 430 years later.

CONTEXT

- › In this last section of Galatians 3, Paul explains the relationship between the promise to Abraham and his seed (Christ), and the law of God given through Moses several centuries later. The law had a purpose, but it was not an ultimate or lasting one. It was in place for a time to both "imprison" the people of Israel and to serve as a "guardian" for them. It revealed their sin and made them long to be free of it, and it guided them as God's distinct people in the time leading up to the coming of Christ. This section, like much of Galatians, is loaded with theology and requires careful study.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

The following are suggested sermon points for each verse or section of verses for a large group setting.

- › Galatians 3:15-18. *God's promise is not superseded by God's law.* God made a promise to Abraham and his seed (Christ), and this promise doesn't go away when the law of Moses is given.
- › Galatians 3:19-26. *The law served a purpose, but it could not give life.* The law of God reveals the will of God and it also reveals our sin. Because of our sin nature, we can't live up to an external standard even if we agree that we should. The law simply cannot produce true spiritual life. Only Jesus can.
- › Galatians 3:27-29. *A Christian has "put on Christ" as his or her primary identity.* We are people of the promise before we are people of a particular race, sex, or anything else. This creates unity among the body of Christ.

GROUP DISCUSSION

The following are suggested discussion questions on each verse or section of verses for leading a small group session are also useful in sermon deliveries that include discussion.

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:15-18.

- › **What is a covenant? How does it differ from a contract? In the Bible, who initiates the various covenants and why does it matter?**
- › **Paul says the promise is made to Abraham and his seed. Who does "seed" refer to?**
- › **How is the promise made to Abraham related to the law given through Moses? Does the law override the promise?**

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:19-26.

- › **According to Paul, why was the law given? What purpose did it serve? Does it still serve a purpose today?**



- › Paul said that the law could not give life. Why do you think that is? If it's true and good and holy, why don't people just obey it?
- › Paul says that we are made right with God through faith. Why do you think faith is so important to God?

ASK A STUDENT TO READ GALATIANS 3:27-29.

- › What does it mean to be "baptized into Christ"? What does it mean to "put on Christ"?
- › How does the gospel eliminate human distinctions like nationality, race, and sex?
- › Paul says Christians are heirs according to the promise. What is the inheritance he's talking about?

SESSION CONNECTION

- › In Session 7, students considered how the Scriptures teach that every person is made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity and respect. This means that Christians should be fighting for justice and fairness wherever there is injustice and exploitation. The world we live in was created good, but is now fallen. There is brokenness everywhere, not only on the evening news, but also in our relationships. We serve a God who fights injustice through sacrifice. Jesus willingly embraced an unjust death in order to save us. While passing good laws can help curb injustice, the root of injustice is in the human heart. The only thing that changes the human heart is God's grace. In Galatians 3, we saw how even the perfect law of God cannot bring people life, only Jesus can.

OBJECT LESSON/APPLICATION

- › Remind students that every person is made in the image of God and is to be treated with care. Discuss this quote from C.S. Lewis: "The dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare....There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."¹

Following Christ requires acknowledging and striving against the injustice in our world.

- › <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/december/20.56.html> – J.I. Packer explains what it means to be made in the image of God.
- › <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/deeper-walk/features/23549-qmade-in-the-image-of-godq> – Dick Staub explains how seeing ourselves and others as made in God's image changes our view of ourselves and other human beings.

* These websites are not affiliated with LifeWay. Consult with your church's leadership before including these in your session to be sure that your church's values allow their materials to be referenced in your session time.