

The Spirit Imparts Life

July 11th, 2010

Galatians 3:14-29

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.

15 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.

A covenant is like a contract. It has two parties and specifies the performance of certain duties by each party. One party cannot arbitrarily set aside or add to any provision of the agreement without the consent of the second party.

16 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.

Parties to the Covenant – On the one side God, on the other Abraham and his seed. In this covenant God promised to do something for Abraham and his seed. “I will bless you so that you will be a blessing and by you all of the nations of the earth will be blessed.” That promise was fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 14 above.

How would Jews receive the promise? By the coming of the Spirit! How would gentiles receive the promise? By the coming of the Spirit!

So then to whom was the promise given? To Abraham and Christ! Which came first, the promise or the law? The promise!

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.

The law could never set aside the promise because God, by the nature of a covenant, could not unilaterally, long after Abraham’s death, change the terms of the deal.

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

How could the promise depend on the law which came 430 years later, long after Abraham’s death? It couldn’t! The inheritance depended on God’s promise and God’s grace alone.

Now that brings up an obvious question. If the promise came and would be fulfilled apart from the law, why did God give the law?

19 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 added, but for how long? “Until” is a word of timing. It’s a word of condition. How long was the law added? It was added until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. Has the Seed come? Yes! Has the condition been satisfied? Yes!

The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. 20 A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

This promise goes beyond the promise from God to man. It also includes a promise between God the Father and the seed, God the Son. The promise that we've come into is the result of a covenant between God and God. And we get to enter in to that covenant through His grace.

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.

What then was God's purpose in the giving of the promise? He wanted to impart life! He wanted to restore His life that his children lost in the fall. It's not as though the law stood in opposition to the promise of God to restore life. The law could not give life because it was never intended to give life. The law did have a purpose. It served a function. But that function was *not* to impart life and restore righteousness. So what was it?

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

Law does not deliver people from the bondage of sin. Rather it hemmed them in until true freedom came through Christ and the Spirit. That freedom comes by faith.

23 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. 24 So the law was put in charge of us until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

What could never come to us by law, life and righteousness, does come to us by faith in Christ. And the result of that faith is that we receive the promise given to Abraham and his Seed, the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

This could not be any clearer. The law has no further role for those who are in Christ. For those in the New Covenant, those who have received the promise, the Holy Spirit has replaced the law as the authority in our lives. What's more the Holy Spirit can do what law could never do and in fact was not designed to do, impart life and righteousness.

The law actually empowered the flesh, our sinful nature. That was Paul's point in Romans 7. Law and flesh are inadequate to impart life, and living by them only leads to frustration.

Romans 7:5-6

5 For when we were controlled by our sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Paul then goes on to describe just how frustrating life under law by the means of the flesh is.

Romans 7:21-25

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So often I've heard people describe the conflict that Paul is referring to here as the conflict between flesh and Spirit. And they use this passage to make themselves feel better when they yield to the passions of the flesh. But Paul never mentions the Holy Spirit in Romans 7. He's completely speaking of how frustrating living under law is when all we have to walk out the requirements of the law is our fallen sinful nature. That mode of living will always result in an experience of death.

	Old Covenant	New Covenant
Authority:	Law	Holy Spirit
Means of Performance:	Flesh (Human Nature Apart from God, Self)	God in Us (Holy Spirit)
Power Released:	Sin	Grace
Judgment Imparted:	Condemnation	Righteousness
Result:	Death	Life

The Old Covenant column is the life experience that Paul is describing in Romans 7. The New Covenant column is life as described in Romans 8.

In Romans 8, Paul points to God's solution, God's grace to restore life to us by His Spirit.

Rom 8:1-17

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful humanity to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in human flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind controlled by the sinful nature is death, but

the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The sinful mind is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not controlled by the sinful nature but are in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

There is a reason that God's passion is for us to be restored to life and righteousness. God is a family man. He wants us to be restored to our place as His children. God is not after slaves. He's after sons and daughters. He's our Papa in heaven.

Galatians 3:26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Papa was sitting on the porch and saw us coming from a long way off. And He rushed out to greet us. He placed the robe of Christ around us and the family ring on our fingers. And He welcomed us home with great celebration and rejoicing. My Son who was lost has returned. My daughter who wandered away has come home. And he's welcomed sons and daughters home from all over the earth and reunited us in one family.

28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Through Christ and the Spirit we have been welcomed home as God's children. Every other previous distinction melts away. Now our identity is sons and daughters of our Father in heaven in Christ Jesus. And the Holy Spirit testifies to that truth by crying out, "Abba, Father."