

Galatians 3 v 15-29

As we come to our passage this morning, try and picture Paul, the author of Galatians, sitting as the lawyer, presiding at the reading of the will. Who are the beneficiaries who is going to get their hands on the estate? In this sense, the beneficiaries of the estate God had promised. All the blessing he has offered to people.

Many of us might have heard the saying, “where there’s a will there is a family”. Lots of long-lost relatives suddenly turn up to see if they get anything. In such cases, “where there’s a will there is a family row” might be a truer saying. Who gets what?

To Paul’s opponents the answer to who gets all the blessings of God was obvious. It was those who kept the law, all the Jewish law, the law of Moses. Now, they would have conceded that, yes, you have to have faith in Christ, but they would say you also need to keep the law. They suggested you need both. Named as an inheritor (through your faith in Christ) & deserving, because of what you do.

But the question is, what does the Will say?

What our passage gives in answer to that question is 2000 years of biblical history condensed into eight verses. The key people, in question are **Abraham**, **Moses** and **Jesus**.

Abraham was the man who, in Genesis 12, was called by God to leave where he lived, leave his old life behind and to go and live in a place God had told him. He did that and God promised to bless him and his descendant. The promise was that ultimately all people will be blessed through him. It was like Abraham being named in the will as the benefactor. “All this is yours”. What did he have to do to inherit all of that blessing God promised? Nothing. It was given to him. He just had to take God at his word. To trust him. It was a bit like a youth from a poor family being called to a lawyer’s office and told, Great Auntie Grace twice removed who he has never heard of has left him millions. What does he have to do? Well, nothing. He might say thank you very much. But he does not have to do anything. It has been promised to him.

Now take that example. suppose a closer relative comes up to him and says, hang on a minute. You don’t deserve that. You have never done a thing for great auntie Grace. There are people much more deserving than you to benefit from her. Does it make any difference? No!. He has been promised it unconditionally. It is his.

In a sense, what Paul’s opponents were trying to do was challenge the will. They were trying to add conditions to the promise God had made to Abraham. Those conditions were to keep the law **Moses** gave them 430 years later.

When Paul said no that is not the case, the promise is there! They would have replied, well what is the point of having the law then? It is a good question. < > If we receive of the goodness of God as a gift, not by keeping the law, then why do we have the law? Why was Israel subsequently given the Law of Moses?

The answer is, it helps us to know when we are doing things wrong. It is a bit like when the 70 mile an hour speed limit was first introduced on UK roads, which was only in 1965. Before that, can you imagine two people talking about who was the best driver. One might say, I am a really good driver. I did 110mph coming home. The other could reply. That’s nothing. I am a much better driver than that. I did 120mph! The imposition of a limit changes the whole conversation and understanding of what is good. In a sense, the law of Moses did the same. It limited conduct and had a desirable effect on the society. But that is

totally separate from receiving what God has promised. All the law really does is make people aware of their failures and misunderstandings. It shows us that it is not good to drive at 120 miles an hour.

We read in vs 19 & 20 that the law was only temporary and was delivered second hand to Moses by angels. Temporary, in the sense that it was only meant to last until the promised descendant of Abraham, the Child – that is Christ, appeared. So it had fulfilled its purpose. From that point on we had a more clear guide – Christ himself. And the fact that one was delivered second hand rather than directly is, simply, an indication of relative significance. Even these days, if a high status person chooses to deliver a message in person, rather than have it sent, it says something. In Christ, God came to us himself, fulfilling the law and teaching us more clearly.

What Paul was saying is that the law had its place. It **is** useful but what we receive from God is through the promise. The descendant (the Child) of God's promise to Abraham is **Christ**. He is the one who fulfils the promise going to the cross for us. So, what we are in the eyes of God is determined by our acceptance of Christ, not by our keeping of the law.

The implication of this for us today is spelt out in our passage.

Paul says here that **no matter who we are**, whatever our background. Whether Jew or Gentile (non Jew), Slave or Free (for which we could say rich or poor, privileged or oppressed) Male or Female (& remember in the ancient middle east that made a massive difference in terms of status), **we are inheritors of God's promise to Abraham, once we accept Christ.**

- When we teach the old testament today it still has value. It helps us to understand God's best way, provided we don't forget its purpose and limitations. So for example, take the law "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy". What was the purpose. God's people had come out of slavery in Egypt. Working, literally all day every day. That is not good for anyone. God took them out as his people to a land he was to give them. The last thing he or they wanted was to go back to that sort of oppression. So, he set the Sabbath into law for their benefit. By Jesus time that law had been turned into a set of oppressive regulations. So, Jesus had to challenge it. He said in Mark 2 v 27 *"The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath."*

- When we come to Christ we are brought into liberty

One of the key things that the law does is that it makes us realise how wrong we are. That knowledge is condemning. Knowing we are in the wrong makes us feel the guilt. It makes us the fugitive or outcast and causes us to see our need for Christ.

In doing so it helps us to appreciate what Christ has done for us and the new status we have in Him.

Vs 26 & 27 say, *"For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes."*

We have left our old life behind and can live a new life in Him.

That is the inheritance we have. It is a complete change of status. We are Children of God because of the promise God made. We have that status, rooted in history, which dates back to God's promise to Abraham. We are the inheritors of that promise.