

Galatians 3:15–29 — Leader / Learner Guide

The Superiority of the Promise to the Law · TheGospelVault.com, @iJohn.316 (Instagram)

Big Idea and Context

Big idea: The law came 430 years after God's unconditional promise to Abraham and could never change it. The law did its job — exposing sin and leading us to Christ — and now gives way to righteousness by faith.

Paul has shown that the law curses and faith justifies (3:6–14). Now he answers the obvious objection: then why was the law given at all?

- **3:15–18:** the law is not part of the promise.
- **3:19–25:** the law is lower than the promise, but it had a purpose.
- **3:26–29 and ch. 4:** sons and heirs, no longer under a tutor.

Promise over Law — Three Anchor Verses

Verse	What it says	Teaching point
3:17	The law, which was 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant	Only the parties to a covenant can change it, and God alone passed between the pieces (Gen 15).
3:19	Added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come	The law restrained sin and was temporary. It ended when Christ came.
3:24–25	The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ ... no longer under a tutor	The law drove Israel to Christ. Once faith has come, the tutor's job is done.

Law and promise: the law says "Do this and you will be blessed." The promise says "You have been blessed — do this."

The commandments today: nine of the ten are restated in the New Testament. The Sabbath is not, because it belonged to the old covenant.

Teaching Flow

1. **The Law Is Not Part of the Promise (15–18).** A confirmed covenant can't be changed by outsiders. The promise was to one Seed, Christ (Matt 1:1). God confirmed it alone while Abraham slept (Gen 15) and swore by Himself (Heb 6:17). The law came too late and contradicts promise.
2. **The Law Is Not on a Par with the Promise (19–20).** It came because of disobedience, was temporary until the Seed, and needed a mediator. The promise needed none, because God is one.
3. **The Law Had a Purpose in the Promise (21–25).** It showed man's weakness (no law could give life), displayed his sinfulness (all under sin, Rom 3:9, 23), and drove him to Christ.
4. **The Law's Prospects Were Inferior (26–29).** The promise goes higher (sons of God), deeper (baptized into Christ), wider (all one in Christ), and longer (Abraham's seed and heirs).

Clarify While Teaching

- **The blessing promise:** the outline's "given through the Mosaic Covenant" is confusing. In this framework, the blessing is expanded in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8), which replaces the Mosaic.
- **"All sinned in Adam":** Hebrews 7:9–10 (Levi paying tithes in Abraham) illustrates that idea; 7:16–17 does not. This is Ryrie's and Sellers' reading of Romans 3:23 and 5:12.
- **Active inheritance:** the Galatians reference is 5:21 ("will not inherit"), not 5:19–20.
- **The burning lamp:** seeing the Father and Son pass between the pieces is Sellers' interpretation. The text says a smoking oven and burning torch (Gen 15:17).
- **Mediator (3:19):** some see angels and Moses; Sellers sees Moses alone. Both views are held.

Discussion and Close

1. If the law could not save, why does God still want us to know it?
2. "You have been blessed — now do this." How does that order change the way you obey?
3. Verse 28 levels every difference at the cross. Where is that hardest to live out in your church?

Close: Point ahead to 4:1–11: in the fullness of time God sent His Son — no longer slaves under the tutor, but sons and heirs.

Full study: [The Superiority of the Promise to the Law — Galatians 3:15–29](#) · Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers, SellersBibleInstitute.com