

Unity of Covenant of Grace - Exegesis of Gal. 3:17-22

by John Murray

The Mosaic dispensation was one of grace, not law, and was consistent with the Abrahamic covenant.

Duration: 52:08

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:20, Romans 10:4, Galatians 3:17-18, Galatians 3:21, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by praying for the congregation to have a deep understanding of God's covenant grace. He then addresses the issue of a recent test that many students failed, stating that they will have an opportunity to retake it. The speaker emphasizes the importance of doing well in the final examination and suggests that balancing the grades from the retake test and the previous test may help improve overall performance. The sermon also touches on the concept of grace in the Mosaic covenant and how it relates to salvation through faith.

Transcript

I pray to you, Lord God Almighty, to reveal thyself, the abundance of thy great movements, at the ends of the manifestation of power in all that is within us. Thou art a specialist. I see two or so papers in addition.

In the class by pointing out who have been conditioned and who haven't. So, I am leaving your papers, indicating to those of you who have been conditioned, that that is, and those of you who have made a five, should by all means, the ultimate consequence, a very, very considerable remedy to some extent, failure in this last test, make up a test, five and two, probably will give you a four, maybe a five. But in class work, I just balance them.

So I would urge those of you who, this afternoon, as there are quite a number of you trying, I would be still worse, if you all came in penny numbers. Well, now, we're dealing with this subject. What is not the issue, what are not the issue in connection, and I want to make one further point here, that neither is the point of issue, whether modern disciplines entail any, were actually saved by works of law.

They don't maintain any such thing, that any, during that period, by works of law, where they acknowledge that in all ages, men were saved by the blood of Christ, through the grace of God. The real question here is, whether instruction offered of the Mosaic is correct, instruction of whether the concession made, that

during that period, men had been saved by grace, consistent with, I mean, consistent with the construction of the Mosaic dispensation. Now, the thesis I am going to propose, that the Mosaic dispensation, or covenant, was like the Abrahamic covenant, one of grace, and that its governing and undergirding principle, its governing and undergirding principle, was one that provided for salvation by grace through faith.

So that the saints in that period, were not only saved by grace, but that the very salvation they enjoyed, was one in terms of the very provisions, in terms of the very provisions, enunciated in this Mosaic covenant. You see the difference? Why is it patent? Dispensationists say, yes, the saints were all received by salvation, through grace, on the basis of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. They say.

But nevertheless, the principle that undergirded the Mosaic dispensation, and the Mosaic covenant, extending from Sinai to Calvary, was the very antithesis of grace. The very antithesis. And in a sense you cannot have two exclusive principles operated at the same time.

They enjoyed that salvation in spite of, in spite of, the governing principle, the dispensation under which they lived. They say on the contrary, they enjoyed salvation by grace, through faith, but that the very dispensation in which they lived, provided for them. The very same salvation.

Now, in order to present beforehand by God, the law, after four hundred and thirty years, does not make so as to bring the promise to naught. Does not make wise, or cities of law, so long as it is a promise. But, to Abraham, it was gracious, God graciously granted it, through promise.

What then is the law? It was added on account of the transgressions, until the seed, from whom it was borne, came to Abraham, and the mediator is not of one, but God is one. Is the law then, against the promises of God? If God forbid, they cannot forbid for Him. The law we have given, is able to make alive, verily, from law, righteousness will be.

But, the scripture has shut up all things under sin, in order that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now, first of all, before we proceed to study this passage in detail, we have to recognize that dispensationalists, as well as others, construe the Abrahamic as one of grace. Though, called by dispensationalists, a covenant of promise, yet, in respect of faith, the contrast between law and grace is wholly gracious.

Therefore, in our short antithesis to the Mosaic Covenant, as does the New Covenant, on this, the Mosaic does to the New Covenant, dispute here as to the character of the Covenant. Now, in this passage, Paul deals expressly with the relation of the Mosaic economy to the Abrahamic Covenant. He deals expressly.

If dispensationalist construction, then the administration of Sinai stands in the sharpest opposition, the sharpest possible opposition, to the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant. Because, on this construction, the Abrahamic Covenant is altogether of grace, altogether of grace, whereas the Mosaic is one of worst, sharpest possible contrast with grace. If that is true, if there is that antithesis, there is certainly some indication of that.

In this passage, because it is precisely with this question Paul is dealing, and so it is very relevant to ask the question, what precisely do we find in this passage respecting the relation of these, the one to the other, or these two economies, the one to the other. Now, one further preliminary remark, in order to make it. You would have noticed that Paul's of the law, what then is the law, the law which was four hundred and

thirty years after.

What does he mean by the law? Does he mean just simply the commandments of the Mosaic institution, or does he mean the institution itself, the economy? Now, I think it is more exegetically tenable to interpret non-laws in this fashion, in the inclusive sense, referring to the whole institution, the whole economy, that is, as the synonym of the significant administration. Significant administration. It is in that sense, I take you not in the earlier part of my exegetically tenable law, which was four hundred and thirty years after.

What then is the law? It wouldn't make any difference, it wouldn't make any difference to the force of Paul's teaching here in reference to our question. If you took now, in all these instances, in the more restrictive sense, in the more restrictive sense of the distinctly legal elements, legislative elements of the focus particularly in the Ten Commandments, but also, it wouldn't make any difference to the force of the argument, more forcefully, because then you would have the question focused particularly upon what was specifically legislated, specifically legislated in this administration. And that would only point out the coherency of Paul's answers.

But I take the part of indecency. It wouldn't make any difference to the force of the argument. Now we connect the inverse of law.

Well, in verse seventeen, as you know, but this I say, a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law which came after four hundred and thirty years does not disannul, or if you will, it simply does not annul, so as to bring the promise to naught. The law, that's the Sinaitic administration, I take it, coming four hundred and thirty years, does not make void so as to bring the promise to naught. Now this means that the administration of the law of Sinai did not disestablish or abrogate the Abrahamic covenant.

Did not disestablish or abrogate the Abrahamic covenant or the promises which that covenant comprised. Now that is so patent that dispensationalists say the same thing. They are insistent that the Abrahamic covenant is not abrogated by the Mosaic.

That in fact is not abrogated by the Mosaic. But the point of criticism here is that the implication of Paul's thought here is either overlooked or not appreciated. For surely Paul's thought is this, that the Sinaitic administration was not inconsistent with far less contradictory order.

Administration consistent with far less contradictory order. The principle of grace and promise governing the Abrahamic covenant. Now of course Paul has fully recognized the absolute antithesis that there is between justification by works and justification by grace.

Paul's two major epistles, Romans and Galatians, are built upon that antithesis, justification by law and justification by grace. It is that antithesis that he enunciates in verse 18 when he says, For if the inheritance is of law, it is no longer of promise. If the inheritance is of law, it is no longer of promise.

But the purpose for which he refers to that antithesis in verse 18, the purpose for which he appeals to that antithesis, is not at all to show that the Sinaitic administration was one of law in opposition to grace, but really the very opposite, or the very opposite purpose. That is the force of the connection between verses 17 and 18. Namely, that the administration of Sinai did not have the effect of annulling or suspending the Abrahamic covenant of grace.

You just need to read the two verses again in order to see that that is really false. He then goes again, But I say a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, that is the Abrahamic covenant, the law, the Sinaitic

administration, which came after 430 years, does not make way so as to bring the promise to naught. For if the inheritance is of law, it is no longer of promise.

Now I think even at this point, you can detect the underlying thought of these two verses today, that the Sinaitic administration does not in any way whatsoever interfere with the principles in terms of which the Abrahamic covenant was given or upon which it was made. But no second do we have confirmation in Gersonality. For here Paul asks a pointed question.

A pointed question? What then is the law? That's just our question, isn't it? What is the Sinaitic administration? What was its purpose? Why did it come in? Now Paul's answer to that question is added. Added. A-D-D-E-D.

Conceptually, it was added to the expression. Now, you think it was an addition? Can you question that? It was added. What was an addition, wasn't it? And that is just saying that it was an appendix.

You see how remote from Paul Scott is the idea that it was an appendix. Dispensationalists that it was a parenthesis coming in between the Abrahamic covenant or dispensation and the New Covenant or the New Testament dispensation. A parenthesis.

And it was a parenthesis because the principle that governed the Abrahamic dispensation and covenant has been suspended. Has been, has been, yes, has been suspended. It couldn't be anything else but a dispensationalist construction.

There has to be some kind of interference, some kind of suspension, some kind of parenthesis. Now, there isn't the remotest suggestion in Paul's language of any such. The thought is clearly that it is an end.

Supplementation for the purpose of conserving and promoting the ends contemplated in the Abrahamic promise. I repeat, for the purpose of conserving and promoting the ends contemplated in the Abrahamic promise. The remotest suggestion of incompatibility, of contrast, of opposition, of contradiction, precisely of contradiction, of actual contradiction as far as governed principle is concerned.

The language of the apostle is language that points to perfect congruity, agreement. In other words, the mosaic administration is ancillary, ancillary to the promise. Now isn't it a dispensationist view where Paul's view that the language he would use to denote or to specify the promise is language that points in the very opposite direction, very opposite direction, from that of suspension, contrast, contradiction? Well, we, we come to verse twenty-one.

And this provides us with additional confirmation of our interpretation of verses seventeen and eighteen. In verse twenty-one, it is Paul saying, Is the law then against the promises of God? Or, for them, may get at all. Here, Paul says expressly what we have seen interpreting his talk to be in verses seventeen, eighteen, and nine.

Because he asks the pointed question, Is the law then against the promises of God? Is the law of the Sinaitic administration against the promises of God? Kata told Evangelium 2.0 There's a 2.0 according to some text, isn't it? Kata told Now, is Paul aware of what this by all means, by all means, the Sinaitic administration is against? Because it's governed by an antithetical principle? The principle of what? The supposed principle. But instead what Paul says is, what we must render in English, by God forbid, may it get at all. That's an Old Testament implied in the Greek form, may it get at all.

In the Old Testament it is, The Lord forbid, your God forbid. It's abbreviated in the New Testament. She said, may it get at all.

But, the force of it will have to be that of the Old Testament formula. God forbid. The strongest negative that the apostle has at his disposal.

So we are brought to this inescapable conclusion. The Sinaitic administration, in any of its elements or aspects, either promulgation or reenactment of a system or covenant of works, a system or covenant of works, is to contradict Paul. In this one passage, which more than any other in his epistle, in the whole compass of his epistle, deals with the express question of the relation of the Mosaic administration to the Abrahamic covenant.

But now for, we have to contradict the verse 31b, the latter part. This part is known as against the promises of God. God forbid.

But then we read later in this very verse, For if a law were given, egare doce nomos, if a law were given, and it hath been given, which is able to make alive verily from law, righteousness would have been. It's very likely that Paul would be using the word nomos in this case in the more restrictive sense. Very likely.

Suggestion, very formally, in the very formal statement, if a law had been given, which was able to make alive. Well, it doesn't make any more restrictive sense that it occurs here, but nevertheless, the main point is that it is impossible, impossible to attain to righteousness unlike by works of law. Now, the reason for which Paul appeals to this is that because of its inviolable truth, by works of law, no one will be justified.

Because of its inviolable truth, we are not to find in the mosaic economy any proposition or proposal of such an arrangement. That's the reason why he's appealing to it here. What Paul is saying is this, that we must not interpret the mosaic dispensation of law in terms of a principle antithetical to promise of it for the very simple reason that the antithetical principle, the opposing principle, is an impossibility.

Let me read the whole of verse 21 again. You know, there is a consistent law, then, that gives the law, or if a law had been given, this would have been of the law. Paul's thought is this, that if it had been possible, righteousness, that is, justification to have been by the law, but since that is a utter impossibility, utterly inconceivable, how ridiculous it would be to interpret the mosaic economy in terms of a provision that has no possibility of ever coming to fruition.

That is fruition in itself. God did not give this dispensation on the basis of an impossible hypothesis, a hypothesis that have yielded anything. I must finish this.

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