

Series: 6:8@Six:Eight	Reference: Galatians 3:15-25 & Various Passages	Title: Story	Date: 11.11.18
Website Writeup:			
This weeks sermon is intimately tied to last weeks. What does it mean to honor & live out of the Story of God's Grace? Grace which preceded Law, and has always been the point of relationship with God from the very beginning pages of Scripture. We greatly value the Story of God in HIStory as revealed in the Holy Scriptures which inform us of who God is & His purpose & direction for humanity.			

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Today we come to the third value, Story Matters, in this series 6:8@Six:Eight, one intimately tied to last weeks value of Grace; speaking of the complete Story of God with a clear message of Grace in Jesus from beginning to end. It reads:

Story Matters

We are rooted in the Scriptures, the Story of a loving God pursuing his children. It is a story in four parts, what it was like (*creation*), what happened (*fall*), what it is like now (*redemption*), and what it will be (*restoration*). The central character is Jesus who lovingly bore in himself our judgment, and guides us by his timeless teaching. This story extends through his followers in history. It encompasses and speaks to all issues of life, restoring our relationship to God, and bringing freedom & joy where there was once none.

The Mature Christian Profile of this reads...*The mature Christian in the issue of Story isn't only knowledgeable of God's Word, but has allowed it to influence & guide, all aspects of their life. They see themselves as rooted in the biblical story, which is larger than themselves, beginning in creation & ending in the hope of restoration. They aren't only able to 'quote' or lead a person to certain ideas or verses, but more importantly, are able to apply them in ways which are refreshing & challenging to the soul. Their world view is shaped by the story of God, how they view life & reality; it's born out of this holistic story. They don't try to impress with their knowledge, but if one listens closely to the mature Christian, they can hear that their words are bolstered with the ideas & verses of Scripture. They no longer dwell on the elementary teachings, but have moved onto deeper issues of the faith. They don't try to impress, but are just 'being'.*

Last week we talked about the value of Grace. Often times, after initially accepting God's grace at salvation we begin to live our lives as if we had to gain acceptance by what we do, how we look, through accomplishments, etc. **We're restored to God by grace once for all, yet we're also transformed by grace daily. We bring hurt & pain to ourselves, and to community, when we set up a protective hedge of Law around ourselves & apply it to others. Life in Christ means we have to bring our thoughts & hearts back to the cross allowing God to crucify our desires, rather than fruitlessly trying to save ourselves via anything other than grace. Living out of the eternal value we have in Jesus.**

Life is ambiguous. Mature Christians need to become comfortable living in that ambiguity, living in community with differing opinions. We tend to focus on external behavior instead of the heart. For example, someone may say that a young woman wearing a shorter skirt is 'over the top' in church. However, the speaker, wearing a tight red cocktail dress may be just as provocative. The style of dress is just culturally acceptable in different circles. One shops at Anne Taylor. The other, Urban Outfitters. People see things differently.

My friend was sitting in Turkey at an outdoor cafe with some Muslim friends one day. Western clad women strolled by in shorts & halter tops. His friends took no notice. He thought they must be good Muslims. But then a woman walked by in full burqa with only hands, feet & eyes showing. Thick eye makeup, hands & feet painted with Henna, the wind blew the burqa against her body revealing her feminine form - the Muslim men went nuts like drunken frat boys. The gospel isn't about judging externals, it's about right relationship with God, allowing him to correct our hearts to live out of grace which leads to behavioral change externally.

What we think's 'right' sometimes is either actually 'not right', or at the least, neither right, nor wrong, but a matter of preference. **And grace addresses the deeper questions as to 'why' we do what we do. Why do I seek attention in negative ways? Why does that person bother me with how they act? Why does my mind need very little external stimulus, if any, to be perverted? (Short term Bikini story) There's a fear, we're going to degenerate into sin & lawlessness in living by grace, but grace is the only avenue for true unity, patience, love & to give & receive forgiveness in community.**

Our goal's to live out of grace, allowing God to crucify the old self with all its fear, pride, anger & insecurity; to model the heart of God to each other & the world. To do that well we must understand the complete Story of God as seen in the Scriptures. To see that Grace has been God's intention all along throughout his continuing Story.

This begs a question, what's the relationship between the Law & Promise? Isn't the OT about Law & the NT about grace in Jesus? Most Christians view the story of God as seen in the Scriptures something like this; (1) God created Adam & Eve to live in perfect harmony with him. (2) They chose to turn away. (3) So, God sat back & scratched his head saying, "Well I'll give them this Law to live by. If they live right, then I'll accept them, if not, I'll cut them off." (4) And then when he figured out that was useless, he sent Jesus as a payment for the sin revealed in us by the very law he put in place - Jesus as a kind of afterthought. In this view, Old & New Testaments are separate stories. The Scripture becomes a disjointed bunch of stories from different people with no unifying theme. **But grace has always been the central theme, the end goal of this story has always been Jesus. Scripture must be read more like a novel, than short stories. Jesus said the Scripture speaks of him, referring to the OT. Paul & others saw the gospel of grace all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures - they didn't have the NT at the time & preached this message of grace via the Hebrew Scriptures - the OT.**

As I wrote out my will I did it in the assurance, when I die, no matter the circumstances, the conditions of my will should be carried out. Paul's making that argument in Galatians 3:15-25 when he says that just as with a human document where nothing can be added or taken away it's the same with God's promise. With this I want to give you

one small glimpse into the unity of the Scripture as it pertains to the Story of Grace. This is only a glimpse, by no means is it exhaustive. Let me read it.

¹⁵Brothers, 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. ¹⁶The promises were spoken to Abraham & to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

¹⁷What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God & thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

¹⁹What, 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 put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

It's easy to see what he's referring to when talking about a human covenant. A will, or contract with a mediator between two parties. Paul's making a contrast to God's Promise given to Abraham back in Genesis 12, but he says that promise, or covenant, was made by one party, God...It says in Genesis 12:1-3...

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people & your father's household to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

In Galatians 3, as Paul refers to the Promise in Genesis 12 & also 15, there are some confusing things, for instance:

This idea of 'Seed' which comes later in Genesis 12:7, 13:15 & 24:7, Paul says there were four parts to the promise God gave to Abram in Gen. 12 & 15. (1) Seed or offspring in the singular. (2) Land. (3) Israel will be blessed – his descendants will be numerous. (4) Israel will be a blessing to all nations

God promised a number of things & in one sense God was making it clear to Abraham, that the Messiah will come through his lineage. It's interesting to think, Abraham, at the time, was just a man chosen by God. He was an Iraqi, called out of the Ur of the Chaldeans. Our father of faith is an old Iraqi guy, sort of ironic. His background was that he probably worshipped the local deity; he was a pagan. He didn't have the Scriptures, the Temple, the Church, orthodoxy & doctrine, or much to go on at all. He may've possibly had a few creation & flood stories to go from, but that's about it until God calls him.

God calls, God chooses, not us (Eph 2). Right orthodoxy, although important, isn't necessary for salvation. All that's necessary is passive righteousness - receiving God's grace by faith in God's promise. Now a lot of people will say they 'believe in God', but very few will say they 'believe God', there's a difference. We can't make up God to fit

what we want him to be. God reveals himself in the Scriptures, in Christ & in Creation; we accept & believe God on his terms. Abraham believed God in that four part promise.

The other confusing thing in these verses is: *A mediator doesn't just represent one party, but God is one (Gal 3:20)*. Confusing, because a contract or covenant is always made between two parties. It's so confusing there are more than 300 interpretations of this passage! But, let me attempt to give some clarity...

R.C. Sproul was often asked, what he thought was a strange question, what's your life verse? If you had to have just one verse what would it be? Strange since he'd want the whole Scriptures Story, but to pick one it'd be Genesis 15:17 which says, *¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.*

Strange verse. Now, to understand Galatians 3 & this one party idea, we have to understand this verse in Genesis 15:17. You must understand the covenant process God was undertaking with Abraham. In OT times if a king conquered another, they'd 'cut' a covenant, not 'make', but 'cut'. They'd sacrifice some animals, cut them down the middle & lay the two halves opposite each other, making a bloody aisle. Then the two parties would walk down the middle of this aisle reciting their promise to each other as a covenant. What they were basically saying was, "If I break our covenant, may I end up like these animals; dead." Two parties cutting a covenant promise, a contract for future relationship.

So, let's read around Genesis 15:17...⁹ *So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat & a ram, each three years old, along with a dove & a young pigeon."* ¹⁰ *Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two & arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.*

¹² *As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick & dreadful darkness came over him.*

¹⁷ *When the sun had set & darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared & passed between the pieces.* ¹⁸ *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram & said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates".*

God cut a covenant with Abraham here. But the interesting thing is, when it came time to walk the aisle, Abraham was in a deep sleep. God, *by himself*, represented by the smoking fire-pot & a burning torch, walked the aisle cutting the covenant as one party with Abraham. So, in essence what God was saying is, 'I make this covenant with you as one party. The whole covenant is therefore based on my Word, my Promise, by Grace & not your ability to hold up your end of the bargain.' Not based on two party's behavior. God's saying, if I fail at this, then I am placing all of my deity on the line, you do nothing for it. Very gracious of God - remember Ephesians 2 from last week!

So, to summarize, what Paul's saying is, God chooses us, not based on our merit, just like he chose Abraham, an old Iraqi pagan. Abraham believed God's promise to him. That is why it says in Romans 4:3, ³ *What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."* and in v13, ¹³ *It was not through the law*

that Abraham & his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

When we hear, God chose us & sacrificed himself on the cross, taking our sin away & becoming cursed, placing his righteousness on us, we believe it & believe it every day of our lives! Not just the day we're saved, but we should know, grace happened on the cross & it has nothing to do with what I do to be right with God, even now. Just like it didn't with Abraham.

Paul adds very adeptly, *The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God & thus do away with the promise.* ¹⁸*For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Galatians 3:17-18)*

You see to base your relationship with God on the Law takes two parties, one party sets the standard as sovereign king & the other keeps it as vassal king. But the Promise/Covenant came 430 years before the Law - the Law can't nullify the Promise because God's Word can't be broken. God promised, it was He that cut & kept the covenant with his people, not based on anything we do. Think of it this way. Paul uses the word *inheritance* in 3:18. If I'm promised an inheritance by my father in his will, I do nothing but believe he promised an inheritance. But if someone comes to me & says, I have no descendants & will die soon, IF you take care of me, THEN I will give you an inheritance, that's based on *performance*. It's a conditional statement. Well, God promised to Abraham & likewise to us, that we're his children by grace through faith alone way back then. All that is his is ours, based only on grace through faith. The Promise came first & can't be broken; he never said if you obey my Law, then you will have the inheritance. The promise depends on God, therefore based on relationship, not performance. Grace always preceded Law.

He then says 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.*

And also, ²²*But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

²³*Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.* ²⁴*So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* ²⁵*Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*

In Indonesia we had house help. I loved it after a while, anybody would really; all I had to do after a while was say, "Naah, minta teh!" And my helper, Naah, would reply, "Iyo Pak, 'bentar Pak." And, magically my tea would appear on my desk, made just to my liking - heaven! My wife doesn't do that, I miss Indonesia.

Naah didn't just clean the house, she babysat as well. You can imagine a young couples concern with what our children would learn since Naah was a poor animistic Muslim woman from a highly spiritualistic culture. She had input into the character development of our children. She was a pedagogue, a nanny, or tutor to our children.

Likewise, Paul uses the word pedagogue in v24. The Law's like a pedagogue charged with the discipline, protection & leading of a child to school; the pedagogue has moral input & their principles would guide a child into adulthood; The Law, he says is like this, leading us into our adult life of faith, revealing God's standard. But at some point the child grows & is released from the hand of the nanny, however, the lessons learned by the Law carry on into adult life.

You see, Scripture tells us that the Law of God's written on our hearts, we naturally know right from wrong in many cases. However, the Law, more clearly laid out in Scripture, was instituted as a pedagogue which would lead us to Christ & instruct us on God's standard. The Law, by defining sin more clearly reveals sin in us, taking us by the hand, bringing us to the point, we realize we're in need of a Savior; in need of grace.

We're not living in a world where we can just choose not to sin; remember that's viewing sin superficially, which leaves us in the position of being God over ourselves - sin's a condition of humanity. Paul makes it deathly clear here, we're prisoners, locked away in our sin nature awaiting release. Release comes through faith in Christ; we're justified by faith in Christ & transformed by grace daily. One way to look at the Law & the Promise is, God, as our father, is promising, we have an inheritance & says concerning His Law, "Since you're my children loved & accepted by me, the Law's my standard for living, but you can't live that standard without me, my grace will grow you over time into my likeness by convicting you via this standard." God's moral law is always our standard.

The Law therefore is good; it originates from God & defines his standard. It's something to which we should attain. But again, we don't get our value by how well we attain to it, but through the relationship established by grace. Daily it reminds us of our need for him & continually should drive us back to grace which has been from the beginning of the whole Story.

So, if I'm trusting in something other than the Gospel of Grace, then I'm breaking the first commandment of God's Law, "You shall have no other Gods before me." If I'm trusting in my looks, the way I dress, my eloquence, skills, money, drugs, sex, alcohol, attention from others, my pride, or accomplishments, or anything to make me feel secure in life; if I'm seeking comfort, approval, control, or power to find security, the Law says, I've set myself up as a my own god. Until I can bring unhealthy desire before the cross, allowing God to crucify that old self, I'm breaking God's first commandment - and it's interesting, if you read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, which is the Law, you realize, if we break any of the others, we're automatically breaking the first.

Tim Keller (p64/66-67 Galatians Leaders Guide) says, those Christians who live trying to justify their existence by the Law are the most insecure, angry, frustrated people around, even more so than those outside the Church. So many in the church live as if they're trying to prove themselves by the Law that it makes the Church a mean & hostile place at times. How many times have you heard people say, Christians like to eat their own? This is why. Many Christians aren't living out of grace. If a person's living by the Law, they're not only frustrated, angry & insecure, but they most definitely will develop a secret sin life.

We must live by grace; the complete Story of God! This is why there are so many more one-another verses espousing encouragement, love, forgiveness, mercy & such, as

opposed to verses on confrontation in Scripture. This is why Jesus said what he did in Matthew 22:37-40...

³⁷Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first & greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law & the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

If we love God with all our heart, soul & mind, is it possible to live in anger, secret sin, pride, fear, etc...? No. If you're loving your neighbor as yourself, don't you think you'll be leading them by grace towards the cross, instead of belittling & making them feel even worse about themselves? Six:Eight lives out of he Story of a loving God pursuing his children. A story in four parts, what it was like (*creation*), what happened (*fall*), what it's like now (*redemption*) & what it will be (*restoration*). A story which has always been marked by God's grace.

Your homework this week is to read the Ten Commandments in Chapter 20 of Exodus & pray God will reveal to you where you're not giving him Lordship in life; where you've not been living out of Grace. Ask him where you've broken his commandments; make amends with him & others. Resist the urge to say, "I'm sorry for this thing, but...!" (scratch your butts). Love God by loving his commandments, remembering, your value comes not from how well you have lived up to these things, but in relationship to Him by grace through faith. Love others by extending grace as you've been extended it. Take your sin to the cross, allow God to crucify it & find freedom in Christ once more!