

Galatians 3
July 17, 2022

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: In your view, what do you think is the biggest difference between faith and Law? [Let people engage]

Transition: Poor Paul. He's frustrated. As you have already shared, faith is BELIEVING in Christ and what He did for us on the cross. Paul taught these Gentile believers the gospel and that the evidence of their belief in Christ is being sealed by the Spirit. Paul can't believe that his new Gentile converts are getting "bewitched" by the Judaizers "understanding" of salvation, which requires following the Law – even though following the Law never helped them OBTAIN their salvation nor MAINTAIN their salvation.

We are getting ready to watch Paul masterfully lay out key arguments to support the fact that faith and Law cannot be mixed as it relates to salvation. Let's begin.

BOOK:

Faith or Observance of the Law

3 You foolish (orig. language = spiritually dull) Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. ²I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? ⁴Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? ⁵Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

⁶Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (Gen 15:6) ⁷Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. ⁸The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." (Gen 12:3; 18:18) ⁹So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

¹⁰All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." (Deut 27:26) ¹¹Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because "The righteous will live by faith." (Hab 2:4) ¹²The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them." (Lev 18:5) ¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Deut 21:23) ¹⁴He 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.

The Law and the Promise

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 and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” (Gen 12:7) meaning one person, who is Christ.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.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.

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

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.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 (or charge until Christ came) that we might be justified by faith.²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Sons of God

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, 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.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Your Christian life ought to take on new wonder and meaning as you realize all that you have in Christ. And all of this is by grace—not by Law.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 697–704)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

BEWITCHED AND BOTHERED

Galatians 3:1–14

The sixty verses that make up Galatians 3 and 4 are some of the strongest writings that Paul ever penned. But, after all, he was in a battle! He was out to prove that salvation is by grace alone, and not by the works of the Law. His opponents had used every possible means to try to capture the churches of Galatia, and Paul was not going to fight them halfheartedly. The apostle was no amateur when it came to debate, and in these two chapters he certainly proves his abilities. His logic is unassailable.

Paul uses six different arguments to prove that God saves sinners through faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law. He begins with the *personal argument* (Gal. 3:1–5) in which he asks the Galatians to recall their personal experience with Christ when they were saved. Then he moves into the *scriptural argument* (Gal. 3:6–14), in which he quotes six Old Testament passages to prove his point. In the *logical argument* (Gal. 3:15–29) he reasons with his readers on the basis of what a covenant is and how a covenant works. He then presents the *historical argument* (Gal. 4:1–11), explaining the place of Law in the history of Israel.

At this point, Paul's love for his converts comes to the surface. The result is a *sentimental argument* (Gal. 4:12–18) as the apostle appeals to them to remember his love and their happy relationship in days past. But then Paul goes right back to his close reasoning and concludes with the *allegorical argument* (Gal. 4:19–31), based on the life of Abraham and his relationships with Sarah and Hagar. Practical application of his doctrinal argument follows in the last two chapters.

The Personal Argument (Gal. 3:1–5)

The key to this section is in the word *suffered* (Gal. 3:4), which can be translated “experienced.” Paul asks, “Have you experienced so many things in vain?” The argument from Christian experience was a wise one with which to begin, because Paul had been with them when they had trusted Christ. Of course, to argue from experience can be dangerous, because experiences can be counterfeited, and they can be misunderstood. Subjective experience must be balanced with objective evidence, because experiences can change, but truth never changes. Paul balances the subjective experience of the Galatian Christians with the objective teaching of the unchanging Word of God (Gal. 3:6–14).

It was obvious that these people had experienced something in their lives when Paul had first visited them; but the Judaizers had come along and convinced them that their experience was not complete. They needed something else, and that “something else” was obedience to the Law of Moses. These false teachers had bewitched them and turned them into fools. In calling them “fools” Paul is not violating Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:22), because two different words are used and two different ideas are expressed. *Foolish* in Galatians 3:1 means “spiritually dull” (see Luke 24:25), while the word Jesus used carries the idea of “a godless person.” Paul is declaring a fact; Jesus is warning against verbal abuse.

Paul reminds them that they had truly experienced a meeting with God.

They saw God the Son (v. 1). It was “Christ and Him crucified” that Paul had preached in Galatia, and with such effectiveness that the people could almost see Jesus crucified for them on the cross. The words *evidently set forth* translate a Greek word that means “publicly portrayed, or announced on a poster.” Just as we put important information on a poster and display it in a public place, so Paul openly presented Christ to the Galatians, with great emphasis on His death for sinners on the cross. They heard this truth, believed it, and obeyed it; and as a result, were born into the family of God.

They received God the Holy Spirit (vv. 2–4). The Holy Spirit is mentioned eighteen times in this epistle and plays an important part in Paul’s defense of the Gospel of the grace of God. The only real evidence of conversion is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer (see Rom. 8:9). Paul asks an important question: did they receive the Spirit by faith in the Word of God, or by doing the works of the Law? Of course, there could be but one answer: the Spirit came into their lives because they trusted Jesus Christ.

It is important that we understand the work of the Spirit in salvation and Christian living. The Holy Spirit *convicts* the lost sinner and reveals Christ to him (John 16:7–11). The sinner can resist the Spirit (Acts 7:51) or yield to the Spirit and trust Jesus Christ. When the sinner believes in Christ, he is then *born of the Spirit* (John 3:1–8) and receives new life. He is also *baptized by the Spirit* so that he becomes a part of the spiritual body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–14). The believer is *sealed by the Spirit* (Eph. 1:13–14) as a guarantee that he will one day share in the glory of Christ.

Since the Holy Spirit does so much for the believer, this means that the believer has a responsibility to the Holy Spirit, who lives within his body (1 Cor. 6:19–20). The Christian should *walk in the Spirit* (Gal. 5:16, 25) by reading the Word, praying, and obeying God’s will. If he disobeys God, then he is *grieving the Spirit* (Eph. 4:30), and if he persists in doing this, he may *quench the Spirit* (1 Thess. 5:19). This does not mean that the Holy Spirit will leave him, because Jesus has promised that the Spirit abides forever (John 14:16). But it does mean that the Spirit cannot give him the joy and power that he needs for daily Christian living. Believers should be *filled with the Spirit* (Eph. 5:18–21), which simply means “controlled by the Spirit.” This is a continuous experience, like drinking water from a fresh stream (John 7:37–39).

So, in their conversion experience, the believers in Galatia had received the Spirit by faith and not by the works of the Law. This leads Paul to another question: “If you did not *begin* with the Law, why bring it in anyway? If you began with the Spirit, can you go on to maturity without the Spirit, depending on the flesh?” The word *flesh* here does not refer to the human body, but rather to the believer’s old nature. Whatever the Bible says about “flesh” is usually negative (see Gen. 6:1–7; John 6:63; Rom. 7:18; Phil. 3:3). Since we were saved through the Spirit, and not the flesh, through faith and not Law, then it is reasonable that we should continue that way.

The illustration of human birth is appropriate here. Two human parents are required for a child to be conceived and born, and two *spiritual* parents are required for a child to be born into God’s family: the Spirit of God and the Word of God (John 3:1–8; 1 Peter 1:22–25). When a normal child is born, he has all that he needs for life; nothing need be added. When the child of God is born into God’s family, he has all that he needs spiritually; *nothing need be added!* All that is necessary is that the child have food, exercise, and cleansing that he might grow into maturity. It would be strange if the parents had to take the child to the doctor at one month to receive ears, at two months to receive toes, and so on.

“You have begun in the Spirit,” writes Paul. “Nothing need be added! Walk in the Spirit and you will grow in the Lord.”

They experienced miracles from God the Father (v. 5). The *He* in this verse refers to the Father as the One who ministers the Spirit and “worketh miracles among [them].” The same Holy Spirit who came into the believer at conversion continues to work in him and through him so that the whole body is built up (see Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:19). The Father continues to supply the Spirit in power and blessing, and this is done by faith and not by the works of the Law. The phrase *among you* can also be translated *within you*. These miracles would therefore include wonderful changes *within* the lives of the Christians, as well as signs and wonders within the church fellowship.

“Do you really believe the miracles in the Bible?” a skeptic asked a new Christian who had been a terrible drinker.

“Of course I do!” the believer replied.

The skeptic laughed. “Do you mean that you really believe that Jesus could turn water into wine?” he asked.

“I sure do! In my home He turned wine into food and clothing and furniture!”

The Scriptural Argument (Gal. 3:6–14)

Paul turns now from subjective experience to the objective evidence of the Word of God. We never judge the Scriptures by our experience; we test our experience by the Word of God. In the first section, Paul asked six questions; in this section he will quote six Old Testament statements to prove that salvation is by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law. Since the Judaizers wanted to take the believers back into the Law, Paul quotes the Law! And, since they magnified the place of Abraham in their religion, Paul uses Abraham as one of his witnesses!

Abraham was saved by faith (vv. 6–7). Paul begins by quoting Moses to show that God’s righteousness was placed to Abraham’s account only because he believed God’s promise (Gen. 15:6). The words *accounted* in Galatians 3:6 and *counted* in Genesis 15:6 mean the same as *imputed* in Romans 4:11, 22–24. The Greek word means “to put to one’s account.” When the sinner trusts Christ, God’s righteousness is put to his account. More than this, the believer’s sins are no longer put to his account (see Rom. 4:1–8). This means that the record is always clean before God, and therefore the believer can never be brought into judgment for his sins.

The Jewish people were very proud of their relationship with Abraham. The trouble was, they thought that this relationship guaranteed them eternal salvation. John the Baptist warned them that their *physical* descent did not guarantee *spiritual* life (Matt. 3:9). Jesus made a clear distinction between “Abraham’s seed” physically and “Abraham’s children” spiritually (John 8:33–47). Some people today still imagine that salvation is inherited. Because mother and father were godly people, the children are automatically saved. But this is not true. It has well been said, “God has no grandchildren.”

This salvation is for the Gentiles (vv. 8–9). The word *heathen* (Gal. 3:8), as used here, simply means Gentiles. Paul’s quotation of Moses (Gen. 12:3) proves that, from the very beginning of Abraham’s relationship with God, the blessing of salvation was promised to all the nations of the world. God preached the “Good News” to Abraham centuries ago, and Paul brought that same Good News to the Galatians: sinners are justified through faith and not by keeping the Law. The logic here is evident: if God promised to save the Gentiles by faith, then the Judaizers are wrong in wanting to take the Gentile believers back into Law. The true “children of Abraham” are not the Jews by physical descent, but Jews and Gentiles who have believed in Jesus Christ. All those who are “of faith” (believers) are blessed with “believing Abraham.”

When you read God's great covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, you discover that many different blessings were promised—some personal, some national and political, and some universal and spiritual. Certainly, God did make Abraham's name great; he is revered not only by Jews, but also by Christians, Muslims, and many others. God did multiply his descendants, and God did bless those who blessed Abraham. He also judged those who cursed his descendants (Egypt, Babylon, and Rome are cases in point). But the greatest blessings that God sent through Abraham and the Jewish nation have to do with our eternal salvation. Jesus Christ is that promised "Seed," through whom all the nations have been blessed (Gal. 3:16).

This salvation is by faith, not Law (vv. 10–12). Salvation could never come by obedience to Law because the Law brings a curse, not a blessing. Here Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26. Law demands obedience, and this means obedience in *all things*. The Law is not a "religious cafeteria" where people can pick and choose (see James 2:10–11). Paul next quotes Habakkuk, "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). This statement is so important that the Holy Spirit inspired three New Testament books to explain it as mentioned before. *Romans* explains "the just" and tells how the sinner can be justified before God (see Rom. 1:17). *Galatians* explains how the just "shall live"; and *Hebrews* discusses "by faith" (see Heb. 10:38). Nobody could ever live "by Law" because the Law kills and shows the sinner he is guilty before God (Rom. 3:20; 7:7–11).

But someone might argue that it takes faith even to obey the Law; so Paul quotes Leviticus to prove that it is *doing* the Law, not believing it, that God requires (Lev. 18:5). Law says, "Do and live!" but grace says, "Believe and live!" Paul's own experience (Phil. 3:1–10), as well as the history of Israel (Rom. 10:1–10), proves that works righteousness can never save the sinner; only faith righteousness can do that.

The Judaizers wanted to seduce the Galatians into a religion of legal works, while Paul wanted them to enjoy a relationship of love and life by faith in Christ. For the Christian to abandon faith and grace for Law and works is to lose everything exciting that the Christian can experience in his daily fellowship with the Lord. The Law cannot justify the sinner (Gal. 2:16); neither can it give him righteousness (Gal. 2:21). The Law cannot give the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:2), nor can it guarantee that spiritual inheritance that belongs to God's children (Gal. 3:18). The Law cannot give life (Gal. 3:21), and the Law cannot give liberty (Gal. 4:8–10). Why, then, go back into the Law?

This salvation comes through Christ (vv. 13–14). These two verses beautifully summarize all that Paul has been saying in this section. Does the Law put sinners under a curse? Then Christ has redeemed us from that curse! Do you want the blessing of Abraham? It comes through Christ! Do you want the gift of the Spirit, but you are a Gentile? This gift is given through Christ to the Gentiles! All that you need is in Christ! There is no reason to go back to Moses.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy again, "He that is hanged is accursed of God" (Deut. 21:23, NKJV). The Jews did not crucify criminals; they stoned them to death. But in cases of shameful violation of the Law, the body was hung on a tree and exposed for all to see. This was a great humiliation, because the Jewish people were very careful in their treatment of a dead body. After the body had been exposed for a time, it was taken down and buried (see Josh. 8:29; 10:26; 2 Sam. 4:12).

Of course, Paul's reference to a "tree" relates to the cross on which Jesus died (Acts 5:30; 1 Peter 2:24). He was not stoned and then His dead body exposed; He was nailed alive to a tree and left there to die. But by dying on the cross, Jesus Christ bore the curse of the Law for us; so

that now the believer is no longer under the Law and its awful curse. “The blessing of Abraham” (justification by faith and the gift of the Spirit) is now ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

The word *redeemed* in Galatians 3:13 means to purchase a slave for the purpose of setting him free. It is possible to purchase a slave and keep him as a slave, but this is not what Christ did. By shedding His blood on the cross, He purchased us that we might be set free. The Judaizers wanted to lead the Christians into slavery, but Christ died to set them free. Salvation is not exchanging one form of bondage for another. Salvation is being set free from the bondage of sin and the Law *into* the liberty of God’s grace through Christ.

This raises an interesting question: how could these Judaizers ever convince the Galatian Christians that the way of Law was better than the way of grace? Why would any believer deliberately want to choose bondage instead of liberty? Perhaps part of the answer is found in the word *bewitched* that Paul uses in Galatians 3:1. The word means “to cast a spell, to fascinate.” What is there about legalism that can so fascinate the Christian that he will turn from grace to Law?

For one thing, legalism appeals to the flesh. The flesh loves to be “religious”—to obey laws, to observe holy occasions, even to fast (see Gal. 4:10). Certainly there is nothing wrong with obedience, fasting, or solemn times of spiritual worship, *provided that the Holy Spirit does the motivating and the empowering*. The flesh loves to boast about its religious achievements—how many prayers were offered, or how many gifts were given (see Luke 18:9–14; Phil. 3:1–10).

Another characteristic of religious legalism that fascinates people is the appeal to the senses. Instead of worshiping God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), the legalist invents his own system that satisfies his senses. He cannot walk by faith; he has to walk by sight and hearing and tasting and smelling and feeling. To be sure, true Spirit-led worship does not deny the five senses. We see other believers; we sing and hear the hymns; we taste and feel the elements of the Lord’s Supper. But these external things are but windows through which faith perceives the eternal. They are not ends in themselves.

The person who depends on religion can measure himself and compare himself with others. This is another fascination to legalism. But the true believer measures himself with Christ, not other Christians (Eph. 4:11ff). There is no room for pride in the spiritual walk of the Christian who lives by grace; but the legalist constantly boasts about his achievements and his converts (Gal. 6:13–14).

Yes, there is a fascination to the Law, but it is only bait that leads to a trap; and once the believer takes the bait, he finds himself in bondage. Far better to take God at His Word and rest on His grace. We were saved “by grace, through faith” and we must live “by grace, through faith.” This is the way to blessing. The other way is the way to bondage.

THE LOGIC OF LAW

Galatians 3:15–29

The Judaizers had Paul in a corner. He had just finished proving from the Old Testament that God’s plan of salvation left no room for the works of the Law. But the fact that Paul quoted six times from the Old Testament raised a serious problem: If salvation does not involve the Law, then why was the Law given in the first place? Paul quoted from the Law to prove the insignificance of the Law. If the Law is now set aside, then his very arguments are worthless, because they are taken from the Law.

Our faith is a logical faith and can be defended on rational grounds. While there are divine mysteries in the faith that no man can fully explain, there are also divine reasons that any sincere person can understand. Paul was trained as a Jewish rabbi and was fully equipped to argue his case. In this section, he makes four statements that help us understand the relationship between *promise* and *Law*.

The Law Cannot Change the Promise (Gal. 3:15–18)

The word *promise* is used eight times in these verses, referring to God's promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). This promise involved being justified by faith and having all the blessings of salvation (Gal. 3:6–9). It is obvious that the promise to Abraham (and, through Christ, to us today), given about 2000 B.C., preceded by centuries the Law of Moses (about 1450 B.C.). The Judaizers implied that the giving of the Law *changed* that original covenant of promise. Paul argues that it did not.

To begin with, once two parties conclude an agreement, a third party cannot come along years later and change that agreement. The only persons who can change an original agreement are the persons who made it. To add anything to it or take anything from it would be illegal.

If this is true among sinful men, how much more does it apply to the holy God? Note that Abraham did not make a covenant with God; *God made a covenant with Abraham!* God did not lay down any conditions for Abraham to meet. In fact, when the covenant was ratified *Abraham was asleep!* (see Gen. 15) It was a covenant of grace: God made promises to Abraham; Abraham did not make promises to God.

But Paul reveals another wonderful truth: God made this promise, not only to Abraham, but also to Christ. "And to thy Seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

The Bible concept of "the seed" goes back to Genesis 3:15, after the Fall of man. God states that there will be a conflict in the world between Satan's seed (children of the devil, see John 8:33–44) and the woman's seed (God's children, and, ultimately, God's Son). The Scriptures show this conflict: Cain versus Abel (see 1 John 3:10–12); Israel versus the nations; John the Baptist and Jesus versus the Pharisees (Matt. 3:7–9; 23:29–33); the true believer versus the counterfeit (see the Parable of the Tares, Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43). Satan's goal in the Old Testament was to keep the Seed (Christ) from being born into the world, for Satan knew that God's Son would one day crush his head.

In the final analysis, God made this covenant of promise with Abraham *through Christ*, so that the only two parties who can make any changes are God the Father and God the Son. *Moses cannot alter this covenant!* He can add nothing to it; he can take nothing from it. The Judaizers wanted to add to God's grace (as though anything could be added to grace!) and take from God's promises. They had no right to do this since they were not parties in the original covenant.

The 430 years of Galatians 3:17 has puzzled Bible students for many years. From Abraham's call (Gen. 12) to Jacob's arrival in Egypt (Gen. 46) is 215 years. (This may be computed as follows: Abraham was 75 years old when God called him and 100 when Isaac was born, Gen. 12:4; 21:5. This gives us 25 years. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born, Gen. 25:26; and Jacob was 130 years old when he arrived in Egypt, Gen. 47:9. Thus, 25 + 60 + 130 = 215 years.) But Moses tells us that Israel sojourned in Egypt 430 years (Ex. 12:40); so the total number of years from Abraham's call to the giving of the Law is 645 years, not 430. The length of the stay in Egypt is recorded also in Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, where the round figure of 400 years is used.

Several solutions have been offered to this puzzle, but perhaps the most satisfying is this: Paul is counting from the time Jacob went into Egypt, when God appeared to him and *reaffirmed* the covenant (Gen. 46:1–4). The 430 years is the time from God’s confirmation of His promise to Jacob until the giving of the Law at Sinai.

Regardless of what solution to the dating question we may choose, the basic argument is clear: a law given centuries later cannot change a covenant made by other parties. But suppose the later revelation, such as the Law of Moses, was greater and more glorious than the earlier? What then? Paul makes a second statement.

The Law Is Not Greater Than the Promise (Gal. 3:19–20)

The account of the giving of the Law is impressive (Ex. 19). There were thunders and lightnings, and the people were trembling with fear. Even Moses was shaking in his sandals (Heb. 12:18–21). It was a dramatic event in comparison with the giving of the covenant to Abraham (Gen. 15), and, of course, the Judaizers were impressed with these emotional externals. But Paul points out that the Law is inferior to the covenant of promise in two ways.

The Law was temporary (v. 19a). “It was added ... until the Seed should come.” Now it is obvious that a temporary law cannot be greater than a permanent covenant. When you read God’s covenant with Abraham, you find no “ifs” in His words. Nothing was conditional; all was of grace. But the blessings of the Law were dependent on the meeting of certain conditions. Furthermore, the Law had a terminus point: “until the Seed [Christ] should come.” With the death and resurrection of Christ, the Law was done away and now its righteous demands are fulfilled in us through the Spirit (Rom. 7:4; 8:1–4).

The Law required a mediator (vv. 19b–20). When God gave the Law to Israel, He did it by means of angels and through the mediation of Moses. Israel “received the Law by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53). This means that the nation received the Law third-hand: from God to angels to Moses. But when God made His covenant with Abraham, He did it personally, without a mediator. God was revealing to Abraham all that He would do for him and his descendants. A mediator stands between two parties and helps them to agree; but there was no need for a mediator in Abraham’s case since God was entering into a covenant with him, not Abraham with God. “God is one” (Gal. 3:20), therefore there was no need for a go-between.

The Judaizers were impressed by the *incidentals* of the Law—glory, thunder, lightning, angels, and other externals. But Paul looked beyond incidentals to the *essentials*. The Law was temporary and required a mediator. The covenant of promise was permanent, and no mediator was required. There could be but one conclusion: the covenant was greater than the Law.

The Law Is Not Contrary to the Promise (Gal. 3:21–26)

You can almost hear the Judaizers shouting the question in Galatians 3:21: “Is the Law then *against* the promises of God?” Is God contradicting Himself? Does His right hand not know what His left hand is doing? As he replies to this question, Paul reveals his deep insight into the ways and purposes of God. He does not say that the Law *contradicts* the promise, but rather that it *cooperates* with the promise in fulfilling the purposes of God. While *Law* and *grace* seem to be contrary to one another, if you go deep enough, you will discover that they actually *complement* one another. Why, then, was the Law given?

The Law was not given to provide life (v. 21). Certainly, the Law of Moses regulated the lives of the Jewish people, but it did not and could not provide *spiritual* life to the people. (Gal.

3:21 should be matched with 2:21.) If life and righteousness could have come through the Law, then Jesus Christ would never have died on the cross. But Jesus did die; therefore, the Law could never give the sinner life and righteousness. It was “worship of the Law” that led Israel into a self-righteous religion of works, the result of which was the rejection of Christ (Rom. 9:30–10:13).

The Law was given to reveal sin (vv. 19a, 22). It is here that we see the way that Law and grace cooperate in bringing the lost sinner to Jesus Christ. Law shows the sinner his guilt, and grace shows him the forgiveness he can have in Christ. The Law is “holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12), but we are unholy, unjust, and bad. The Law does not *make* us sinners; it reveals to us that we already *are* sinners (see Rom. 3:20). The Law is a mirror that helps us see our “dirty faces” (James 1:22–25)—*but you do not wash your face with the mirror!* It is grace that provides the cleansing through the blood of Jesus Christ (see 1 John 1:7b).

There is a lawful use of the Law, and there is an unlawful use (1 Tim. 1:8–11). The lawful use is to reveal sin and cause men to see their need of a Saviour. The unlawful use is to try to achieve salvation by the keeping of the Law. When people claim they are saved by “keeping the Ten Commandments,” they are revealing their ignorance of the true meaning of the Law. The Law concludes “all [men] under sin” (Gal. 3:22), Jews and Gentiles alike. But since *all* are under sin, then *all* may be saved by grace! God does not have two ways of salvation; He has but one—faith in Jesus Christ.

The Law was given to prepare the way for Christ (vv. 23–26). Here Paul uses an illustration that was familiar to all his readers—the child guardian. In many Roman and Greek households, well-educated slaves took the children to and from school and watched over them during the day. Sometimes they would teach the children, sometimes they would protect and prohibit, and sometimes they would even discipline. This is what Paul means by *schoolmaster* (Gal. 3:24); but please do not read into this word our modern idea of a schoolteacher. The transliteration of the Greek would give us our word *pedagogue*, which literally means “a child conductor.”

By using this illustration, Paul is saying several things about the Jews and their Law. First, he is saying that the Jews were not *born* through the Law, but rather were *brought up* by the Law. The slave was not the child’s father; he was the child’s guardian and disciplinarian. So, the Law did not *give* life to Israel; it *regulated* life. The Judaizers taught that the Law was necessary for life and righteousness, and Paul’s argument shows their error.

But the second thing Paul says is even more important: *the work of the guardian was preparation for the child’s maturity*. Once the child came of age, he no longer needed the guardian. So the Law was a preparation for the nation of Israel until the coming of the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal in God’s program was His coming (Gal. 3:22), but “before this faith [Christ] came” (Gal. 3:23, NIV), the nation was “imprisoned by the Law” (literal translation).

The Law separated Israel from the Gentile nations (Eph. 2:12–18); it governed every aspect of their lives. During the centuries of Jewish history, the Law was preparing for the coming of Christ. The *demands* of the Law reminded the people that they needed a Savior. The *types* and *symbols* in the Law were pictures of the coming Messiah (see Luke 24:27).

A good example of this purpose of the Law is in the account of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16ff). This young man had everything anybody could desire, but he was not satisfied. He had tried to keep the commandments all his life, but still something was missing. *But these commandments brought him to Christ!* This is one of the purposes of the Law, to create in lost sinners a sense of guilt and need. The sad thing is that the young man was not honest as he

looked into the mirror of the Law, for the last commandment (“Thou shalt not covet”) escaped him; and he went away without eternal life.

The Law has performed its purpose: the Savior has come, and the “guardian” is no longer needed. It is tragic that the nation of Israel did not recognize their Messiah when He appeared. God finally had to destroy the temple and scatter the nation, so that today it is impossible for a devoted Jew to practice the faith of his fathers. He has no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifice, no temple, no king (Hosea 3:4). All of these have been fulfilled in Christ, so that any man—Jew or Gentile—who trusts Christ becomes a child of God.

The Law cannot change the promise, and the Law is not greater than the promise. But the Law is not contrary to the promise: they work together to bring sinners to the Savior.

The Law Cannot Do What the Promise Can Do (Gal. 3:27–29)

With the coming of Jesus Christ, the nation of Israel moved out of childhood into adulthood. The long period of preparation was over. While there was a certain amount of glory to the Law, there was a greater glory in the gracious salvation of God as found in Christ. The Law could reveal sin and, to a certain extent, control behavior, but the Law could not do for the sinner what Jesus Christ can do.

To begin with, the Law could never justify the guilty sinner. “I will not justify the wicked,” said the Lord (Ex. 23:7); yet Paul states that God “justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5). King Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, reminded God to condemn the wicked and justify the righteous (1 Kings 8:32); and this was a proper request in light of the holiness of God. The trouble is, nobody was righteous! It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that the sinner is justified—declared righteous—before God.

Furthermore, the Law could never give a person a oneness with God; it separated man from God. There was a fence around the tabernacle and a veil between the holy place and the holy of holies.

Faith in Jesus baptizes us “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). This baptism of the Spirit identifies the believer with Christ and makes him part of His body (1 Cor. 12:12–14). Water baptism is an outward picture of this inner work of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 10:44–48).

The phrase *put on Christ* (Gal. 3:27) refers to a change of garments. The believer has laid aside the dirty garments of sin (Isa. 64:6) and, by faith, received the robes of righteousness in Christ (see Col. 3:8–15). But to the Galatians, this idea of “changing clothes” would have an additional meaning. When the Roman child came of age, he took off the childhood garments and put on the toga of the adult citizen. The believer in Christ is not just a “child of God”; he is also a “son of God” (see Gal. 3:26, where *children* ought to be translated “adult sons”). The believer has an adult status before God—so why go back into the childhood of the Law?

“All one in Christ Jesus”—what a tremendous claim! The Law created differences and distinctions, not only between individuals and nations, but also between various kinds of foods and animals. Jesus Christ came, not to divide, but to unite.

This must have been glorious news for the Galatian Christians, for in their society slaves were considered to be only pieces of property; women were kept confined and disrespected; and Gentiles were constantly sneered at by the Jews.

The Pharisee would pray each morning, “I thank Thee, God, that I am a Jew, not a Gentile; a man, not a woman; and a freeman, and not a slave.” Yet all these distinctions are removed “in Christ.”

This does not mean that our race, political status, or sex is changed at conversion; but it does mean that these things are of no value or handicap when it comes to our spiritual relationship to God through Christ. The Law perpetuated these distinctions, but God in His grace has declared *all men* to be on the same level that He might have mercy on *all men* (Rom. 11:25–32).

Finally, the Law could never make us heirs of God (Gal. 3:29). God made the promise to “Abraham’s Seed” (singular, Gal. 3:16), and that Seed is Christ. If we are “in Christ” by faith, then we too are “Abraham’s seed” spiritually speaking. This means we are heirs of the spiritual blessings God promised to Abraham. This does not mean that the material and national blessings promised to Israel are set aside, but that Christians today are enriched spiritually because of God’s promise to Abraham (see Rom. 11:13ff).

This section of Galatians is valuable to us as we read the Old Testament Scriptures. It shows us that the spiritual lessons of the Old Testament are not for the Jews only but have application to Christians today (see Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11–12). In the Old Testament we have *preparation for Christ*; in the Gospels, the *presentation of Christ*; and in the Acts through Revelation, the *appropriation of Christ*.

Your Christian life ought to take on new wonder and meaning as you realize all that you have in Christ. And all of this is by grace—not by Law! You are an adult son in God’s family, an heir of God. Are you drawing on your inheritance? This will be Paul’s theme in the next section.

Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Galatians*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 596-600) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

A. *Vindication of the doctrine (chap. 3).*

1. BY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GALATIANS (3:1–5).

3:1. Paul’s tone was direct and severe as he remonstrated, **You foolish Galatians!** To embrace a doctrine which declared the death of Christ unnecessary was irrational (cf. 2:21). It would almost appear they had been **bewitched**, cast under some evil spell by a malign influence. For this they were, however, without excuse because the Savior had been **clearly portrayed** (*prographē*; lit., “to write for public reading” as with the posting of a public announcement) **as crucified** before them. Paul had vividly and graphically proclaimed the crucified Christ to the Galatians; yet their eyes had been diverted from the Cross to the Law. They were without excuse.

In order to demonstrate convincingly that faith alone is God’s method of dealing, the apostle asked four questions.

3:2. (1) *How did you receive the Holy Spirit?* This rhetorical question pointed to the time of their conversions, when they received the Holy Spirit (cf. 4:6). Thus, Paul did not question their salvation but challenged them to consider whether they were saved and received the Spirit by faith or on the basis of works. It was of course by faith, when they heard Paul preach the gospel. As an essentially Gentile church they did not possess the Mosaic Law anyway.

3:3. (2) *How will you be sanctified?* Presupposing the answer that the Galatians became Christians by faith, Paul asked if they were **so foolish** as to think they could begin the Christian life in one way (by faith) and move on to spiritual maturity in another (by works). This was what the Judaizers promoted (cf. 4:10; 5:2; 6:13), but the means of justification and sanctification were (and are) the same. There was no provision under the Law for the Holy Spirit to do a work

of sanctification. The Galatian believers probably thought that keeping the old Law would aid them in their spiritual lives, but it would not.

3:4. (3) *Did you suffer in vain?* The third question looked back on the persecution the apostles and new believers experienced in the region of Galatia. As Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps at the end of the first missionary journey, they warned the Galatian converts that they would suffer as Christians (Acts 14:21–22). Persecution evidently soon followed, and Paul reminded them that if they turned from grace to Law, they would brand their former position in error and would then have **suffered so much for nothing**. But the apostle was unwilling to believe that this was so.

3:5. (4) *On what basis did God perform miracles?* That **miracles** were performed among the Galatians by divine power was recorded in the Book of Acts (14:3, 8–11). It was clear, furthermore, that these supernatural works were not the result of the works of **the Law** but from the hearing that leads to faith. The Galatians did not know the Law, and Paul's message was that of justification by faith.

2. BY THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM (3:6–9).

3:6. The Judaizers claimed to have the Old Testament on their side, especially looking to Moses as their teacher. But Paul went centuries farther back and said, **Consider Abraham**. How was he, the father of Jewish people, justified? The answer was simple and direct. Noting Genesis 15:6, Paul declared, **He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness**. Abraham's faith in God's ability to perform what He promised was accepted by God as righteousness and so the patriarch was justified—before he was circumcised (cf. Gen. 17:24). How then could the Judaizers insist that circumcision was essential to being accepted by God?

3:7–8. Striking a tremendous blow at the Judaizers, Paul linked the past with the present and declared that just as **Abraham** was saved **by faith** so were those who now claimed to be his **children** (*huioi*; lit., “sons”). Abraham and his spiritual descendants, both Jews and Gentiles, have all been declared righteous by faith. Moreover, this conclusion is in harmony with **the Scripture** which states that **all nations will be blessed through Abraham** (cf. Gen. 12:3). Thus, the justification of uncircumcised Gentiles was anticipated in the universal aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant when God **announced the gospel** (lit., “the good news”) **... to Abraham**. It should not be overlooked that Paul referred to Scripture speaking as though God were speaking, so it can rightly be affirmed that what the Bible says, God says. This and similar verses (e.g., John 10:35b; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21) provide important support for believing in the absolute and total inspiration and authority of Scripture.

3:9. The apostle concluded this phase of his argument by stating that though provision was made for “all nations” (v. 8), only **those who have faith** receive the blessing of justification. Thus, Paul drew a distinction between God's provision and human appropriation.

3. BY THE EFFECT OF THE LAW (3:10–12). HAVING ESTABLISHED THE FACT THAT JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE GALATIANS AND OF ABRAHAM, PAUL THEN SHOWED THE ILLOGIC OF RELIANCE ON THE LAW.

3:10–11. Contrary to what the Judaizers taught, the Law could not justify; it could only condemn. Paul quoted Deuteronomy 27:26 to show that **the Law** demanded perfection and that a **curse** was attached to failure to keep any part of it. The breaking of only one command even once brings a person under the curse; and since everybody fails at some point, all are under the

curse. The proposition that a person can gain divine acceptance by human effort is therefore totally destroyed. Quoting the Old Testament again, Paul showed that even during the dispensation of **Law** legal obedience was not the basis for a **justified standing before God ... because**, as the Prophet Habakkuk wrote, **The righteous will live by faith** (Hab. 2:4).

3:12. But perhaps **faith** and **the Law** could be combined; perhaps both are needed. Quoting again from the Old Testament Paul proved this to be scripturally impossible. Law and faith are mutually exclusive. The basic principle of the Law is found in Leviticus 18:5: **The man who does these things will live by them**. Only perfect performance could win divine approval under the Law, but since that was not achievable the Law could only condemn a person (cf. James 2:10) and cause him to cast himself on God in faith.

4. BY THE WORK OF CHRIST (3:13–14).

3:13. The positive side of Paul's argument emphasized that there is hope for all who have broken the Law and are therefore under its curse. That hope is not in man but in **Christ** who **redeemed us from the curse of the Law**. But how did Christ redeem (*exēgorasen*, lit., "buy out of slavery"; cf. 4:5; see chart "New Testament Words for Redemption" at Mark 10:45) man? The answer is **by becoming a curse for us**. This is a strong declaration of substitutionary redemption whereby Christ took the penalty of all guilty lawbreakers on Himself. Thus the "curse of the Law" was transferred from sinners to Christ, the sinless One (cf. 1 Peter 3:18), and He delivered people from it. The confirming quotation from Deuteronomy 21:23 refers to the fact that in Old Testament times criminals were executed (normally by stoning) and then displayed on a stake or post to show God's divine rejection. When Christ was crucified, it was evidence He had come under the curse of God. The manner of His death was a great obstacle to faith for Jews until they realized the curse He bore was for them (cf. Isa. 53).

3:14. Two purposes for Christ's redemptive work are given, each introduced by the Greek conjunction *hina*, "in order that" (cf. 4:5): (1) **Gentiles** might receive **the blessing given to Abraham**; as already stated (3:8) this is a reference not to personal or national blessings but to the promised blessing of justification apart from works of the Law, available to all who believe; (2) all who thus believe **might receive the promise of the Spirit**, that is, the Holy Spirit, who was promised (cf. v. 2). Again, the apostle emphasized that salvation and sanctification come **by faith**, not by works.

5. BY THE PERMANENCE OF FAITH (3:15–18).

3:15–16. Even if Paul's opponents admitted that Abraham was justified by faith, those Judaizers might have argued that the Law, coming at a later time, entirely changed the basis for achieving salvation. To refute this, Paul declared that just as a properly executed Roman **covenant** (or will) cannot arbitrarily be **set aside** or changed (probably reference to ancient Gr. law), so the promises of God are immutable. Further, **the promises ... spoken to Abraham and to his seed** were not fulfilled before the giving of the Law. Rather, they found fulfillment in Christ and are in effect forever. The blessing of justification by faith is therefore permanent and could not be changed by the Law. The stress on **seed** (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7), not **seeds**, was made simply to remind the readers that the faithful in Israel had always recognized that blessing would ultimately come through a single individual, the Messiah (cf. Gal. 3:19). And Matthew declared Christ to be *the* Son of Abraham and the true Heir to the First Covenant's promises (Matt. 1:1).

3:17–18. Finally, Paul applied the principle of the permanence of faith by affirming that a covenant made so long before could not possibly be altered by a later giving of the Law. **The Law** was given **430 years** after the promise. When did that lengthy period of time begin? Some have suggested it began with Abraham, in which case the 430 years included the Israelites' time of about 200 years in Canaan and about 200 years in Egypt. The Septuagint supports this view, but this conflicts with the clear statement in Exodus 12:40 that the Egyptian sojourn was 430 years. Another suggestion is that the period began with the confirming of the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob (Gen. 35:9–12).

A third and perhaps best view is that the period began with the final confirmation of the covenant to Jacob (given in Gen. 46:1–4). Accordingly, the 430 years went from the end of one era (the Age of Promise) to the beginning of another (the Age of Law). This seems to fit best with Exodus 12:40. (Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6, in referring to the sojourn in Egypt as 400 years, may be using rounded figures.)

During that long interval God blessed the patriarchs on the basis of faith alone, and the coming of the Law could not change this in any way. Additionally, **the Law** could not alter God's dealing with **Abraham** on the basis of **a promise** because the two are fundamentally different in nature. They do not co-mingle; they cannot be combined. Instead, **the inheritance** (i.e., justification by faith) was given by **God** as an unconditional gift to those who believe. Contrary to the claim of the Judaizers, obedience to the Law was not necessary to gain the inheritance. God's way of salvation has always been by grace through faith.

6. BY THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW (3:19–25).

3:19. An indignant Judaizer was sure to respond with objections to Paul's insistence that the Law could not give the Holy Spirit (vv. 1–5); could not bring justification (vv. 6–9); could not alter the permanence of faith (vv. 15–18); but does bring a curse (vv. 10–12). **What, then, was the purpose of the Law?** Why *was* a change made at Sinai? Paul answered by declaring the purpose and character of the Law. First, it was given **because of transgressions**, that is, the Law was given to be a means for checking sins. It served as a restrainer of sins by showing them to be transgressions of God's Law which would incur His wrath (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8–11). Second, the Law was temporary and served **until the Seed** (the Messiah; cf. Gal. 3:16) came, after which it was no longer needed. Third, the Law was inferior because of the manner of its bestowal. While God made promises to Abraham directly, **the Law** was established **by a mediator**. There were in fact two mediators, the **angels** representing God, and Moses representing the people.

3:20. This verse appears to be closely related to the last part of verse 19. **A mediator** implies a covenant between two parties both of whom have responsibilities, facts true of the Mosaic Covenant. On the other hand **God is One**, that is, the "promise" (v. 19) was unilateral and was given to man directly without a mediator, God alone having responsibility for fulfilling it.

3:21–22. Another question was raised: Is there conflict between **the Law** and the **promises of God**? "Perish the thought" (*mē genoito*), declared the apostle. God gave both the Law and promises, but for different purposes. And it was not the purpose of **the Law** to give **life**. Theoretically salvation could have come by the Law if people had been capable of keeping it perfectly, but they could not (Rom. 8:3–4). The **life** promised to those who sought to obey the **Law** refers to temporal blessing on earth (Deut. 8:1).

But if the Law is not **opposed to** the promises, if there is no conflict between them, how can their harmony be demonstrated? By recognizing that while the Law could not justify or give life, it did prepare the way for the gospel. What part then did Law play in this respect? It declared **the**

whole world ... a prisoner of sin. Referring perhaps to Psalm 143:1–2 or Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul declared that the whole world is trapped and under the dominion of sin (cf. Rom. 3:9, 23). When people recognize this and give up attempts to please God by their own works, the way is prepared for them to receive the promise of salvation **through faith in Jesus Christ.**

3:23–25. Continuing to comment on the purpose of the Law, Paul used two figures of speech, likening the Law to a prison and to a child-custodian relationship. **Before this faith came** means before the advent of faith in Jesus Christ (see v. 22). Justifying faith was operative in the Old Testament but faith in the person and work of Christ did not come until He was revealed. Before that, Israel was under the protective custody of **the Law**, God thus shielding His people from the evil heathen rites surrounding them. Further, the Law served as a “tutor” (NASB). The word *paidagōgos* is difficult to render into English since there is no exact parallel to this position in modern society. Phillips suggests “a strict governess.” The pedagogue here was not a “schoolmaster” (KJV) but a slave to whom a son was committed from age six or seven to puberty. These slaves were severe disciplinarians and were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. This was like the Law’s function until **Christ** came and people could **be justified by faith** in Him. It is better then to understand that the Law did not *lead us to* Christ but that it was the disciplinarian *until* Christ came. Thus, the reign of Law has ended for faith in Christ has delivered believers from the protective custody of the prison and the harsh discipline of the pedagogue.

7. BY THE BELIEVER’S PRESENT POSITION (3:26–29)

Paul’s vindication of the doctrine of justification by faith reached a climax in this section as he contrasted the position of a justified sinner with what he had been under the Law. Three changes are noted.

3:26–27. First, **all** who believe in **Christ** become **sons of God**. The change in person from the first to the second (**you**) indicates that Paul turned from looking at Israel as a nation to address the Galatian believers. Under the dispensation of Law, as seen in verse 24, the Law was a disciplining pedagogue, and those under its supervision were regarded as children. However, now that Christ had come, the Galatian believers were adult sons **through faith** and were no longer under a Jewish slave-guardian. Why should they seek to revert to their inferior status? The exalted position of “sons of God” is explained in verse 27 to involve a living union with Christ brought about by being **baptized into Christ**. This is the baptism of (or in) the Holy Spirit, which according to Paul (1 Cor. 12:12–13) joins all believers to Christ and unites them within the church, Christ’s body. This union with Him means being **clothed with Christ**. In the Roman society when a youth came of age he was given a special toga which admitted him to the full rights of the family and state and indicated he was a grown-up son. So the Galatian believers had laid aside the old garments of the Law and had put on Christ’s robe of righteousness which grants full acceptance before God. Who would want to don again the old clothing?

3:28. Second, believers **are all one in Christ Jesus**. Since all believers became one with each other, human distinctions lose their significance. None is spiritually superior over another, that is, a believing Jew is not more privileged before God than a believing Gentile (**Greek**, in contrast to **Jew**, suggests all Gentiles; cf. Col. 3:11); a believing **slave** does not rank higher than a believing **free** person; a believing man is not superior to a believing woman. Some Jewish men prayed, “I thank God that Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” Paul cut across these distinctions and stated that they do not exist in the body of Christ so far as spiritual privilege and position are concerned. Elsewhere, while affirming the coequality of man and

woman in Christ, Paul did nonetheless make it clear that there is a headship of the man over the woman (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3) and that there are distinctions in the area of spiritual service (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12).

3:29. Third, believers in Christ **are Abraham's seed**. As Paul previously stated, **Christ is the Seed of Abraham** (vv. 16, 19); therefore being in Christ makes a believer a part of that seed and an **heir of the promise** to Abraham. Any discussion of the seed of Abraham must first take into account his natural seed, the descendants of Jacob in the 12 tribes. Within this natural seed there is a believing remnant of Jews who will one day inherit the Abrahamic promises directed specifically to them (cf. Rom. 9:6, 8). But there is also the spiritual seed of Abraham who are not Jews. These are the Gentiles who believe and become Abraham's spiritual seed. They inherit the promise of justification by faith as Paul explained earlier (cf. Gal. 3:6–9). To suggest, as amillenarians do, that Gentile believers inherit the national promises given to the believing Jewish remnant—that the church thus supplants Israel or is the “new Israel”—is to read into these verses what is not there.

Fields, W. C. (1972). *Galatians*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (p. 743). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Paul Defends His Gospel of Faith (Gal. 3:1–4:31)

The passage—The Christian movement faced a crisis of authority. The issue? Christ or the Jewish law. Paul appeals to history and to their own experience. He says that there were indications to Abraham and others all along that the law was a preliminary stage of religious development. But that preliminary stage is now passed. The Great Teacher has come. Follow him! You are out of elementary school now, he says. Why turn around and go back? Don't be foolish, thoughtless, and gullible!

The Galatian believers are reminded that Paul's gospel of free grace through faith has worked. They had seen it with their own eyes (3:1–5). They had received the Holy Spirit even though they had not been practicing the ceremonies and rituals of the Jewish law.

The coming of Christ illuminated many dark and obscure passages of the Old Testament. Paul cites the promise to Abraham that he would be a blessing to all nations. From the beginning God's plan anticipated an outreach to the Gentile world (3:6–29). The achievement of the gospel is to make them as Gentile believers, heirs to the promise given to Abraham (chap. 4).

Special points—Paul's impatience with them shows through in 3:1. “Who put a spell on you?” (TEV). He says, Wake up! The Judiazers have hypnotized you. Get your senses back!

In 3:6 a bookkeeping term is used. Abraham's faith was “accounted to him for righteousness.” His faith was put down on the “right” side of the ledger.

The watch cry of the Protestant Reformation was 3:11— “The just shall live by faith.” Paul says flatly that there is only one way to have standing or approval with God. The law was never able to do it. Faith can.

In 3:24 the law is characterized as a temporary stage of religious development. Paul uses the figure of a Greek slave, the “pedagogue,” to describe the role of the law. The pedagogue led the child to the school. There the teacher took over. Paul says the law likewise brings the searcher, the student, the disciple to Jesus, the Teacher.

Paul's “infirmity of the flesh” (4:13) is never revealed. This disability, illness, or handicap, however, was not allowed to divert attention from the message he had to deliver.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Galatians 3). Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan.**

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