

# Galatians 3 Commentary

PREVIOUS

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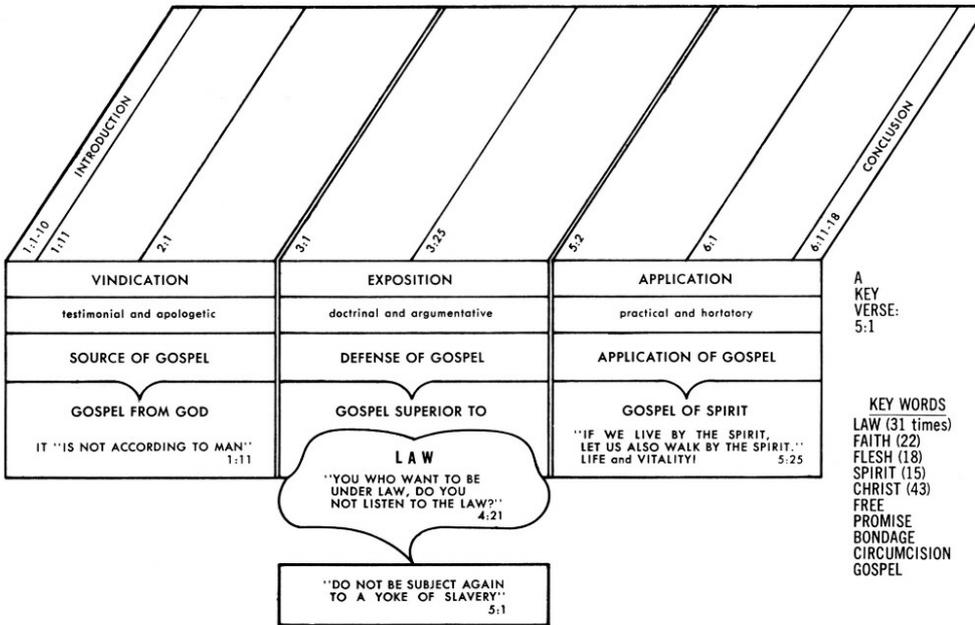
To go directly to that verse

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**Abraham believed God (Gal 3:6,16, Ge 15:5,6+)**

"Magna Charta of spiritual emancipation" Favorite epistle of the Reformers.



MAGNA CARTA OF SPIRITUAL EMANCIPATION  
 Click chart to enlarge  
 Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
 Another Overview Chart - [Galatians - Charles Swindoll](#)

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SUMMARY CHART: EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS							
Gospel of Grace Defended		Gospel of Grace Explained			Gospel of Grace Applied		
Defense of the Gospel Gal 1:1-2:21		Freedom from Legalism Gal 3:1-4:31			Freedom to Love and to Serve Gal 5:1-6:18		
Labor		Liberty			Life		
Authority Not Opinion		Freedom Not Bondage			Spirit Not Flesh		
Personal Autobiography		Doctrinal Accuracy			Practical Application		
Paul the Apostle (Gal 1:1-24)	Paul's Authority (Gal 2:1-21)	Justified by Faith not Works (Gal 3:1-9)	Justified by Faith not the Law (Gal 3:10-4:20)	Grace and Law Cannot Co-Exist (Gal 4:21-31)	Position and Practice of Liberty (Gal 5:1-15)	Power of Liberty (Gal 5:16-26)	Performance in Liberty (Gal 6:1-18)
Vindication		Exposition			Application		
Testimonial and Apologetic		Doctrinal and Argumentative			Practical and Hortatory		
Biographical Explanation		Doctrinal Exposition			Practical Exhortation		
Authentication of Liberty		Argumentation for Liberty			Application of Liberty		
<b>Style or Tone:</b> Vigorous, blunt, aggressive, direct, corrective, urgent, brief, righteous anger, strong words							
<b>Theme:</b> Justification by Faith and not by Works of the Law							
<b>Author:</b> Paul in large letters (Gal 6:11)							

**Recipients:** Churches in Galatia (Gal 1:2) (Most likely the Southern Region)

**Christ in Galatians:** Jesus is the Source and Power for the believer's New Life. (Gal 2:20, 5:16)

**CONTRAST OF GRACE AND LAW**

<b>LAW</b>	<b>GRACE</b>
The law prohibits	Grace invites and gives
The law condemns the sinner	Grace redeems the sinner.
The law says DO	Grace says IT IS DONE.
The law says, Continue to be holy	Grace says, It is finished.
The law curses	Grace blesses
The law slays the sinner	Grace makes the sinner alive.
The law shuts every mouth before God	Grace opens the mouth to praise God.
The law condemns the best man	Grace saves the worst man.
The law says, pay what you owe	Grace says, I freely forgive you all.
The law says "the wages of sin is death"	Grace says, "the gift of God is eternal life."
The law says, "the soul that sins shall die"	Grace says, Believe and live.
The law reveals sin	Grace atones for sin.
By the law is the knowledge of sin	By grace is redemption from sin.
The law was given by Moses	Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
The law demands obedience	Grace bestows and gives power to obey.
The law was written on stone	Grace is written on the tables of the heart.
The law was done away in Christ	Grace abides forever.
The law puts us under bondage	Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.

**CONTRASTS IN GALATIANS**

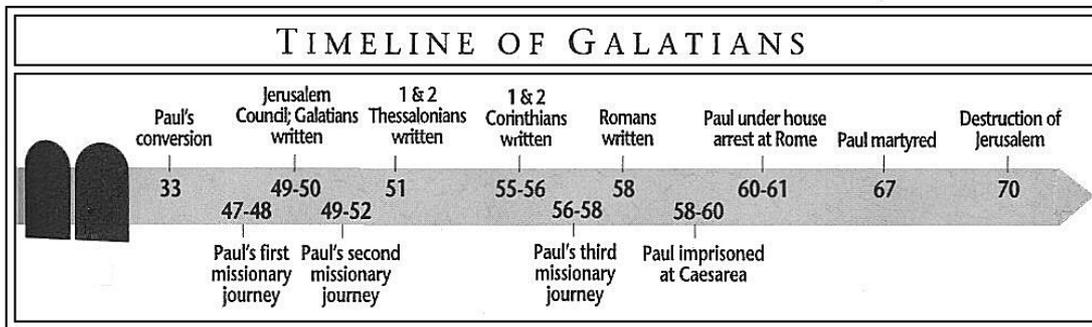
(From Irving Jensen & Merrill Unger)

<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>THE LOWER</b>	<b>THE HIGHER</b>
<b>1-2</b>	Lost in Adam all die Physically in Adam Another Gospel (false) Man's Reasoning	Saved in Christ all live Spiritually in Christ The Genuine Gospel God's Revelation
<b>3-4</b>	Law Works curse of death Condemnation by Works Servants in Bondage (Defeat) Old Covenant (Symbolized by Hagar)	Grace Faith blessing of life Justification by Faith Sons in Freedom (Victory) New Covenant (Symbolized by Sarah)
<b>5-6</b>	Living in the Flesh Works of the Flesh Falling from grace World or self object of glorying	Walking by the Spirit Fruit of the Spirit Standing Firm in Grace The Cross the sole object of glorying

## **An Outline of Galatians - [D Edmond Hiebert](#)**

### **DOCTRINAL: THE EXPOSITION OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (3:1-4:31)**

1. The elaboration of the doctrine of justification (Galatians 3:1-4:7)
  - a. The nature of justification as by faith, not law (3:1-14)
    - i. The inconsistency of their conduct (Galatians 3:1-5)
      - a. The question about their turning from the crucified Christ (Galatians 3:1)
      - b. The question about the beginning of their Christian life (Galatians 3:2)
      - c. The question about their method of perfection (Galatians 3:3)
      - d. The question about their sufferings as believers (Galatians 3:4)
      - e. The question about the basis of God's work among them (Galatians 3:5)
    - ii. The example of Abraham's justification (Galatians 3:6-9)
      - a. The means of Abraham's justification (Galatians 3:6)
      - b. The identity of the sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)
      - c. The announcement to Abraham concerning Gentile justification by faith (Galatians 3:8)
      - d. The sharers in the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:9)
    - iii. The deliverance from law-works through Christ (Galatians 3:10-14)
      - a. The curse upon those under law-works (Galatians 3:10)
      - b. The inability of law-works to justify (Galatians 3:11-12)
      - c. The deliverance from the curse through Christ (Galatians 3:13-14)
        1. The fact of our deliverance through Christ (Galatians 3:13a)
        2. The means of our deliverance from the curse (Galatians 3:13b)
        3. The purpose in our deliverance from the curse (Galatians 3:14)
  - b. The limitations of the law and its relations to faith (3:15-4:7)
    - i. The covenant with Abraham unaltered by the law (3:15-18)
      - a. The illustration of a man's covenant as binding (Galatians 3:15)
      - b. The fact illustrated is the divine promise to Abraham (Gal 3:16)
      - c. The application of the principle of an unalterable covenant (Gal 3:17-18)
        1. The law did not alter the promise (Galatians 3:17)
        2. The inheritance is not through law but promise (Galatians 3:18)
    - ii. The true place and purpose of the law (3:19-29)
      - a. The temporary nature of the law (Galatians 3:19-20)
        1. The reason for the adding of the law (Galatians 3:19a)
        2. The time limit for the law (Galatians 3:19b)
        3. The manner of the establishment of the law (Galatians 3:19c-20)
      - b. The inability of the law to produce life (Galatians 3:21-22)
        1. The law not contrary to the promise (Galatians 3:21a)
        2. The law unable to produce life (Galatians 3:21b)
        3. The Scripture shut up all to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:22)
      - c. The law as a child-leader to Christ with His blessings (Galatians 3:23-29)
        1. The old position under law (Galatians 3:23-24)
          - a. The position of confinement under law (Galatians 3:23)
          - b. The function of the law as child-leader to Christ (Galatians 3:24)
        2. The new position in Christ (Galatians 3:25-29)
          - a. The nature of the new position (Galatians 3:25-26)
          - b. The entry into the new life (Galatians 3:27)
          - c. The effect of the new life (Galatians 3:28)
          - d. The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:29)



Click to Enlarge  
Source: Ryrie Study Bible Notes

### Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

Greek - o anoetoi Galatai tis humas ebaskanen (3SAAI) ois kat ophthalmous Iesous Christos proegrae (3SAPI) estauromenos (RPP)

Amplified: O you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians! Who has fascinated or bewitched or cast a spell over you, unto whom—right before your very eyes—Jesus Christ (the Messiah) was openly and graphically set forth and portrayed as crucified?

Barclay O senseless Galatians, who has put the evil eye on you—you before whose very eyes Jesus Christ was placarded upon his cross?

Phillips O you dear idiots of Galatia, who saw Jesus Christ the crucified so plainly, who has been casting a spell over you?

Wuest O, unreflecting Galatians, who bewitched you,12 before whose eyes Jesus Christ was placarded publicly as the Crucified One? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified!

GNT Galatians 3:1 νητοι Γαλται, τς μς βσκανεν, ος κατ φθαλμος ησος Χριστος προεγρφη σταυρωμνος;

NLT Galatians 3:1 Oh, foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.

KJV Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

ESV Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

ASV Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?

CSB Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified?

NIV Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

NKJ Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

NRS Galatians 3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified!

YLT Galatians 3:1 O thoughtless Galatians, who did bewitch you, not to obey the truth -- before whose eyes Jesus Christ was described before among you crucified?

NAB Galatians 3:1 O stupid Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?

NJB Galatians 3:1 You stupid people in Galatia! After you have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ crucified, right in front of your eyes, who has put a spell on you?

GWN Galatians 3:1 You stupid people of Galatia! Who put you under an evil spell? Wasn't Christ Jesus' crucifixion clearly described to you?

BBE Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians, by what strange powers have you been tricked, to whom it was made clear that Jesus Christ was put to death on the cross?

- **Foolish:** Ga 3:3 De 32:6 1Sa 13:13 Mt 7:26 Lu 24:25 Eph 5:15 1Ti 6:4 \*marg:
- **who has bewitched you:** Ga 1:6 4:9 5:7,8 Mt 24:24 Ac 8:9-11 2Co 11:3,13-15 Eph 4:14 2Th 2:9-12 2Pe 2:18 Rev 2:20 13:13,14 18:3
- **that ye should not obey the truth** (Only in [Greek Textus Receptus](#)) - Ga 2:14 5:7 Ac 6:7 Ro 2:8 6:17 10:16 2Co 10:5 2Th 1:8 Heb 5:9 Heb 11:8 1Pe 1:22 4:17
- **Jesus Christ:** 1Co 1:23,24 2:2 11:26 Eph 3:8
- [Galatians 3: The Purpose of the Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-3: Whatever Happened to Holy Spirit?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched: An Argument from Experience](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3:1: Men Bewitched](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians Commentary](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## O FOOLISH GALATIANS

In Galatians 3-4 we come to the **doctrinal portion** of the letter. In this section Paul gives a Scriptural defense of the Gospel. He does this by addressing the Galatians themselves, using their example of inconsistent conduct to launch into an exposition of justification by faith. And so we see Paul proceed to show the superiority of the Gospel over Judaism, the Spirit over the flesh (Gal 3:3), faith over works (Gal 3:2), being justified over being held by the law (Gal 3:8, 11), being blessed over being cursed (Gal 3:9, 10) and finally the superiority of the promise in Abraham over the command through Moses (Gal 3:12-14)

**O foolish Galatians!** (ESV) - Sadly, the NAS omits the very first word of the Greek text which is "O" an interjection discussed below. The English word [foolish](#) means devoid of good sense or judgment, lacking in sense, judgment, or discretion; totally unsound, lacking or marked by lack of intellectual acuity; unwise; silly | resulting from folly or stupidity | ridiculous or absurd; not worthy of consideration | weak-minded; simple.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, any and all of the preceding definitions of **foolish** might also be applied to us as believers when we make the foolish choice to futilely attempt to live a supernatural life depending on our natural power and/or we try to follow a set of rules or regulations to guide our behavior in a way we think will be pleasing to God. It's called legalism and it will blunt the transforming power of grace and quench the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. And then we wonder why we are not experiencing the abundant life of John 10:10! If that describes your experience beloved, then Paul's wise words in Galatians are for you. Eat this book for breakfast, lunch and dinner until so you can "digest" its rich truths asking God to set you free in Christ to live in the power of His Spirit daily, all for the glory of the Father. Amen

**O** (5599) (o) is an interjection used as a marker of personal address and in some context (as Gal 3:1) to express emotion at the beginning of a clause. " In context the following section is highly charged emotionally." (NET Note) "**O**" is used in a similar sense in a gentle rebuke by Jesus in Luke 24:25. **BDAG** - 1. marker of personal address O, O ... ! (often before the voc., in accord with the Koine and with Semitic usage, but never used when calling upon God. a. mostly expressing emotion (at the beginning of a clause; b. without emotion (in accord w. Attic usage, (Acts 1:1) 2. an exclamatory utterance, O, Oh, How ... ! etc. (in this use it can also be written w;). In modern versions the term is frequently rendered in some functional equivalent, e.g. 'I stand amazed at' (so Phillips: Ro 11:33, or w. the punctuation mark (!) serving as a semantic component.

**O - 20x in 20v** - O and Oh. This Greek letter (o) is also translated "Omega" but Strong gave it a different # - [5198](#) in Rev. 1:8; Rev. 21:6; Rev. 22:13 presumably because it was part of the Name of Jesus.

Matt. 15:28; Matt. 17:17 ((ESV = **O** faithless); Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41 (ESV = **O** faithless); Lk. 24:25; Acts 1:1 (ESV = **O** Theophilus); Acts 13:10 (KJV = **O** full of all subtilty and all mischief); Acts 18:14; Acts 27:21 (YLT = '**O** men - having hearkened to me") ; Rom. 2:1 (ESV = **O** man); Rom. 2:3; Rom. 9:20; Rom. 11:33; Gal. 3:1 (ESV = **O** foolish Galatians!) ; 1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Tim. 6:20; Jas. 2:20 (KJV = **O** vain man); Rev. 1:8; Rev. 21:6; Rev. 22:13

**O** is used about 37x in the Septuagint often for "Alas" (0162) -

Gen. 27:20; Num. 24:23; 2 Ki. 3:10; 6:5, 15; 20:3; Job 19:21; Ps. 116:4, 16; 118:25; Prov. 2:13; 6:6; 8:4; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 6:6; 14:13; 22:13, 18; 23:1; 32:17; 34:5; 50:24; Ezek. 22:3; 24:6; 30:2; 34:2; Dan. 5:16; 6:20; Jon. 4:2; Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:9, 15; Zeph. 3:1; Zech. 2:6; 11:17. My favorite use is in Jeremiah 32:17-note '**Ah (Lxx = O!)** Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,

**Don Anderson** writes that "There is a strong delusion among believers that is so prevalent, and that is the feeling that: FRUIT IN MY CHRISTIAN LIFE IS BY MY OWN EFFORTS or FRUIT IS BY THE FLESH ([SEE HALVERSON'S NOTE BELOW](#)). It is the thought that if we perform certain things, we will become spiritual. It is LIVING BY THE LAW that PROGRESS COMES BY PERFORMANCE (cf Jesus' teaching in Jn 12:24-25)...We now come to the **DOCTRINAL SECTION** where he will teach us of the foolishness of feeling that we can gain merit in God's sight and that our relationship to Him is all of grace and not of law. It is as if: REDEMPTION is 2/3 the WORK OF GOD and the remaining 1/3, the LIVING THE LIFE PHASE, is the WORK OF MAN. This DIVISION OF LABOR, so to speak, is diabolical and destructive of grace. It has prompted Paul's strongest language in these verses that are before us. In summary, we must understand theologically that: SALVATION, SANCTIFICATION, and GLORIFICATION are all an act of grace on God's part. That the: CONCEPTION, CONTINUITY, and CONSUMMATION of life is indeed of grace. That time between regeneration and resurrection is a critical time to understand that we are victorious not by the works of the law but by OUR FAITH IN THE ADEQUACY OF JESUS CHRIST TO LIVE OUT HIS LIFE IN US. It is NOT: 2/3 a work of God and 1/3 our living the life. You can say a lot of things but do not touch the grace of God. ([Notes](#))

**Gutzke** adds the false teachers in Galatia "were saying, "You began your Christian life by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that was good. Then you received the Holy Spirit of God and you were blessed in Him, and that was good. But now there are things you must do." They outlined regulations. If the believer would keep all these regulations he would be good; then he would be doing what God wanted him to do."

**You foolish Galatians** - This is the first time Paul has addressed the Galatians personally since Galatians 1:11 and this time he uses the impersonal name "Galatians" rather than "brethren" which helps set the tone for what follows. They are not lacking in intelligence but in obedience to the truth of the Gospel! **Amplified** = "O you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians!" **Phillips** = "'O you dear idiots of Galatia." **New English Bible** = "You stupid Galatians." In using the term "**foolish Galatians**" Paul is **not** saying that the Galatians were naturally stupid, senseless, but that they had **not** used their mind ([nous](#)), for if they had they would never have allowed themselves to be led away from **the truth of the Gospel**. (Gal 2:5+, Gal 2:14+) "The tone is certainly not that of contempt, nor is it so much that of indignation as of [reproach](#)." (W E Vine) Jesus addresses the two disciples on the road to Emmaus...

And He said to them, "**O foolish** men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! (Luke 24:25+)

**MacArthur** - Those believers were especially foolish because they had been so carefully and fully taught, having been on many occasions over the years privileged to sit under the teaching of Paul himself, whose very heartbeat was the gospel of God's grace.

**Vine** gives us a preview of coming attractions (so to speak) - Up to this point the apostle had dealt only indirectly with the difficulty in the Galatian churches. Now he begins to reason with them directly, first from their own experience, Gal 3:1-5, and then from Scripture, Gal 3:6-29, 4:17, then from their experience, Gal 4:8-20+, and from Scripture again, Gal 4:21-31+, concerning their defection, threatened or actual, from the true Gospel.

**Wiersbe** - Paul used six different arguments to prove that God saves sinners through faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. He began with the personal argument (Gal. 3:1-5), in which he asked the Galatians to recall their personal experience with Christ when they were saved. Then he moved into the scriptural argument (Gal 3:6-14), in which he quoted six Old Testament passages to prove his point. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Bob DeWaay** - In calling the Galatians **foolish** or stupid, Paul was not casting aspersions on their intelligence. No one can read the Letter to the Galatians without realizing that Paul presupposed a high level of intellectual ability on the part of his readers. The

Galatians were not lacking in IQ but in spiritual discernment. ([Galatians 3:13-14 Cursed by Works or Blessed by Faith](#))

The **Judaizers** had infiltrated the church and were undermining the very core of Christianity, namely, **justification by faith alone in Christ alone**. They were teaching that to be Christians, Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes and obey the Mosaic Law including circumcision. Appalled that the Galatians would tolerate, much less embrace, such heresy, Paul called them anoetos or people **without understanding, reason, and thought**, people who had abandoned the very truth of the glorious Gospel they had been taught by one of the greatest teachers in the history of the church. The believers in Galatia were not stupid but had simply failed to use their spiritual intelligence when faced by the unscriptural, Gospel-destroying teaching of the Judaizers. In a word they had failed to use their heads!

**Hendriksen** asks rhetorically "is not everyone **foolish** who barter the truth of God for the lie of Satan, peace for unrest, assurance for doubt, joy for fear, and freedom for bondage?... Paul was probably not thinking about the sorcerer who had brought the Galatians under the baleful influence of his evil eye, but rather of the Judaizer who had cast a spell upon them not by means of his eyes but by means of his words, his teaching; specifically, by telling them that faith in Christ must be supplemented by Mosaic ritualism. And the Galatians, by yielding to this influence, had failed to understand that a Christ supplemented is a Christ supplanted ([New Testament Commentary](#))

**Wuest on O foolish Galatians** - It is an expression of surprise mingled with indignation. The situation in Galatia will help us understand this outcry. There was on the one hand, the native and national spirit joined to the power of the priesthood and the temples, the spirit of Orientalism, that of stagnation, ignorance and superstition. On the other hand, there was the desire for education, the recognition that Greece and Rome stood on a higher intellectual level than was afforded by the native religions and customs, and in addition to that, a revolt against the ignorant and enslaving native superstitions. The people of the province of Galatia are those who have shaken off the benumbing and degrading influence of the native magic and superstition. They are those who judge for themselves as to the real values in life, and lay claim to insight and wisdom. Paul accuses them with failing to use that insight and wisdom, that appreciation of the better things, when he uses the Greek word translated **foolish**. The word is **anoetos**. It denotes the stupidity that arises from deadness and impotence of intellect. It means "lacking in the power of perception, unwise." It refers to one who does not reflect. The word speaks of failure to use one's powers of perception. The Galatians, Paul says, were certainly not using their heads. The word is used with an ethical reference as the faculty of moral judgment. Thus the word indicates a failure to use one's powers of perception, that failure being due to a moral defect. It is always true, as it was with the Galatians, that the act of a Christian who embraces false doctrine, is due to sin in his life. The Galatian defection was not due to any fickleness of the Gauls. They are not prominent in the picture. Paul sends this stinging rebuke therefore, "O Galatians, who fail in the first characteristic of the Galatians, namely, the ability to use their heads and to appreciate the finer values of life." ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse online](#))

**Spurgeon** - With very great enthusiasm the Galatians received the gospel when Paul preached it to them. They seem to have been a very warm-hearted but fickle people, and Paul found, to his great grief, that while he was away from them certain false teachers came in and turned them aside from the gospel that he had delivered to them. Paul does not compliment them on being a very "thoughtful," "educated," "cultured" people; he does not care an atom about that matter. Because they had forsaken the simple truth of the gospel, he says, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" Those are hard words, Paul! Why did he not say, "Who has led you forward into more advanced views?" No, he calls it witchery, the work of the devil, and it is nothing better. The wisdom of it is no better than the trickery of some old witch. If you take your eyes off Christ, it must be witchcraft that makes you do it. There is such glory, such beauty, such perfection, such wisdom, such divinity in Christ crucified that, if you turn from that sight to anything else—no matter how scientific and learned it may be—you are "foolish" indeed, and somebody has "bewitched you."

**Eadie** says foolish "describes acting in a spirit which manifests the absence of wisdom."

**Bartlett** - In giving head to false teachers, the Galatians had, indeed, shown the grossest stupidity.

**Foolish** (453) (**anoetos** from **a** = alpha-negative = makes following word exact opposite + **noéo** = comprehend from nous = mind, intellect, understanding, thought) means literally "not having a mind" or not thought of (not within the province of thought) and thus describes a person without understanding, dull-witted. **Anoetos** describes one with a unwillingness to use one's mental faculties to understand. It is not a lack of intelligence as much as it is a mental laziness and carelessness. It describes a person who can think but fails to use their power of perception. **Trench** adds that "in the **anoetos** there is always a moral fault lying behind the intellectual; the  $\nu\sigma$ , the highest knowing power in man, the organ by which divine things are apprehended and known, being the ultimate seat of the error (Luke 24:25, Gal. 3:1, 3; 1 Tim. 6:9; Titus 3:3)." **Anoetos** speaks of someone who is lacking in discernment. The Galatians had been taught the truth of the Gospel and Jesus, but they failed to examine the teachings of the Judaizers in the light of this truth with the result that the Judaizers led them out of truth and into bondage.

**Related Resource:**

- [Wayne Barber's in depth discussion of foolish](#)

The believers in Galatia (cp Jesus use of *anoetos* in Lk 24:25) were not stupid but had simply failed to use their spiritual intelligence when faced by the unscriptural, gospel-destroying teaching of the Judaizers. They were not using their heads!

**Vincent** - [Nous](#) is used by Paul mainly with an ethical reference, as the faculty of moral judgment. See on Rom. 7:23. *Anoetos* therefore indicates a folly which is the outgrowth of a moral defect.

**Henry Morris** - Unlike most of his other epistles, Galatians includes no prayer requests from Paul, nor any commendations of the church and its ministry. Paul had preached the doctrines of salvation by grace and Christian liberty so clearly and effectively when he had first established these churches that it was hard for him to understand how they could so quickly and easily be led into false doctrine. This is a problem today as well. Professing Christians are being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14+), not only with legalism but also with evolutionism, emotionalism, libertinism, and many other unscriptural heresies. Many, like the Galatians, have been "**bewitched**" by clever persuasion into such deceptions. The Greek word for "bewitched" is used only this once in the New Testament, and does not necessarily refer to witchcraft. The connotation is "fascinated" or "deceived."

**Harrison** - Law demands works; grace requires faith. As law leaves us helplessly on Our Side, impotent to transfer us to His Side, it is evident that all works required by law are equally impotent. As grace alone has positioned us on His Side, so faith lays hold of all the riches that are ours by His saving and sustaining grace. ([Galatians 3:2-3 Faith versus Works](#))

## **BEWITCHED BEFUDDLED**

**Befuddle** means to be confusing or perplexing to; to cause to be unable to think clearly; to muddle or stupefy with or as if with drink. It is as if the Galatians had "drunk" of the Judaizer "cool-aid" and were now confused and perplexed regarding the truth of the Gospel.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, be very careful reading many books other than the Bible (cf Eccl 12:12). Be especially careful reading so-called "Christian books." Only God's Word is inspired. Only God's Word will keep you on the straight and narrow path of the truth of the Gospel. Only God's Word can partake of the promise in Isaiah 55:11! And Peter tells us the Bible is enough for God "has granted to us everything (HOW MUCH?) pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." (2 Pe 1:3+). Similarly, be very wary of any "new teaching" that comes into your church making big promises. I have seen this method used by the evil one to disrupt and divide several churches. In one situation I even tried to draw the elders attention back to the Word of God to compare with what was being taught. Guess what? They did not heed the advice! And guess what? Several hundred families ended up leaving the church over this issue. Punch line? Stay in the Word and keep the Word as your compass and guide and you won't be led astray or befuddled regarding the truth of the Gospel!

**Martin Luther** - Although I am a doctor of divinity, and have preached Christ and fought His battles for a long time, I know from personal experience how difficult it is to hold fast to the truth. I cannot always shake off Satan. I cannot always apprehend Christ as the Scriptures portray Him. Sometimes the devil distorts Christ to my vision. But thanks be to God, who keeps us in His Word, in faith, and in prayer.

**Who has bewitched you** - This is like we might say to someone today "What has gotten into you?" or "Have you lost your wits?" The pronoun **WHO** is singular which could allude to a single prominent individual or to the evil one himself as the instigator of the bewitching teaching. **Amplified** = Who has fascinated or bewitched or cast a spell over you "**Barclay** = "who has put the evil eye on you." **Barclay** comments that "The Greeks had a great fear of a spell cast by the evil eye. Time and again, private letters end with a sentence such as this: 'Above all I pray that you may be in health unharmed by the evil eye and faring prosperously.'" **Wuest** adds **bewitched** is "from the popular superstition of the evil eye. The word denoted either the fascination of an evil eye or some malignant influence akin to it. The infatuation of the Galatians is attributed to the baneful effect of some mysterious power of evil." ([Ibid](#))

**Ryrie** - Gal 3:1-2 To return to law and negate the necessity of the death of Christ (Gal 2:21) was to act as **ibewitched**. Works of the law did not give them the Holy Spirit.

**Gromacki**: "In a sense, the Galatians were victims of an evil spell. They must have been hypnotized or awe struck by the forceful oratory of the key Judaizer." ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Bartlett** - "Who hath bewitched you with his evil eye of sorcery to exchange the priceless Gospel of grace for a worthless

**gospel of works?** Many unstable folk are fairly begging for a ride in every newfangled substitute for the Gospel that comes along (WOE! THAT'S A BIT IN YOUR FACE!). Almost every day we hear that gullible victims are being swindled out of funds by smooth-spoken crooks who induce them to invest in worthless enterprises. Put no trust in anyone who seeks to lure you away from a simple reliance upon your all-sufficient SAVIOUR (AND HIS ALL SUFFICIENT WORD OF TRUTH!). It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that subjection to works is rejection of grace. Self-righteousness is spiritually fatal (IT BLUNTS THE WORK OF GRACE AND THE SPIRIT). He who turns his back upon CHRIST as his one and only Mediator with GOD loses everything." ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**Spurgeon** - The Galatians wanted to go back to circumcision and to the old sacrifices of the law. Paul calls it witchery, for in his day it was believed that men could cast an evil eye upon one another and thus work evil upon their fellow men. It seemed to Paul to be something like that—as if the devil himself were in it and came and turned men away from Christ Jesus, to go back to trusting in the law and its obsolete ceremonies. These Galatians thought that they had been led by reason and guided by the learning of their teachers, but Paul calls it witchery. "Who has bewitched you?" he asks, as if anything that led a man to trust in his own works should be as much abhorred as the incantations of a witch. "Who has bewitched you?" It is a dangerous state, it is a devilish snare to be brought into—to be led to trust to frames, and feelings, and experiences, and doings, and prayings, or to anything else but Christ. It is a strange thing that those who have seen Christ should ever go back to these things....Even those that are converted, or appear to be so, can become suddenly bewitched with error of one kind or another, just as in families children are suddenly taken ill with certain complaints that seem incidental to childhood. If parents had never heard of such things before, they would be astonished. They would suppose that they must lose their children when such unaccountable diseases suddenly appeared in them, and yet they survive. In the family of Christ, certain epidemics break out at times. We cannot tell why they should come just then. At first, perhaps, we are puzzled and perplexed to think that such diseases should come at all. But they do come, and hence it is well to be on our guard against them.

**Bewitched** meant to bring evil on a person by false praise or to mislead by an "evil eye" and so to charm or "bewitch" (Webster = to charm, to fascinate, to cast a spell over, to attract as if by the power of the "evil eye") and in the present context to lead into the evil doctrine of "faith plus something else" (works of the law, circumcision, etc). Remember that believers are set free from the **law** (read Ro 6:14-note, Ro 7:4, 5, 6-note, Ro 8:1-note, Ro 8:2, 3-note, Ro 8:4-note) Paul was saying that the Galatian believers had yielded to these "magicians" and had come under the power of untruth (the law is bondage, the Spirit of Christ is freedom, liberty, Jn 8:36).

**Bewitched** (940) (**baskaino**) originally meant "slander, speak ill of one," to cause harm with unfavorable words. In the NT it came to mean to subject a person to an occult influence, to "blight by the evil eye," or "cast the evil eye"(see [Wikipedia](#)). The thought was to put a spell on someone. **Baskaino** means to charm or fascinate in a misleading way, as by flattery, false promises, or occultic power, and clearly suggests the use of feeling over fact, emotion over clear understanding of truth. "Who tickled your fancy?" Paul asked rhetorically, fully aware of the answer. "Who could have dragged you away from the truth of the Gospel which I had so clearly taught?" "How often we feel that way today about vacillating Christians or prospects who suddenly turn away!

**BDAG** on **baskaino** - (1) to exert an evil influence through the eye, bewitch, as with the 'evil eye' tina, someone...(in secular literature it was said) one can ward off baskani,a by spitting 3 times. (2) . to be resentful of something enjoyed by another, envy (Dt 28:54, 56)

**NIDNTT** adds - The effect of the spell, if the evil eye is detected at the time, could be averted by spitting, and some hold that this was in Paul's mind in his use of **ekptuo** (literally = to spit out) in Gal. 4:14 (NAS "*loathe*").

**Thayer** on **baskaino** - 1. to speak ill of one, to slander, traduce him (Demosthenes 8, 19 (94, 19); Aelian v. h. 2, 13, etc.). 2. to bring evil on one by feigned praise or an evil eye, to charm, bewitch one (Aristotle, probl. 20, 34 (p. 926{b}, 24); Theocritus, 6, 39; Aelian nat. an. 1, 35); hence, of those who lead away others into error by wicked arts

**Baskaino** is used elsewhere only 2 times in the Septuagint - Deuteronomy 28:54 (in the context of the Curses specifically when they are besieged and starved as occurred in 586BC and 70AD) = The man among you who is by nature tender and sensitive **will turn against** (Lxx - baskaino - **shall look with an evil eye upon**) his brother, his beloved wife, and his remaining children." The second use in Dt 28:56 is in a similar context where "the refined and delicate woman....**shall be hostile toward** (Lxx = baskaino - **shall look with an evil eye upon**) the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter."

**Baskaino** "comes from an early superstition based on "the evil eye": a person might be enticed to stare at someone who could bewitch him or cast a spell on him through the magic arts and then would do things totally foreign to his natural behavior. Bruce suggests the translation, "Who has hypnotized you?" Paul's use of this word does not imply he believed in such a thing; he was using the word's association with ignorant superstition to shame them." (Kenneth Boles - College Press NIV Commentary)

Although **bewitched** can carry the idea of sorcery, that is not the idea in Galatians 3:1. The Galatians were not victims of a magical

spell or incantation, but were misled pupils of teachings they should have instantly recognized as false. They were willing victims who succumbed to the flesh-pleasing works righteousness of the Judaizers (cp Paul's clear teaching - Gal 2:16+). They had fallen under the spell of those who had distorted (transformed it into something of opposite character) "the Gospel of Christ." (Gal 1:7+)

Paul had just stated that "if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" which of course He did not, but that was the effect of this **faith + works** heresy which was a Gospel "contrary to that which we have preached." Gal 1:8, see Gal 1:6, 7, 9, 11). There "different Gospel" (Gal 1:6+) was a belief in Christ plus human works and as William Hendricksen said "A *supplemented* Christ is a *supplanted* Christ."

## **PAUL'S CRYSTAL CLEAR PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED**

**Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified - Amplified** = "Jesus Christ (the Messiah) was openly and graphically set forth and portrayed as crucified" "How could you have missed this truth, which I Paul clearly taught preaching "Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor 1:23). This was always Paul's primary goal in presentation of the Gospel even as he reminded the saints at Corinth that he had "determined to know nothing among (them) except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The official notice of Christ's death had been posted so to speak (see discussion below on [prographo](#))! And so the yielding of the Galatians to the false teaching of the Judaizers was inexcusable

**Spurgeon** adds that Paul had presented the truth of Christ crucified "with great plainness. The Greek word [prographo](#) has to do with a program or a proclamation. It is as good as to say, "**I have set Christ before you as plainly as if I had printed a great notice and stuck it up before your eyes. I have put the letters down in capitals.**" Paul says, "As a king, when he makes a proclamation, puts it on the walls and calls attention to it, so I have set forth Christ before you. I have not talked of Him in a mystical way, so that you did not know what I meant, but I have set Him forth. I have said of Him that He suffered in our stead (IN OUR PLACE) and was made a curse for us, as it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.' "

**Bartlett** reminds us that practically we must never forget "that it was through His death on Calvary that JESUS has become our living LORD. Regardless of how many [fulsome](#) tributes of praise we bestow on CHRIST as the matchless Teacher, Leader and moral Example for men to follow, we dishonor Him if we refuse to acknowledge Him as the Son of GOD Who died for sinners. The CHRIST GLORIFIED is the CHRIST CRUCIFIED. The One to be lifted up BY US must be the One lifted up FOR US and for all who will put their trust in Him as [the atoning Sacrifice](#). ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**Wiersbe** - "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." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Guzik** explains that by using the phrase **before whose eyes** (of the Galatians) "Paul did not mean that the Galatians literally saw the crucifixion of Jesus or even that they had a spiritual vision of it. He meant that the truth of Jesus and Him crucified (cf 1 Cor 1:23) and the greatness of His ([atonement](#)) work (on the Cross) for them (as their [substitutionary sacrifice](#)) was laid out for them so clearly (see [prographo](#)) that they could see it. In fact watching the death of Jesus on the Cross meant nothing to hundreds, if not thousands, who saw Jesus dying on the Cross and only mocked Him! ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Publicly portrayed** makes us think of a message on a large billboard which is easily seen, clearly displayed and fully understood! This vision of the Cross and the centrality of the truth of the finished work of Christ had become "fuzzy" to the Galatians because of the false teaching. Instead of the Gospel message of JESUS ONLY, they had begun to think that the message was JESUS PLUS, especially works of the law such as circumcision (cf Gal 5:1-4+).

**Lightfoot** says [prographo](#) "is the common word to describe all public notices or proclamations....This placard ought to have kept their eyes from wandering, and so to have acted as a charm against all Judaic sorceries."

**Marvin Vincent** paraphrases Paul's seeming play on the word "eye" - "Who could have succeeded in bringing you under the spell of an evil eye, when directly before your own eyes stood revealed the crucified Christ?"

**THOUGHT** - "We need to warn people to keep their eyes on Jesus (cf Heb 12:2) in order that they may not become "[fascinated](#)" ([Latin for casting a spell](#)) by the worldly allurements. When our eyes are filled with the bright shining of the **Light of the World** (Jn 8:12), we shall not be captivated by the dazzling neon signs of the world's pleasures. When we are following the Light, other little flashes may annoy us, but they will not divert us from the narrow way (Mt 7:13-14+) that leads to life and light eternal." (Ralph Earle in [Word Meanings in the New Testament](#))

**Spurgeon** adds "When we see Jesus clearly before us (**Publicly portrayed**), we won't be deceived. "If anything contrary to this comes before Him (JESUS), Paul does not timidly say, 'Everybody has a right to his

opinion'; but he says, 'Yes, they may have a right to their opinion, and so have I to mine; and my opinion is that any opinion which takes away from the glory of Christ's [substitutionary sacrifice](#) is a detestable opinion.' Get the real [atonement of Christ](#) thoroughly into your soul, and you will not be bewitched."

**Publicly portrayed** (written before) (4270) ([prographo](#) from **pró** = before, openly, plainly + **grapho** = write) means literally to write for public reading, publicly portrayed, announced on a poster. To write previously or before. Figuratively **prographo** means to announce or prescribe. The word was used to describe all public notices or proclamations and indicates a public announcement in which the validity of a particular fact or condition is proclaimed. **Prographo** is used of posting important official notices on a placard in the marketplace or other public location for citizens to read. Those who were summoned before courts of justice were said to be *progegramménoi*, posted up ahead of time, because they were cited by posting up their names in some public place. Even in our day the cases to be heard by a judge are written beforehand and appended in a public place in the courthouse. The word **prographo** is found in early secular documents where a father posted a proclamation that he would no longer be responsible for his son's debts (In contrast our Father has posted a proclamation called the **Gospel** promising to remit our debts completely based on the work of His Son!). **Prographo** was also used for putting up the announcement of an auction sale. Paul uses **prographo** to refer to what was written before in the Old Testament (Ro 15:4+ cp. "ungodly creepers" in Jude 1:4+ "beforehand marked out").

**Vine on prographo**- The apostle (in his words "**publicly displayed**") carries on his metaphor of the evil eye (*baskaino*); as a preventative of such mischief it was common to post up charms on the walls of houses, a glance at which was supposed to counteract any evil influence to which a person may have been subjected. Notwithstanding, he says in effect, that the fact that Christ had been crucified was placarded before your very eyes in our preaching, you have allowed yourselves to be overlooked, you have been fascinated by the enemies of the Cross of Christ, when you had only to look at Him to escape their malignant influence; cp. the interesting and instructive parallel in Nu 21:9 = "*And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.*" ([Collected Writings](#))

**Wuest** notes that Paul's use of **prographo** "does not here speak of the act of painting the crucified Christ on a placard for public notice, but of posting a public announcement to the effect that He was crucified. This Paul did in his preaching among the Galatians (cp 1 Cor 1:23, 2:2). This placarded notice of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus should have been enough to keep the eyes of the Galatians from wandering to the enticements of the Judaizers. The word crucified is in the [perfect tense](#). This speaks of the fact that the apostle is not speaking of the figure of a dead Christ on a crucifix, but of the risen, ascended Christ who had been crucified, who was alive, whose glorified body still bore the marks of the nails and the scars of the crown of thorns, and who is the living Saviour by virtue of His atoning work on the Cross. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse online](#))

Why is the crucifixion important to refute the false teaching of Judaizers who taught one needed to add to the finished work of Christ? It is the fact that when Christ was crucified, just before he died, He declared the glorious word [tetelestai](#) which means **IT IS FINISHED** and the redemption price for sinners has been **PAID IN FULL** so that the Gospel doors of salvation have been flung wide open to anyone who simply believes!

**Spurgeon** sums it up that the Galatians "had heard the plainest possible preaching from Paul and his companions. Jesus Christ had been so clearly set forth before them that they might, as it were, see Him as He hung upon the cross of Calvary. Yet, under some unhallowed spell, they turned aside from the faith of Christ."

**Ryken** on the [perfect tense](#) of **crucified** - The [perfect tense](#) denotes a past event that continues to have significance in the present. And if ever there was an event that called for the perfect tense, it was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified on a particular day, by particular men, outside a particular city, on a particular tree. If we had been there to witness his crucifixion, we could have reached out to touch the cross and picked up a splinter in our fingers. The crucifixion was a factual event in human history. On the cross, Jesus gave his life as the once-and-for-all atonement for sin. According to God's strict standard of justice, sin demanded the death penalty, which Jesus paid. By God's mercy, the sacrifice Jesus made was accepted as the full price for sin. This is what it means to portray Jesus Christ as crucified. But there is more. God proved that he accepted the sacrifice Jesus made by raising him from the dead. Therefore, to preach Christ having been crucified is not simply to preach him crucified; it is also to preach him risen. Jesus is no longer on the cross. At this very moment he is a risen and living Savior who is able to grant forgiveness to everyone who believes in him. This forgiveness goes all the way back to the cross, a past event with a present consequence. ([Reformed Expository Commentary - Galatians](#))

The [perfect tense](#) speaks of past completed action with ongoing effect or results. Indeed, will not the saving effect of the Cross of Christ endure eternally? Of course it will, praise God!

**Crucified** (4717) ([stauroo](#) from **stauros** = cross, in turn from **histemi** = to stand) means literally to nail or fasten to a cross and so to crucify -- literal death by nailing to and hanging from a cross (a stake). Latter in this same letter, in Gal 5:24+, Paul uses **stauroo** in a metaphorical sense to refer to crucifixion of the flesh (as a result of the literal crucifixion), of a believer's renouncing his old sinful way of living. Toward the end of this letter Paul again uses **stauroo** declaring "may it never be that I should

boast, except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal 6:14<sup>+</sup>)

**Stauroo** - 46x in 42v -

Matt. 20:19; 23:34; 26:2; 27:22f, 26, 31, 35, 38; 28:5; Mk. 15:13ff, 20, 24f, 27; 16:6; Lk. 23:21, 23, 33; 24:7, 20; Jn. 19:6, 10, 15f, 18, 20, 23, 41; Acts 2:36; 4:10; 1 Co. 1:13, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Co. 13:4; Gal. 3:1; 5:24; Gal 6:14; Rev. 11:8

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**Matthew Henry** summary (Gal 3:1-5) - Several things made the folly of the Galatian Christians worse. They had the doctrine of the cross preached, and the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified, and the nature of his sufferings, had been fully and clearly set forth. Had they been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, by the ministration of the law, or on account of any works done by them in obedience thereto? Was it not by their hearing and embracing the doctrine of faith in Christ alone for justification? Which of these had God owned with tokens of his favour and acceptance? It was not by the first, but the last. And those must be very unwise, who suffer themselves to be turned away from the ministry and doctrine which have been blessed to their spiritual advantage. Alas, that men should turn from the all-important doctrine of Christ crucified, to listen to useless distinctions, mere moral preaching, or wild fancies! The god of this world, by various men and means, has blinded men's eyes, lest they should learn to trust in a crucified Saviour. We may boldly demand where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are most evidently brought forth? whether among those who preach justification by the works of the law, or those who preach the doctrine of faith? Assuredly among the latter.

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Here is a summary of the "arguments" (truth) Paul uses to refute the Galatian heresies (error)...

- (1) The Galatian believers' own experience with the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:1,2,3,4)
- (2) The example of Abraham's faith and the blessing given to the Gentiles (Gal 3:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Ge 15:6, 12:3)
- (3) The curse of the Law (Gal 3:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, Dt 27:26, Hab 2:4, Lev 18:5, Dt 21:25)
- (4) The example of a human covenant ("will") (Gal 3:15, 16, 17, 18).
- (5) The purpose of the Law (Gal 3:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25)
- (6) The blessing to children of God (Gal 3:26, 27, 28, 29)

So this is why Paul argues from the OT example of Abraham (Gal 3:6, 7, 8, 9) - it was FAITH plus nothing that resulted in his justification. The **circumcision** that was commanded by God in Ge 17:9-11 was not until at least 14 years later (Ge 16:16 = 86yo, Ge 17:1 = 90yo). God had never intended for the physical act of circumcision to be an "end" in itself, but this is exactly what the Jews did with this command. They made it a "prerequisite" for salvation. They did what so many have done with God's Word over the years, focusing on the "letter" of the Law and missing the "spirit" of the law. God is primarily concerned about what men are like on the **inside** not the outside. He has always desired internal (heart) change over external (works). A good outward act is validated before God only when it honestly represents what is on the inside. (Cp Jer 17:10, Rev 2:23<sup>+</sup>). Right **external** behavior only pleases Him when it corresponds to right **internal** attitudes and motives (cp 1 Co 4:4,5, cf Jn 15:5).

## LAW AND GRACE

### THE FUNCTION

#### OF LAW

Based on works  
Gal 3:10

Our Guardian  
Gal 3:23, 4:2

Our Tutor  
Gal 3:24

#### OF GRACE

Based on faith  
Gal 3:11,12

Centered in Christ  
Gal 3:24

Our Certificate of Freedom  
Gal 4:30, 31

### THE EFFECT

#### OF LAW

Works put us under  
curse  
Gal 3:10

Keeps us for Faith  
Gal 3:23

Brings us to Christ  
Gal 3:24

#### OF GRACE

Justifies us by faith  
Gal 3:3, 24

Christ lives in us  
Gal 2:20

Adopts us as sons and  
heirs  
Gal 4:7

The Law functions to:

1. Declare our guilt
2. Drive us to Christ
3. Direct us in a life of obedience

But is powerless to save

\*\*Source: Believer's Study Bible - W A Criswell

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### **Oliver Greene - Law and Grace**

1. Under Law there was a dividing veil (Exodus 26:33) - Grace brought a rent veil (Hebrews 10:19-22).
2. Law blots out the sinner (Exodus 32:33) - Grace blots out the sinner's sin (Colossians 2:14).
3. The Law curses the offender (Galatians 3:10) - Grace covers the offender (Romans 4:7).
4. The Law cries out, "Do - and live!" (Deuteronomy 8:1) - Grace cries out, "It is done! It is finished! Receive Jesus and live!" (John 19:30; John 1:12).
5. The Law cries out, "Every mouth... stopped." (Romans 3:19) - Grace invites, "Every mouth opened." "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" (Romans 10:9). "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" (Romans 10:13).
6. The Law showed favor to the good (Proverbs 12:2) - The grace of GOD shows mercy and favor to the bad, the ungodly (Ephesians 2:1-6).
7. The Law was graven upon stone . . . outward (II Corinthians 3:3) - Grace is graven on the heart . . . inward . . . CHRIST in you (Colossians 1:27; Colossians 3:3; II Corinthians 3:3).
8. The Law says, "He added no more" (Deuteronomy 5:22) - Grace assures us, "Hath... spoken... by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2).
9. Law is inexorable in its demand (Joshua 7:25) - The grace of GOD is inspirational in its blessing (II Corinthians 5:17).
10. The Law brings judgment (Romans 5:18) - Grace brings justification (Romans 3:24).
11. Law cries out, "Keep the Commandments - all of them, in every minute detail" (James 2:10) - Grace assures us we are kept by the power of GOD (I Peter 1:5).
12. The Law demands love (Deuteronomy 6:5) - The grace of GOD exhibits love (John 3:16).
13. The Law moves the sinner to sin (Romans 7:8) - The grace of GOD removes sin from the sinner (Matthew 1:21).
14. According to the Law, nearness to GOD is impossible (Exodus 20:21) - In Grace, nearness to GOD is guaranteed (Ephesians 2:13).
15. The Law demands obedience - or no blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-2) - Grace brings obedience because of the blessing (I John 4:19).
16. The Law cries out, "Stone the prodigal" (Deuteronomy 21:20-21) - Grace cries out, "Put the best robe on the prodigal . . . kill the fatted calf! Let us feast and be merry!" (Luke 15:20-23).
17. Law brings death (Deuteronomy 21:22-23) - Grace gives to us the quietness and assurance of peace (Romans 5:1).
18. The Law retaliates (Exodus 21:24) - The grace of GOD redeems (Galatians 3:13).
19. The Law demands sanctification (Leviticus 11:44) - Grace bestows sanctification (I Corinthians 1:30).
20. Because of the Law, three thousand were slain (Exodus 32:28) - Because of the grace of GOD, three thousand were saved (Acts 2:41).
21. The Law is unsatisfying to the conscience (Hebrews 10:1-2) - The grace of GOD is unfailing in its forgiveness and remedy for sin (Hebrews 9:12-14; Hebrews 10:10-14).

22. The Law is the voice of consternation (Hebrews 12:18-21) - The grace of GOD is the voice of covenant, blessing, peace and assurance (Hebrews 12:22-24).

23. When the Law was given, Moses' face shown, and the people feared (Exodus 34:30) - Grace brought by JESUS CHRIST attracted the people to the face of JESUS (Mark 9:15).

24. The Law was a yoke of burdensome weight (Galatians 5:1) - Grace is to be in the yoke with JESUS, which makes the yoke easy and the burden light (Matthew 11:29-30).

25. The Law produced zeal (Romans 10:1-2), but no salvation (Philippians 3:6; Romans 10:1-8) - Grace imparts zeal, and brings joy unspeakable and full of glory because we are saved (Titus 2:14; I Peter 1:8).

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**Bob DeWaay** comments on what he interprets as a modern day repetition of the Galatian problem - "I have personally seen chronically troubled saints pouring over the book (Neil Anderson's "The Bondage Breaker"), for years, hoping to find relief from such things as promised on the cover: "negative thoughts, irrational feelings, and habitual sins." This is abusive to these dear saints who are blessed in Christ but are told that their symptoms prove they have more to do. They must do a veritable survey of the flesh to find the walk of the Spirit. Thus the Galatian error is repeated. In regard to Galatians 3:1-3, the Holy Spirit does not bring past sins to our minds. The accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) keeps busy with that task. Colossians 2:13, 14 tells us that the debt is cancelled, the decrees against us nullified, and our sins forgiven. The work of the Holy Spirit is to remind us of what Christ has done, once for all, through the cross and point us to our future hope. Yet Anderson tells his readers to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind past sins: "If something comes to mind and you are not sure what to do about it, trust that the Spirit of God is answering the prayer you just prayed, and go ahead and renounce it"(Anderson: Bondage, 202). The reader is directed to a long checklist (there are others in the book) and told to pray a prescribed prayer of renunciation of things that "the Holy Spirit has prompted you to renounce." The checklist has nearly 60 items (and whatever might be associated with them) plus whatever else comes to mind. What are they? They are religions, magic, spells, curses, astrology, superstitions, and anything else that pagans typically get involved with. The last box to be checked is telling: "Movies, TV shows, music, books, magazines, or comics that the Lord is bringing to your mind." (Anderson: 204). Having gone through the checklist and listened for special prompting from God, the reader is to repeat prescribed prayers of confession and renunciation "out loud." There is a checklist for bad motives and sins of the heart (Anderson: Anderson: 230). The confessions and renunciations have no logical end. Thus, Galatians 3:1-3 is violated, abrogated, and transgressed, all in the name of recognizing the reality of the stoicheia as demonic and not just the ABC's of religion." (You may or may not agree with DeWaay but if you would like more of his discussion see [Galatians 3:13-14 Cursed by Works or Blessed by Faith](#))

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#### **Vance Havner - Paul asked the Galatians, who hath bewitched you (Gal. 3:1).**

This is a day of sorcery, demonic deception in the end of time. The world is tricked, fascinated, under the spell of a thousand evil eyes. The weird, the uncanny, the occult, psychedelic drugs, hallucinations with these humanity is being swept into an orgy of induced insanity. The church is attacked, and Satan would deceive the very elect. Good men are led astray by the liberal gospel, the secular gospel, the social gospel. Jannes and Jambres imitate Moses. The Great Deceiver as an angel of light imitates every work of God, and thousands of poor souls cannot distinguish wheat from tares. Fortune-tellers, necromancers, magicians, are small fry compared to the new witchery let loose upon the world. Men we never dreamed would weaken are giving way, and Satan has so cleverly maneuvered his strategy that it appears un-Christian to lift a voice against his wiles and devices. This procedure is so skillfully executed, that many are afraid to express even doubt of it-much less opposition. We had better take some special courses in Ephesians Six, and learn the true nature of spiritual conflict. We have been provided full equipment for this warfare, and we had better learn how to evaluate both our adversaries and our allies.

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**Misunderstanding the Value of the Cross** Some years ago, a 14-foot bronze crucifix was stolen from Calvary Cemetery in Little Rock, Arkansas. It had stood at the entrance to that cemetery for more than 50 years. The cross was put there in 1930 by a Catholic bishop and had been valued at the time at \$10,000. The thieves apparently cut it off at its base and hauled it off in a pick-up. Police speculate that they cut it into small pieces and sold it for scrap. The thieves figured that the 900-pound cross probably brought about \$450. They obviously didn't realize the value of that cross. That is the problem, of course—understanding the value of the cross. As the gospel writers relate the story of Jesus' crucifixion, the theme that runs through all the details is rejection. Not only did people not see the value of Jesus, they also didn't understand the value of his death. May we not be so blind! Lee Eclow, in the sermon "The Agony of Victory," [PreachingToday.com](#)

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#### **The Power Of Influence**

Read: 2 Chronicles 22:1-9

Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? —Galatians 3:1

All those years of training in good grammar couldn't stand up to a few hours of being with a friend who mangles the language. That was my observation recently as I overheard my second-grade son Steven talking with one of his friends.

I had listened as Steven's buddy used poor English again and again. I was surprised by his word choices, but I was really taken aback when I heard Steven talking the same way. He doesn't usually talk like that—at least he didn't until a little peer pressure got to him.

It was another illustration of the power of others to change the way we think. We carefully guide our children to use proper speech patterns, but the influence of one friend can undo all that.

Think about how this principle affects much more important choices. Consider Ahaziah in 2 Chronicles. He was influenced by his mother to do wrong (2 Chr 22:3). As a result, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chr 22:4). His godly grandfather Jehoshaphat surely had some influence on Ahaziah, but it was the evil persuasion of Athaliah that marked his course.

We can be manipulated! So we must be careful about who or what influences us and stay close to our Father, the source of all that is good and right. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Be sure that those in whom you trust  
Are led by God each day;  
For if they let the devil guide,  
They could lead you astray.  
—JDB

Choose your companions with care—  
you may become what they are.

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**Maxie Dunnam** - How could you miss it?—you "before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified" (v. 1).

During a visit to the Peoples' Republic of China, I was using Barclay's Daily Bible Study of Galatians for my daily devotional reading, and I came to this third chapter the day I entered that country. This verse might not have struck me with such power had I read it in another setting. "You before whose very eyes Jesus Christ was placarded upon His cross." China is the land of posters, and placards were everywhere. Great crowds gather around the walls where posters are displayed. A primary means of communication, posters have been used to share the message of liberation and revolution for thirty years in this vast land. Not only are posters used for the current propaganda, there are some omnipresent ones. Pictures of Chairman Mao, Premier Hua, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin were in every school we visited, every factory, and in every reception room of every commune. The thinkers, planners, and leaders of the socialist revolution are constantly before the eyes of the people of China. The Greek word which Barclay translates "placarded" in this verse is phrographien. One of the words Paul used for preaching, it meant "post a notice," as on a bulletin board in a public square. This is why it came through to me with such power in China. Barclay reminds us that in New Testament times the word was used to describe what a father did when he proclaimed publicly that he would no longer be responsible for his son's debts.

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**Richard C. Halverson** points out: When Paul says, "by grace you are saved," he is not referring just to a fraction of salvation—two thirds, for example—as though justification and glorification, but not sanctification, depended upon grace. He is referring to the total work of God in the Christian: the past, the continuing present, and the future; the beginning, the end, and all in between. Grace is as necessary for the continuity of the Christian life as it is for its conception and consummation. One has little difficulty in apprehending the fact that the new birth is a work of grace. There is nothing one can do to be born anew. "The wind blows where it desires to blow and you hear the sound of it, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The mystery of spiritual birth, it is relatively easy to me, must be a work of grace. Furthermore, there is a little difficulty in understanding the resurrection of the body to be a work of grace. It is quite obvious that man can do nothing to expedite this event. But when it comes to the interlude between regeneration and resurrection the inclination is to think of it as man on his own, or at least man doing his best with token help from God. It is at this point that the Christian is constantly in danger of developing a doctrine of works that will defeat the very thing he is desiring in his life.

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A famous story tells of the tight-rope walker Charles Blondin (1824-97), who set up a rope across Niagara Falls and walked across

several times. So confident did he become that he made the journey backwards as well as forwards, and performed various tricks on the way, like sitting on a small stool and eating a meal. But the most famous trick was when he asked for a volunteer to be carried over on his back. In what must be one of the most supreme acts of physical trust ever placed by one human being in another, a brave, or perhaps foolish, man stepped forward, and was carried over on the great man's shoulders. Now supposing, halfway across, the man had said to Blondin: 'Look here, this is all very well, but I really don't trust you any more. I think I'd better do the rest by myself. Let me down and I'll walk from here without you.' One can only imagine the retort he would have got, not only from the professional, but from any watching friends or family. Had he taken leave of his senses? How did he suppose he would get across by himself? That is exactly the reaction Paul has on hearing that his beloved Galatians are thinking of getting circumcised. (Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians)

**Galatians 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**

Greek - touto monon thelo (1SPA1) mathein (AAN) a humon ex ergon nomou to pneuma elabete (2PAA1)e ex akoes pisteos

Amplified: Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the [Holy] Spirit as the result of obeying the Law and doing its works, or was it by hearing [the message of the Gospel] and believing [it]? [Was it from observing a law of rituals or from a message of faith?]

Barclay Tell me this one thing—did you receive the Spirit by doing the works the law lays down, or because you listened and believed?

Phillips I will ask you one simple question: did you receive the Spirit of God by trying to keep the Law or by believing the message of the Gospel?

Wuest This only am I desiring to learn from you. By means of law works did you receive the Spirit or by means of the message which proclaims faith? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?

GNT Galatians 3:2 το το μ νον θ λω μαθε ν φ μ ν· ξ ργων ν μου τ πνε μα λ βετε ξ κο ς π στεως;

NLT Galatians 3:2 Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit by obeying the law of Moses? Of course not! You received the Spirit because you believed the message you heard about Christ.

KJV Galatians 3:2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

ESV Galatians 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

ASV Galatians 3:2 This only would I learn from you. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

CSB Galatians 3:2 I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

NIV Galatians 3:2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

NKJ Galatians 3:2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

NRS Galatians 3:2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard?

YLT Galatians 3:2 this only do I wish to learn from you -- by works of law the Spirit did ye receive, or by the hearing of faith?

NAB Galatians 3:2 I want to learn only this from you: did you receive the Spirit from works of the law, or from faith in what you heard?

NJB Galatians 3:2 There is only one thing I should like you to tell me: How was it that you received the Spirit --

was it by the practice of the Law, or by believing in the message you heard?

GWN Galatians 3:2 I want to learn only one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by your own efforts to live according to a set of standards or by believing what you heard?

BBE Galatians 3:2 Give me an answer to this one question, Did the Spirit come to you through the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

- **Receive:** Ga 3:5,14 Acts 2:38 Acts 8:15 Acts 10:44-47 Acts 11:15-18 Acts 15:8 Acts 19:2-6 1Co 12:7-13 2Co 11:4 Eph 1:13,14 Heb 2:4 6:4 1Pe 1:12
- **by the hearing:** Ro 1:17 10:16,17
- [Galatians 3: The Purpose of the Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-3: Whatever Happened to Holy Spirit?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched: An Argument from Experience](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3:2: The Hearing of Faith](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## THEY RECEIVED THE SPIRIT BY FAITH

**This is the only thing I want to find out from you** "Let me ask you this one question" (Amplified); "I will ask you one simple question" (Phillips) "It is not that he is uninterested in anything else but that this one issue is of supreme importance, crowding out all other considerations." (Osborne) Although Paul asks 5 questions in Galatians 3:1-5, this question should have been sufficient to convict the Galatians of the folly of their drifting from the truth of the Gospel that initially saved them! As **Lenski** says Paul "pours out question upon question. He wants no answer for himself, he needs none; the Galatians need them for themselves. It is high time they did a little plain Christian thinking." And Christian conviction!

**Ridderbos** adds that their answer to this question "is in principle determinative of the issue between them and him. **Their own witness must convince them of their error.**" ([NICNT - Galatians - 1953](#))

**Want** (2309)([thelo](#) see [thelema](#); synonyms [boule](#) and [boulomai](#)) is a very common NT verb (208x) which primarily refers to exercising of one's will with the underlying sense of to be willing, to desire, to want or to wish (in Jn 15:7 in context of prayer).

**Find out** (learn) ([3129](#)) ([manthano](#) related to noun [mathetes](#) = disciple, literally a learner! The shut mind is the end of discipleship!) has the basic meaning of directing one's mind to something and producing an external effect. The NET translation is probably a more accurate rendering of the Greek word **manthano**, the passage reading "The only thing I want to **learn** from you is this." (HCSB, NIV, NRS also translate it "**learn**").

**Bartlett** - This query ushers in a series of questions skillfully designed, by the honest answers evoked, to build up an indisputable argument from Christian experience in support of the thesis that men are justified by faith alone. The question immediately before us in verse 2 points to the manner in which the Galatian believers had become children of GOD through the miracle of the new birth and the reception of the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9+). If, then, regeneration was wrought in their hearts through the mighty work of GOD in response to their simple **faith** in JESUS as Savior, how can there possibly be any place for **works, either alone or in addition to faith**, so far as the obtaining of salvation is concerned? ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**Gerald L. Borchert** - In typical [diatribe](#) fashion, this statement opens the way to a question with an answer that Paul knows will be obvious to his readers...the experience of the Spirit was, for the early Christians, proof positive that they were regenerated people of God (see Gal 4:6+; Acts 10:45+; Ro 5:5+). ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 14: Romans and Galatians](#))

**Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?** This is the first of four rhetorical questions in Gal 3:2-5 (Not counting the rhetorical question in Gal 3:1 "Who has bewitched you?"). **Works of the Law** refers to obedience to the Mosaic Law. He is basically asking them how were they saved - by works or by faith? How did your Christian life begin? As he explains in Ro 8:9+ if one does not have the Spirit, he is not saved and so he focuses on the Spirit. Notice that he assumes they do in fact possess the Spirit and thus he is not questioning whether or not they are saved. He assumes they are saved. And the answer

to his question is simple and straightforward. How did you **receive the Spirit**? (As an aside notice it is not something they EARNED but Someone they RECEIVED, as one would a gift). Did you have to work for the Spirit of God to take up residence in your body, His temple (1 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 6:19<sup>+</sup>)? "Of course not" would be the expected response. Or did He come in when you put your faith in Christ? "Yes, of course" would be the expected response. And so Paul is challenging them to remember how they were saved, and the answer they would have or should have given is **by hearing** the Gospel Paul had preached and accepting it **with faith**. And when did they receive the Spirit? The moment they placed their trust in Jesus and His death, burial and resurrection on their behalf. Stated another way the Holy Spirit came to indwell them only after they believed the message they heard about Christ, and independent of performing any works of the Law.

In sum Paul has presented **works of the law** and the **hearing with faith** in the gospel of Christ (cf Gal 2:16+) which are two diametrically opposed ways of salvation, and only faith in the Gospel leads to true salvation. As polar opposites faith in the Gospel and works of the Law cannot tolerate each other. It must be one or the other, and not a combination of both. These two ways are like oil and water and they do not mix! The Law says "Do this." The Gospel says "Christ has done it all."

**John Stott** adds that "The law requires works of human achievement; the gospel requires faith in Christ's achievement. The law makes demands and bids us obey; the gospel brings promises and bids us believe. So the law and the gospel are contrary to one another. They are not two aspects of the same thing, or interpretations of the same Christianity. At least in the sphere of justification, as Luther says, "the establishing of the law is the abolishing of the Gospel."

Notice that Galatians 3:2 connects with Galatians 3:5 which says " So then, does He who provides you with the **Spirit** and works **miracles** among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?" Clearly the miracles Paul describes are occurring among them because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, further evidence of course that they are genuinely saved.

**Spurgeon** writes the Galatian believers "had gone off into **legality**; they were trying to be saved (**ED: AND I WOULD ADD "TRYING TO BE SANCTIFIED"** cf Gal 3:3) by ceremonies and by works of their own. "Well," asks Paul, "how did you receive the Spirit—the Spirit by which miracles were wrought among you (Gal 3:5), the Spirit by which you spoke with unknown tongues, the Spirit that changed and renewed your hearts? If you did indeed receive Him, did you receive Him by the **works of the law** or by the **hearing of faith**?" There was only one reply to the question: The Spirit came to them as the result of **faith**."

**Maxie Dunnam** comments that "With his tenacious argumentative skills, Paul gets the Galatians in the steel vise of their own experience (**ED: DOES THIS NOT SOUND A LITTLE LIKE PETER WHEN OPPOSED BY PAUL "STOOD CONDEMNED"** Gal 2:11+) . There could be no middle ground. The Spirit came either by **hearing with faith**, or by **law**. The Galatians had only one answer from their experience: the Spirit came by the **hearing with faith**. It is everlastingly so, Paul would say. We are "*begraced*" not according to our merit, our accomplishments, our keeping the law, living the "good" life, obeying the commandments, abiding by the Golden Rule, but by obedient trust. (**Ed: I like that - "obedient trust"** because "trust" that is genuine faith will obey, not out of legalistic constraint and reliance of natural energy, but our of love and supernatural energy from the Holy Spirit).

**Hendriksen** comments that "It is as if Paul were asking, "My dear Galatians, does the course which you are now following make you more happy and contented than that which you previously selected? By what avenue were you first made conscious of having the Holy Spirit in your hearts? Was it by the avenue of rigorous bondage to ceremonial ordinances or was it by the exercise of faith in Christ, so that you listened and listened and eagerly took to heart the marvelous message of the gospel?"" ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon](#))

**John Phillips** on Paul's question about their salvation - This, indeed, is the Great Divide between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Law said, "Do!" Grace says, "Done!" The Law said, "Try!" Grace says, "Trust!" The Law says, "Behave!" Grace says, "Believe!" Law points to the commandments; grace points to the Christ. The weakness of the Law is the flesh; the wonder of grace is the Holy Spirit...This was the crucial point. When Paul appeared among them on his first missionary journey, what had he preached? Had he told them to be good and keep the Ten Commandments? Had he told them to be circumcised and keep the Sabbath? Had he told them to become proselytes of the Jewish religion and join the local synagogue? Is that how they were saved? Is that how they had received the regenerating Holy Spirit of God? Of course not! He had preached Christ to them. They had believed and had been regenerated, indwelt, baptized, sealed, and filled by the Holy Spirit. Simply to ask the question was its own answer. ([Exploring Galatians](#))

**ESV Study Notes - Received the Spirit** refers to the new covenant work of the Holy Spirit that comes after saving faith, at the beginning of the Christian life, to sanctify and to empower the believer in life and various kinds of ministry. Paul knew this experience was so real for the Galatians that they would remember it.

**John MacArthur** on the **Spirit** - The gift of the Holy Spirit is the believer's most unmistakable evidence of God's favor, his greatest proof of salvation and the guarantee of eternal glory. "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God**" (Ro 8:16<sup>+</sup>), Paul assured the Roman Christians. Conversely, "**if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not**

**belong to Him**" (Ro 8:9+). John writes, "**By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit**" (1 John 4:13+; 1 Jn 3:24+). It is therefore ludicrous to maintain, as some Christians do, that the full gift of the Holy Spirit comes through an additional work of experience. A person who does not have the fullness of the Holy Spirit does not need a **second blessing**; he needs salvation. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the **new birth**. At no time before salvation can a person have the indwelling Spirit, and at no time after salvation can he not have Him. "**Having also believed**" in Christ, Paul explained to the Ephesians, "**you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance**" (Eph. 1:13-14+). ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Earle on Spirit** - The Greek word is **pneuma**, from which we get "pneumonia," "pneumatic," etc. It originally meant "a movement of air, wind, breath." But when a person's breath leaves his body, he is dead; that is, his spirit is gone. So the word for "breath" was also used for "spirit."

Note Paul's emphasis on the **Holy Spirit** in these first 5 verses (Gal 3:2, 3, 5), which are the first time the Spirit is mentioned in this letter. **Holy Spirit (pneuma)** in Galatians (based on the NAS translation as some uses in KJV are not capitalized) is used a total of 16x in 13 verses - Gal 3:2,3 , 5, 14; Gal 4:6, 29; Gal 5:5, 16, Gal 5:17 (twice) Gal 5:18, 22, Gal 5:25 (twice); Gal 6:8 (twice). The two uses of **pneuma** which refer to the human spirit and not the Holy Spirit are Gal 6:1, Gal 6:18.

**Works of the Law** - 8x in 6v - Ro 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16; Gal 3:2, 5, 10

**Spurgeon on works of the Law** makes an interesting statement that "We Christians are sound enough on this point as a matter of **theory**, but we are all of us very heretical and unsound as a matter of **practice**. You will not find a Christian who does not have to mourn over his **self-righteous** tendencies. You will not discover a believer who has not, at certain periods in his life, had to groan because the **spirit of self-confidence** has risen in his heart and prevented him from feeling the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit." (Well, amen or oh my!)

**Or by hearing with faith?** (Ro 1:17+; Ro 10:16,17+) - **Wuest** says "**hearing** refers either to the act of hearing a message, or to the message that is heard. The second meaning agrees more with the context since Paul is contrasting his message of grace with the preachments of the Judaizers."

Romans 10:17 says "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." And so clearly the "correct answer" to Paul's question is "by hearing with faith" and not by adding obedience to the law, which demands, but has nothing to give, least of all God's gift of His Spirit!

**Gromacki** comments that "If the Judaizers had been correct, then it would have been impossible for the uncircumcized Gentile converts to have received the Spirit at all. Yet the Galatians 'were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit' as the result of Paul's evangelistic efforts (Acts 13:52+). To accept the heresy of the Judaizers would be to deny the presence of the Spirit in their lives." ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Martin Luther** reasoned, "The devil approves of this idea [of works salvation] and makes it grow in our hearts. So when our reason hears that we can do nothing to obtain the forgiveness of sins but only hear the Word of God, it immediately cries out, 'Rubbish! You are making the forgiveness of sins too unimportant a matter.'" ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Wuest on with faith** (or "of faith") - The phrase **of faith** defines or describes the message. It is a message that announces **faith** as the means whereby one receives salvation. The only answer the Galatians could give to this question was that they received the Spirit, not by obedience to the law, but through their **faith** in Paul's message of grace.

**MacDonald** - One question should be sufficient to settle the whole matter. Let them go back to the time of their conversion—the time when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in their bodies. How did they receive the Spirit? By doing, or by believing? Obviously it was by believing. No one ever received the Spirit by keeping the law.

## **FAITH IS THE KEY THAT OPENS THE DOOR TO ABUNDANT LIFE IN CHRIST**

**Faith** is clearly a key word in Galatians 3 where it is mentioned in 50% of the passages - 14x in 13 verses (Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:7; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:9; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 3:25; Gal. 3:26). The related word **believe, believer or believed** is used 3x in 3 verses.

The contrasting word **Law** is also a key word in Galatians 3 - 15x in 12 verses.(Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:10; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:13; Gal. 3:17; Gal. 3:18; Gal. 3:19; Gal. 3:21; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24)

**Maxie Dunnam** on **faith** in this passage - Paul is talking here not about the content of faith, or the state of mind of the listener, but

of the believing kind of hearing that is open to the gospel, welcomes it, and leads the hearer to yield to Christ and entrust his life to Christ. To hear the law and the traditions set down by Moses and the fathers carried with it the burden of straining nobly to keep it, and the guilt of inevitable failure. Hearing the gospel creates faith (God gives us that faith) in which the Spirit is received.

**Jack Arnold** - Faith in Christ results in justification and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Every one who is justified receives the Spirit and everyone who receives the Spirit is justified. This puts an end to the false teaching that salvation is in two stages. Some say that a person is justified when he initially receives Christ but he must receive the Holy Spirit at a later time in the Christian life. Paul says that justification and the coming of the Spirit occur when a person trusts in Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior. Paul's whole point is that the Galatians received the Holy Spirit by an act of faith not by the works of the law. ([Sermon](#))

**Faith** ([4102](#)) ([pistis](#)) means trust or confidence and in the active sense equates with belief. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

**Wayne Grudem** defines **faith** that saves one's soul and opens the door to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as follows - **Saving faith** is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. This definition emphasizes that saving faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me....The definition emphasizes personal trust in Christ....Because saving faith in Scripture involves this personal trust, the word "**trust**" is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word "**faith**" or "**belief**." The reason is that we can "**believe**" something to be true with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it. ([Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine](#))

**W E Vine** has this descriptive definition of the related verb **pisteuo**...

- (1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Th 2:11-"in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** [pisteuo] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")
- (2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** [pisteuo] in His name") and
- (3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender. (See discussion of the [obedience of faith](#))

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**Donald Macleod** - The Law and the Gift of the Spirit - There is one thing further: we do not depend on the law for our experience of Spirit baptism or for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Again, this has become a serious issue. The Charismatic Movement proposes a view of our experience of the Holy Spirit which is essentially legalistic. Its preachers and teachers tell us that the church is in a dreadful spiritual state and the answer to the problem is Holy Spirit baptism, which can be 'got' by going through various steps such as believing in Christ, renouncing all known sin, thirsting for God, praying expectantly and so on. There are variations on this theme but the core technology remains: there are things we have to do. Furthermore, if the poor believer comes back and says he has been through all these steps but nothing has happened, he is then asked, 'But have you really gone through all these steps? Have you really renounced all sin? Have you made a surrender of your will to God—an absolute surrender? Have you really, really thirsted?' Of course, the poor Christian says, 'Well, maybe not!' But this is pure legalism: the gift of the Spirit depending upon our personally attaining some kind of higher life. Paul deals with the problem directly and specifically in Galatians 3. 'Did you,' he asks, 'receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?' (verse 2). The gift of the Spirit is as much a matter of sola fide (by faith alone) as is justification. The New Testament preaches a glorious gospel. But when we tamper with it and add bits to it in the interests of moralism we create all kinds of problems. If our receiving the gift of the Spirit depended on our doing something, on the quality of our believing or on the strength of our religious desires, we would never have the Spirit. (A Faith to Live By - Understanding Christian Doctrine)

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**Adrian Rogers** - No one can believe God unless God enables him to believe. And how does God enable you to believe? He gives you a word. As the verse said that we referenced yesterday, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Ro 10:17NKJV). Therefore, contrary to the popular belief of some in the Christian community, you don't just "name it and claim it." Rather, you listen for God to speak, then you "believe it and receive it." Faith is not an achievement we earn for ourselves; it's an endowment that is given to us by God.

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**Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

Greek houtos anoetoi este (2PAAI) enarchamenoï (AMPMPN) pneumatī nun sarkī epiteleisthe (2PPMI)

Amplified Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? Having begun [your new life spiritually] with the [Holy] Spirit, are you now reaching perfection [by dependence] on the flesh?

Barclay Are you so senseless? After beginning your experience of God in the Spirit, are you now going to try to complete it by making it dependent upon what human nature can do?

Phillips Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances?

Wuest Are you so unreflecting? Having begun by means of the Spirit, now are you being brought to maturity by the flesh? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?

GNT Galatians 3:3 ο τως ν ητο στε, ναρξ μενοι πνε ματι ν ν σαρκ πιτελε σθε;

NLT Galatians 3:3 How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

KJV Galatians 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

ESV Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

ASV Galatians 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?

CSB Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?

NIV Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

NKJ Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

NRS Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?

YLT Galatians 3:3 so thoughtless are ye! having begun in the Spirit, now in the flesh do ye end?

NAB Galatians 3:3 Are you so stupid? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?

NJB Galatians 3:3 Having begun in the Spirit, can you be so stupid as to end in the flesh?

GWN Galatians 3:3 Are you that stupid? Did you begin in a spiritual way only to end up doing things in a human way?

BBE Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? having made a start in the Spirit, will you now be made complete in the flesh?

- **having** (KJV): Ga 4:7-10 Gal 5:4-8 Gal 6:12-14 Heb 7:16-19 Heb 9:2,9,10
- [Galatians 3: The Purpose of the Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-3: Whatever Happened to Holy Spirit?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:3: The Work of the Holy Spirit](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries

## **NECESSITY OF SPIRIT IN SANCTIFICATION**

**Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**- Two questions that are really one rhetorical question to stir their mind and their conscience regarding the beginning (justification) and the time up to the end of their Christian lives (sanctification). Paul's argument is powerful - If a person has received salvation trusting in the crucified Christ,

and received the Spirit the moment they believed and has the Spirit's supernatural power working within, why would they now seek fleshly efforts (works, circumcision) in an attempt to please God or to merit His favor?

The **Phillips** paraphrase is pithy - "Surely you can't be so idiotic as to think that a man begins his spiritual life in the Spirit and then completes it by reverting to outward observances?"

So the first question in Gal 3:2 is about how one becomes a Christian and now in Gal 3:3 the question is about how one lives as a Christian. Gal 3:2 deals with justification by faith and Gal 3:3 deals with sanctification by faith.

**Donald Campbell** - 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. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Don Anderson** titles this section "You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said, I Do It Myself." In other words: "They were running well" in their Christian life and experiences as long as they were dependent upon the Spirit of God to produce the life of Jesus Christ in and through them. "They were running well" until they decided to take over and produce spiritual maturity on their own. They are saying: "I DID IT MY WAY. (ED: THEY WERE LIVING THE FRANK SINATRA SYNDROME!) I DID IT ON MY OWN."

**Are you so foolish?** - "Are you so irrational." **Barclay** = "Are you so senseless?" **Wuest** = "Are you so unreflecting?" **GWN** = "Are you that stupid?" Paul used the Greek [anoetos](#) to convey the idea of those who could think but who had failed to use their power of perception. "The principles Paul referred to are things the Galatians knew, things they had been taught. The knowledge and understanding were there, but they were not using them." (Guzik)

**THOUGHT** - I am a bit convicted here -- it is one thing to possess spiritual knowledge but is a problem if we don't allow the knowledge to "possess us!" Woe!

I would not work my soul to save,  
For this my Lord has done;  
But I work like any slave,  
For love of God's dear Son.  
(source unknown)

**Guzik** on this **foolishness** - This deception was cultivated by Satan to set our Christian life off-track. If he cannot stop us from being saved by faith, then he will attempt to hinder our blessing and growth and maturity by faith. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Foolish** (453) see preceding discussion on [anoetos](#) used in Gal 3:1.

**Anoetos** speaks of someone who is lacking in discernment. The Galatians had been taught the truth of the Gospel and Jesus, but they failed to examine the teachings of the Judaizers in the light of this truth with the result that the Judaizers led them out of truth and the lie that they needed to perform works in order to grow spiritually.

**Bartlett** - Sanctification, no less than regeneration, is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT, conditioned by faith on the part of the Christians. This is a further reason why all forms of legalism should be cast out root and branch. Is it reasonable, Paul asks in effect that you can by conforming to rites and ceremonies bring to fruition that which the HOLY SPIRIT alone could initiate in your souls? Merely to ask such a question is to answer it in the negative. What has been **in-planted** by the SPIRIT must be **un-folded** in the SPIRIT. What He begins He will complete (Php 1:6+) ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**Vincent** - Has your folly reached such a pitch as to reverse the true order of things?

**Vine** paraphrases Paul are you "so reluctant to exercise your senses that you have not seen an inconsistency so glaring as this."

**Howard Vos** comments that "apparently some (ED: Judaizers) were arguing that a really spiritual person should keep the law. This was to exalt flesh above spirit, to ignore spiritual enablement for daily living, and to violate what Paul must have clearly taught them when present with them (cf. Phil 1:6; 2 Co 8:6). ([Galatians- Everyman's Bible Commentary: A Call to Christian Liberty](#))

**Reginald Wallace** - Far too many people have shared in the "Old Adam Improvement Society." We so often adopt the attitude of, "Well, if I try a little harder, I know I will be what the Lord wants me to be."

**Spurgeon** - The first thing that God the Holy Spirit does in the soul is to regenerate it. The next thing is to teach the soul that it is utterly incapable of saving itself. The Holy Spirit next applies the blood of Jesus to the soul, gives the soul the grace of faith whereby it lays hold of Jesus, and gives it an anointing of holy consolation and unction of assurance—whereby, casting itself wholly on the blood and righteousness of Jesus, it receives joy, knows itself to be saved, and rejoices in pardon. When the sinner has thus believed, then the Holy Spirit brings all the precious things to him: the blood of Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus, the covenant of

adoption. But I cannot rejoice in my adoption until I receive the spirit of adoption, whereby I may be able to cry, "Abba, Father." So you see, every point that is brought out in the experience of the newborn Christian—every point in that part of salvation that we may call its beginning in the soul—has to do with God the Holy Spirit.

## YOU MADE A GREAT START!

**Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?** -"Having commenced your Christian life." Having begun by faith. This speaks of the New Birth (cp John 3:3-8), the regeneration wrought by the Spirit (Titus 3:5-6) when by grace we exercised our will in faith in the Gospel. Notice that for the first time in this letter Paul draws attention to the epic struggle in all Christians - the battle between the **Spirit** and the **flesh**. He will elaborate on this struggle in four more passages:

Galatians 4:29+ But as at that time he who was born according to the **flesh** persecuted him who was born according to the **Spirit**, so it is now also.

Galatians 5:16+ But I say, **walk** ([present imperative](#)) by the **Spirit**, and you will not carry out the desire of the **flesh**.

Galatians 5:17+ For the **flesh** (continually) sets its desire against the **Spirit**, and the **Spirit** against the **flesh**; for these are (continually) in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Galatians 6:8+ For the one who sows to his own **flesh** will from the **flesh** reap corruption, but the one who sows to the **Spirit** will from the **Spirit** reap eternal life.

**Richard Mayhue** writes "Note carefully that the **flesh** and the **Spirit** stand in direct opposition to one another (Gal 5:17+). Because of this contrast, to walk by the Spirit is to avoid walking in the flesh. When we start to walk in the flesh, the warning signs are evident (Gal 5:19+). They do not correspond to kingdom behaviour (Gal 5:21+). ([Seeking God](#))

**Having begun** ([1728](#)) (**enarchomai** from **en** = in + **árchomai** = begin) means to make a beginning, to commence, to begin in a particular state or relationship. This was the normal Greek word for beginning a sacrifice. In other words this was the word for scattering the grains of barley on and around the victim which was the first act of a sacrifice (see Barclay's [note below](#)). In Galatians 3:3 the [aorist tense](#) refers to a past completed action, so that at specific moment when they first trusted the Gospel of Christ for their justification the Spirit began His work of [progressive sanctification](#).

**THOUGHT** - The Galatians were "short-circuiting" the Spirit's work by their fleshly works. Do we ever do this beloved? Or let me ask it this way - do we ever try to live the supernatural Christian life relying on our natural energy seeking to adhere [assiduously](#) to a set of moral/ethical rules and guidelines? This is a rhetorical question! Of course we all fall into this legalistic trap of trusting works of self rather than the work of the Spirit. We daily (even moment by moment) need to consciously, willingly, humbly come before the altar of God (cf Ro 12:1+), confess the futility and failure of our self efforts (1 Jn 1:9+) and throw ourselves wholly on the sufficient supernatural strength of the Holy Spirit. Not let go, let God, but let God and let's go! His part (Php 2:13NLT+), our part (Php 2:12+). We are to be partners with the Spirit, not passive participants in our daily, [progressive sanctification process](#). How are you doing? Are you *trying* by your old self or are you *dying* to self taking up your cross daily and following Jesus (Lk 9:23+, 1 Jn 2:6+, 1 Pe 2:21+), the Author and Perfector of our faith (Heb 12:2+)? Or to ask it another way - Are you walking like Paul who walked like Jesus walked? (cf 1 Cor 11:1+). See [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

Step by step I'll walk with Jesus,  
Just a moment at a time;  
Heights I have not wings to soar to,  
Step by step by faith I climb.  
—Simpson

**Gilbrant** - Enarchō is a verb that consistently appears in the middle voice: enarchomai. In classical Greek it was often employed in literature describing religious ceremonies, particularly in reference to initiatory rites and sacrificial offerings. Because of its early use in the language of sacrifice, enarchomai has been thought to have sacrificial overtones in the New Testament, where the term appears two times (Galatians 3:3; Philippians 1:6). Paul was the only New Testament writer who used it and always with epiteleō (1989), "end, complete." But to see this ordinary word as a sacrificial metaphor in Paul's letters reads too much into it. The Christian life may be described as a sacrifice (Romans 12:1), but in the New Testament enarchomai is an ordinary word for "beginning" as is epiteleō for "ending" (cf. Vincent) ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

There are only 2 uses of **enarchomai** in the NT, here and Php 1:6<sup>±</sup> where Paul encouraged the saints at Philippi writing "I am confident of this very thing, that He who **began** ([aorist tense](#)) a good work in you **will perfect** (same word [epiteleo](#) as here in Gal 3:3) it until the day of Christ Jesus." The Amplified Version says it this way "And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that **He Who began** a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], **developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion** ([epiteleo](#)) in you."

The point in both uses (Gal 3:3 and Php 1:6<sup>±</sup>) is that God via His Spirit takes the initiative in starting His work in us and He is the only One who can bring it to completion (perfection when we are glorified). Salvation always begins with God and if He didn't make the first move, we would make no move at all (cf Jn 1:13<sup>±</sup>, Ro 3:11<sup>±</sup>). It's like the country preacher who was asked at his ordination how he had become a Christian. He replied, "I did my part and God did His." When asked to explain "his part in salvation", he answered "My part was to run from God as fast as I could. God's part was to run after me and catch me and bring me into his family." This is a great picture for every person for we are born as rebels running from God and thus all are in desperate need of God taking the initiative to begin His **good work** in all of us because we are **dead in** (our) **trespasses and sins**. (Ep 2:1<sup>±</sup>) God not only initiates the **good work** of salvation, but continues it and guarantees its consummation. From Him, through Him and to Him be the glory!

The derivative word **proenarchomai** is used in 2Co 8:6 referring to the contribution by the Corinthians that was earmarked to support the poor saints in Jerusalem. "So we urged Titus that as **he had previously made a beginning** (**proenarchomai** also in 2 Cor 8:10), so he **would also complete** ([epiteleo](#)) in you this gracious work as well ("this ministry of giving" = NLT)."

**Enarchomai** - 8x in the Septuagint - Ex. 12:18 (to describe the first month, the "beginning" month); Nu 9:5; Nu 16:47 (to describe beginning of the plague); Dt. 2:24, 31 (to begin to possess their possession - the promised land), Dt 2:25; Joshua 10:24; Pr. 13:12;

**A W Tozer** - The problem is not to persuade God to fill us, but to want God sufficiently to permit Him to do so. The average Christian is so cold and so contented with his wretched condition that there is no vacuum of desire into which the blessed Spirit can rush in satisfying fullness.

**Alan Cole** on - What Paul means is that the whole Christian way is 'supernatural' from **start (Having begun)** to **finish (now being perfected)**; but the Jewish path (whatever it might have been in design and origin) has become thoroughly 'naturalistic'. The adherents of every religion try to earn their own salvation by their own efforts, as do those following Judaism as a faith; the only difference is that the pagan has not such clear knowledge as the Jew. From this angle, Judaism is just 'another religion', although, seen from another angle, it has an eternal value as God's preparation for the gospel of Christ (Gal 3:24). ([The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians](#)).

## **HOW ARE YOU BEING SANCTIFIED? BY FLESH OR SPIRIT?**

**Are you now being perfected by the flesh?** - **Perfected by the flesh** parallels Pauls phrase **by the works of the Law** in Gal 3:2, because the works of the law are carried out in the natural power of the flesh, not the supernatural power of the Spirit. Indeed, there was no provision under the Law for the Holy Spirit to do a work of sanctification. **Barclay** paraphrases it as "are you now going to try to complete it ("your experience of God") by making it dependent upon what human nature can do? "

**THOUGHT** - Dear believer are you now trying to become perfect (to be [progressively sanctified](#)) by your own human effort? When you were saved by faith you began by the Holy Spirit. Do you think that once you are saved (justified) by faith you can grow spiritually by depending on the works of the flesh (works of the Law)? Of course not. But how many Christians today have missed this connection -- they agree that one is saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9<sup>±</sup>) by the Spirit's regeneration (Titus 3:5-7<sup>±</sup>, Jn 3:3-5), but then they begin to live as if there spiritual growth depends on what they DO! Beloved, many saints in the evangelical church in America have fallen into this subtle trap of *legalism* because they do not fully comprehend the surpassing power of the Spirit of God (cf Eph 3:20<sup>±</sup>) Who indwells us (I PRAY Eph 1:18-19<sup>±</sup> FOR YOU AS YOU READ THIS NOTE), Who desires to energize us (cf Php 2:13NLT<sup>±</sup>) for a supernatural walk of faith and growth in Christ-likeness (2 Cor 3:18<sup>±</sup>.)

**Spurgeon** - Surely the way in which the Christian life begins is the method in which it is to be sustained. "As you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord," the apostle says in another place, "so **walk** ([present imperative](#) = as your habitual practice - see [Need for Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in Him" (Col 2:6<sup>±</sup>). If you have begun in the flesh, go on in the flesh; but if you really know that your beginning was in the Spirit, then do not go back to the flesh.

**John Stott** - Paul had come to Galatia and preached the gospel to them. He had publicly portrayed before their eyes Jesus Christ as

crucified. They had heard the gospel and with the eye of faith had seen Christ displayed upon His cross. They had believed the gospel. They had trusted in the Christ exhibited in the gospel. So they had received the Spirit. They had neither submitted to circumcision, nor obeyed the law, nor even tried to. All they had done was to hear the Gospel and believe, and the Spirit had been given to them. **These being the facts of their experience, Paul argues, it is ludicrous that, 'having begun with the Spirit', they should now expect to complete 'with the flesh'. This is another way of saying that, having begun with the gospel, they must not go back to the law, imagining that the law was needed to supplement the gospel. To do so would be not 'improvement' but 'degeneracy'.** (ED: AND [LUNACY!](#)) ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**Being perfected** (2005) ([epiteleo](#) from [epí](#) = intensifies meaning, in the sense of meaning "fully" + [teleo](#) = to complete, bring not just to the end but to the destined goal from [télos](#) = end, goal) conveys the intensified meaning to **fully complete** or to fully reach the intended **goal** in the sense of successfully completing what has been begun (Gal 3:3, Ro 15:28+). **Epiteleo** means to bring something to the place where it is complete. **Epiteleo** is used in the Septuagint of Lev 6:22 where it describes the offering as that which is to be "entirely offered."

**Epiteleo** is used again in 2 Corinthians 7:1+ to depict [progressive sanctification](#) - "Therefore, having these promises (2 Cor 6:17-18), beloved, let us cleanse ([katharizo](#)) ourselves from all defilement ([molusmos](#)) of flesh and spirit, **perfecting** ([epiteleo](#) in [present tense](#) = continually) holiness in the fear of God."

**Vine** interprets the voice as [middle voice](#) (lends a [reflexive sense](#) to the action) rather than [passive voice](#) and if "the [middle voice](#) is to be understood = "are ye now perfecting **yourselves**?" ([present tense](#) = continually perfecting yourselves)

**Frederic Rendall** adds that "**having begun... being perfected**" are used to "express the beginning and consummation of works of mercy and sanctification." (He adds that) "The middle voice of [epiteleo](#) is used here because the spiritual process is to be wrought by them upon themselves." (**Ed:** And yet we know that this would not be possible without divine enablement of the Spirit to give the desire and power - Php 2:13NLT+) ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Barclay** adds that "the words Paul uses for to **begin** ([enarchomai](#)) and for to **complete** ([epiteleo](#)) are technical terms for the beginning and the ending of a sacrifice. There was an initial ritual in connection with a Greek sacrifice. A torch was lit from the fire on the altar and then dipped into a bowl of water to cleanse it with its sacred flame; and with the purified water the victim and the people were sprinkled to make them holy and clean (ED: NOTE HOW SATAN COUNTERFEITS TRUTH). Then followed what was known as the **euphemia**, the sacred silence, in which the worshipper was meant to make his prayers to his god. Finally a basket of barley was brought, and some grains of the barley were scattered on the victim, and on the ground round about it. These actions were the **beginning of the sacrifice**, and the technical term for **making this beginning** was the verb [enarchesthai](#) which Paul uses here. The verb used for **completing the whole ritual of sacrifice** was the verb [epitelein](#) which Paul uses here for to **complete**. Paul's whole sentence (Php 1:6) moves in an atmosphere of sacrifice. Paul is seeing the life of every Christian as a sacrifice ready to be offered to Jesus Christ. It is the same picture as he draws when he urges the Romans to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Ro 12:1+, 2 Ti 4:6+) ([Philippians 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Flesh** ([4561](#))([sarx](#)) has a variety of meanings but in the present context "refers to all that a person is as the product of natural generation apart from the morally transforming power of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. The word speaks of the unsaved man, body, soul, and spirit, controlled by his totally depraved nature, together with all his human accomplishments, positions, capabilities, and philosophies. See the following scriptures as illustrations of this use: Jn 3:6; Php 3:3, [4+](#); Ro 6:19+, Ro 7:5+, Ro 7:18+, Ro 7:25+, Ro 8:3+; 2 Cor 1:17." (Wuest) "**Flesh** is here a reference to man unaided by the Spirit of God. It refers to what is earthly and human; and inasmuch as man is a fallen, sinful being, "**flesh**" is opposed to the operation of the Spirit." (Vos)

**Wuest** explains that "The Judaizers in preaching a message of law obedience to the Galatian Christians, caused these latter to abandon the position of **grace** and put themselves in the sphere of **law**, both that of the Judaizers' system of legalism, and that of the Old Testament economy. Because there was no provision in the Mosaic economy for an indwelling Spirit Who would sanctify the believer as that believer trusted Him for that work, the Galatians were turning away from the teaching and the reality of the ministry of the Spirit in the life of the believer in this dispensation of grace, and were starting to depend upon **self effort** in an attempt to obey an **outward legalistic system of works**. Thus these Christians who had **begun their Christian lives in dependence upon the Holy Spirit**, now were **depending upon self effort to continue in them the work of sanctification** which the Holy Spirit had begun. The [present tense](#) of the verb ("now being perfected") here indicates that the Galatians had already begun this attempt. Paul says in effect, "How foolish to think that you can bring yourselves to a state of spiritual maturity in your Christian lives. That is the work of the Spirit. Only He can do that for you." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Related Resources:** Articles relating to vital role of the Holy Spirit in our life of [progressive sanctification](#):

- [A Spirit Filled Church](#)
- [Acts 1:8 Commentary](#)
- [Ephesians 5:18 Commentary](#)
- [Illumination of the Bible](#)
- [Loving Obedience-Obedient Love](#)
- [Our Anointing - The Holy Spirit](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spirit-Filled Believers Are Like Artesian Wells](#)
- [The Holy Spirit-2](#)
- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

The Judaizers promoted the false tenet that sanctification was attained by works of the flesh...

Galatians 4:10 You **observe days and months and seasons and years.**

Galatians 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you **receive circumcision**, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

Galatians 6:13 For those **who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves**, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh.

**Barclay** makes an interesting point alluded to above that "Paul talks about beginning their experience in the Spirit and ending it in the flesh. The words he uses are the normal Greek words for beginning and completing a sacrifice. The first one (enarchesthai) is the word for scattering the grains of barley on and around the victim, which was the first act of a sacrifice; and the second one (epiteleisthai) is the word used for fully completing the ritual of any sacrifice. By using these two words, **Paul shows that he looks on the Christian life as a sacrifice to God.**" (Ed: cp Ro 12:1+, 2 Ti 4:6+) ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

Going to church to worship God sincerely with fellow believers is pleasing to Him, whereas going to the same church service and being with the same fellow believers is not acceptable to Him if done in a self-righteous, self-serving, legalistic spirit.

**Guzik** observes in this section Paul "lays out one of the fundamental differences between the **principle of law** and the **principle of grace**. Under law, we are blessed and grow spiritually by earning and deserving (ED: This of course is what the Judaizers would have taught but it is not the way of genuine spiritual growth and true blessing!). Under grace, we are blessed and grow spiritually by believing and receiving. God deals with you under the covenant of grace; we should not respond on the principle of law. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

Even the best and most acceptable works do not increase our standing before God or elevate us to a higher spiritual status. How would it be possible to be more than a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ, who is the Heir of all things (Ro 8:17+; Heb. 1:2+; cf. Gal 4:7+; 1 Pet 3:7+)?

There is a place for **good works**, but they must be "**God works!**" They must be John 15:5 works! In other words the validity of good works in God's sight depends on whose power they are done in and for whose glory. When they are done in the power of His Spirit and for His glory, they are beautiful and acceptable to Him. When they are done in the power of the flesh and for the sake of personal recognition or merit, they are rejected by Him.

See related study of [Good Deeds](#)

<b>COMPARISON OF HUMAN EFFORT VERSUS LIFE IN THE SPIRIT</b>		
	<b>Religion by Reliance on Human Effort</b>	<b>Relationship by Reliance on the Spirit</b>
<b>GOAL</b>	Seeking to please God by our own works in our natural strength	Trusting in Christ and living enabled by His Spirit to bear much fruit (Jn 15:5, 8)

<b>MEANS</b>	Practicing diligent service, rigid discipline, and obeying rules in hope of meriting a reward	Daily surrendering to and being filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:18 <sup>+</sup> )
<b>POWER</b>	Self Effort Walking in my power	Spirit Enablement Walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16 <sup>+</sup> )
<b>CONTROL</b>	Self-motivation; self-control	Christ living in me; I living in faith (Gal 2:20 <sup>+</sup> , cf Php 2:13NLT <sup>+</sup> )
<b>RESULTS</b>	Guilt, apathy, depression, futility, failure, desire for approval	Power over lusts Fruit of Spirit Gratitude, guidance (Ga 5:16, 18 <sup>+</sup> , Ga 5:22-23 <sup>+</sup> )

**Spurgeon** applies truth about **works of the Law** - I pray that everyone may examine himself to see whether he is of the works of the law. Are we legal in our feelings? Are we relying upon the self and its doings? Does anyone among us feel that there is not a more deserving person than himself? Because he is a good churchgoer, does he think himself accepted by the Lord? Because of confirmation or baptism or attendance at the sacrament, does he hope to be saved? Because of his decent and respectable life, does he reckon himself just? If such is your hope, you are “of the works of the law,” and it is not my word, but the word of the Lord, that you are under the curse. Think of this, you who are so very good, so free from fault! There is nothing else for you but the curse. You are not the same as those men who are mentioned in the Scriptures as justified. They lived by faith, and you hope to live by works. As you are not the same, you will not come to the same end. It is a thought that vexes you, and possibly even makes you angry, that you should be under the curse—but it will be well for you to know the truth, however black it looks. Nothing remains but a fearful looking forward to judgment. For where there is even now a curse, what else can there be but fiery indignation at the last? Unfortunately, I cannot bring this most searching truth home to the conscience. It requires a miracle of grace to get this truth into the heart of man and to make him feel the full terror of it. It is so repugnant to our proud human nature that we incline to any error that will obscure it. Come, Holy Spirit, with your divine light, and flash this truth upon the sinner’s eyes in such a way that he must see it!

**Spurgeon** on seeking to be **perfected by the flesh** - I fear that some of my brothers and sisters try to grow in spiritual life by adopting methods that are not of faith. Some think that they will set themselves rules of self-denial or extra devotion—these plans are lawful, but they are not in themselves effective. Vows may be observed mechanically, and rules obeyed formally, and yet the heart may be drifting away yet further from the Lord. Indeed, these vows and rules may be a means of deluding us into the vain belief that all is well, whereas we are nearing to spiritual shipwreck. I have found in my own spiritual life that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit. The habit of regular morning and evening prayer is one that is indispensable to a believer’s life, but the prescribing of the length of prayer, and the constrained remembrance of so many persons and subjects, may lead to bondage and strangle prayer rather than assist it. To say I will humble myself at such a time, and rejoice at another season, is nearly as much an affectation as when the preacher writes in the margin of his sermon, “Cry here,” “Smile here.” If the man preached his sermon rightly, he would be sure to cry in the right place and to smile at a suitable moment. When the spiritual life is sound, it produces prayer at the right time, and humiliation of soul and sacred joy spring forth spontaneously apart from rules and vows. The kind of religion that makes itself to order by the almanac and turns out its emotions like bricks from a machine—weeping on Good Friday and rejoicing two days afterwards, measuring its motions by the moon—is too artificial to be worthy of your imitation. The liberty of the spiritual life is a grand thing. And where that liberty is maintained constantly and the energy is kept up, you will need much faith, for the fading of faith will be the withering of devotion. Faith enriches the soil of the heart. Faith fills our treasuries with the choicest gold and loads our tables with the daintiest food for our souls. Faith in Jesus, the Savior, faith in the heavenly Father, faith in the Holy Spirit—this we must have, or we perish like foam upon the waters.

As the other side of all this, some Christians appear to try to live by experience. If they feel happy today, they say they are saved; but if they feel unhappy tomorrow, they conclude that they are lost. If they feel at one moment a deep and profound calm spreading over their spirits, then they are greatly elevated. But if the winds blow and the waves beat high, then they suppose that they are not the Lord’s people. Ah, miserable state of suspense! To live by feeling is a dying life. You do not know where you are or what you are

if your feelings are to be the barometer of your spiritual condition. A simple faith in Christ will enable you to remain calm even when your feelings are the reverse of happy, to remain confident when your emotions are far from ecstatic. If, indeed, we are saved by Jesus Christ, then the foundation of our salvation does not lie within us, but in that crucified Man who now reigns in glory. When He changes, then what changes must happen to us! But since He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, why do we need to be so soon removed from our steadfastness? Believe in Jesus when you cannot find a spark of grace within yourself. Cast yourself as a sinner into the Savior's arms when you cannot think a good thought or uplift a good desire. Have confident faith in Jesus at all times, for if you believe in Him you are saved and cannot be condemned. However good or bad your state, this shall not affect the question. You believe; therefore, you will be saved.

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Christ is waiting for us to come to the end of our frustrated working and futile efforts and to let him take over. It is like a scuba diver down with the tanks of oxygen, refusing to take a breath because he feels he can hold his breath long enough, when finally in exhaustion he takes a breath of air. He takes that which has been provided as a very source of his life. That reminds me of the experience of my first dive in the Grand Caymans. When I learned to appropriate the oxygen that was available, I was able to enjoy a whole brand-new way of living. I am reminded of the story of the Aggie who went to the power saw company to buy a chainsaw. He went out and worked hard all day and did not feel like the saw was doing what it was cracked up to do. So he took it back to the company and told the owner that it did not do nearly as well as his old axe. The owner promptly took hold of the starting cord and pulled it. The saw immediately started running and the Aggie was heard to say, "What is that sound?"

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**BUTTERFLY ILLUSTRATION** - Does a butterfly—having emerged from its chrysalis transformed, regenerated, metamorphosed to live a new life, and equipped with gorgeous gossamer wings—continue as a caterpillar? Does it say to itself, *Well, I have been born again. I must do my best to be a butterfly. I will crawl up this stem and gnaw on these leaves!* Of course not! It spreads its wings. It catches the rising air currents. It soars from field to field seeking the nectar of the flowers. It has new life. That new life cannot be lived on the principles of the old life. Trying to earn salvation led the Galatians nowhere. They were saved by the simple expedient of trusting Christ. They had new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit indwelt their hearts. Were they now to go back to the old, ineffective system of trying? Of course not! It didn't work when they were sinners seeking salvation, and it wouldn't work now that they were saints seeking sanctification. ([Exploring Galatians: An Expository Commentary](#))

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**Tony Evans** - What exactly is **legalism** in the spiritual realm? We have a definition in Galatians 3:3, stated in the form of a question. Paul asked the Galatians, "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" **Legalism** is trying to please God "by the flesh," by attempting to keep a list of laws and rules that we think will earn us God's favor and keep us in good standing with Him. It is identity based on performance rather than relationship. It makes rule-keeping the basis of victory. It says you are what you do....Paul was asking, "Foolish Galatians, what makes you think you can be saved by grace and then be set free by trying to keep the Law? What makes you think the Holy Spirit is good enough to get you started, but not good enough to keep you going?" Legalism bases our spiritual identity on our performance. It makes rule-keeping the basis of spiritual victory. Don't misunderstand me. Legalism is not merely the presence of rules or laws. Earlier we learned that God's Law is "holy and righteous and good" (Romans 7:12). The problem is that the Law provides no power to obey it. Legalism is not the presence of rules, but the **wrong attitude** toward the rules. Legalism assigns to the rules an authority that God never meant them to have. You have probably met unsaved people who thought they were good enough to go to heaven. You have to show them otherwise before they are ready to believe and receive the gospel. What is true of the sinner who is trying to make it to heaven is true of a saint who is trying to be victorious. Victory and true liberty cannot be found in human efforts to keep the rules. You see, legalism is a guilt-motivated system. We either allow others to put us in bondage to their list of rules, or we shackle ourselves to our own list. The more guilty we feel, the more rules we add to the list and the harder we try to keep them. Here's how it works: A Christian who tends toward legalism goes to church one Sunday and hears the preacher say, "You need to read your Bible and pray." This Christian feels guilty because he hasn't been reading his Bible or praying. So he says, "You know, the preacher's right. I ought to be reading my Bible and praying every day." So that night he sets his alarm ahead an hour. But when the alarm goes off the next morning, this guy doesn't really want to get up. In fact, he's kind of grumpy, but he dutifully staggers out of bed because he feels like he has to. Is there anything wrong with a preacher telling his people they ought to read their Bibles and pray? I hope not, because I'll be the first one to say it. And it's not necessarily bad that this Christian felt guilty over his neglect of his Bible and prayer life. That could be the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The problem comes in the way he deals with his need. You can always tell a legalist, because to a legalist everything in the Christian life is "I ought" or "I should" instead of "I want to." Grace-based Christians obey because it's their delight. Law-based Christians obey because it's their duty. Obedience is certainly our duty as Christians, but duty alone without love behind it can degenerate into routine. Grace-based Christians obey and love it. Law-based Christians obey and come to resent it. To grace-based Christians, the spiritual life is the lifting of a burden. Jesus said, "My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). But to legalistic Christians, living for God feels like carrying a heavy load. Interestingly, Peter called the Law a "yoke" that none of the Jews was able to bear (Acts 15:10). Suppose both partners in a marriage carried around checklists of each other's duties in the marriage and checked each duty off as it was done. If the whole marriage was on that basis, I'd soon be seeing that couple in my office for counseling, because

marriage can't be reduced to a checklist. Do husbands and wives who love each other help each other? Of course. But the doing has to grow out of the loving. God wants nothing less from us. If your Christian life is just a list, you're missing it—not necessarily because the things on your list are bad. It's just that living by a list is a faulty approach to the Christian life and a faulty approach to victory. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will use the truth to set you free so you can tear up your list. That's going to be difficult if you've been conditioned to live by rules, but you can do it with God's help. ([Free at Last: Experiencing True Freedom Through Your Identity in Christ](#))

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### **ILLUSTRATION** - Joseph Carroll

I recently heard pastor Joseph Carroll tell this story of when he was conducting a series of meetings in North Carolina. He was staying in the home of some close friends in Asheville and would travel each night to his various speaking engagements.

One night he was scheduled to speak at a church in Greenville, South Carolina, which is several hours from Asheville. Because he didn't have a car, some folks from Greenville volunteered to transport him to and from the meeting. When they arrived to pick him up, He bid farewell to his hosts and told them he hoped to be back by midnight or soon afterward.

After ministering at the Greenville church, he stayed awhile to enjoy some fellowship and then rode back to Asheville. As he approached the house, he saw the porch light on and assumed his hosts would be prepared for his arrival because he had discussed the time of his return with them. As he got out of the car, he sent his driver on his way, saying, "You must hurry. You have a long drive back. I'm sure they're prepared for me; I'll have no problem."

He felt the bitter cold of the winter night as he walked the long distance to the house. By the time he reached the porch, his nose and ears were numb. He tapped gently on the door but no one answered. He tapped a little harder and then even harder but still no reply. Finally, in a bit of a concern about the cold, he tapped on the kitchen door and on a side window but there was no response.

Somewhat frustrated and becoming colder by the moment, he decided to walk to a neighboring house so he could call and awaken his hosts. Then he realized that knocking on someone's door after midnight wasn't a safe thing to do so he decided to find a public telephone. It was very dark and cold and he wasn't familiar with the area. Consequently he walked for several miles. At one point he slipped as he walked in the wet grass that was growing on the bank along the road and slid down into two feet of water. Soaked and nearly frozen, he crawled back up to the road and walked further until he finally saw a blinking motel light. He awakened the motel manager, who was gracious enough to let him use the phone.

He made the call and said to his sleepy host, "I hate to disturb you, but I couldn't get anyone to wake up in the house. I'm several miles down the road at the motel. Could you come get me?" To which his host replied, "Joseph, you have a key in your overcoat pocket. I gave it to you before you left." Sure enough, he reached into his pocket and there was the key.

That story is a picture of many Christians. They want access to the house of blessing. They want comfort, warmth, rest, peace, nourishment, and fellowship. And they try a variety of human schemes to get in all of which are unsuccessful. Yet all the while they possess the key: the Holy Spirit. He alone can relieve their frustrations and fulfill the deepest longings of their hearts.

How have so many Christians been deceived into thinking they can gain entrance into the house of blessing by relying on pragmatism, psychotherapy, and other human means when Scripture clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is the key to God's provisions? ([What Ever Happened to the Holy Spirit? - John MacArthur](#))

#### 1. Psalm 23:1-6

Psalm 23 illustrates the sufficiency of God's provision to believers: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps 23:1). I can go to God for anything I lack and He will supply my needs. If I need food or water, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2).

Similarly, if my soul is weak and weary "He restores my soul" (Ps 23:3). If I'm lost and don't know how to chart the course of my life "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps 23:3). Someday I will have to face the reality of death, but "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (Ps 23:4). I am often distressed and in upheaval, but "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me" (Ps 23:4). I am concerned about those around me who are hostile, but "Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies" (Ps 23:5). I need healing so "Thou hast anointed my head with oil" (Ps 23:5).

It's a long life and I want to make the best of it, so He makes "my cup [overflow]. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life" (Ps 23:5 6). And I desperately want hope after death, so He promises that "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6).

Our Shepherd graciously supplies everything we need. Why would we go anywhere else?

2. Colossians 2:10<sup>+</sup>: Paul said, "In [Christ] you have been made complete."

3. Ephesians 1:3<sup>+</sup>: God "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

4. Philippians 4:13<sup>+</sup>, Php 4:19<sup>+</sup>: Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me... My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

5. 2 Peter 1:3<sup>+</sup>: Christ "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness."

**Can it be that we have forgotten those provisions? How else can we account for so many Christians attempting to satisfy spiritual needs by human means?** Paul said that all such attempts are **foolish** (Gal. 3:3). Why then do we continue to fall victim to our own inabilities? That only increases our frustration as we realize we can't solve our problems apart from God's Spirit. ([What Ever Happened to the Holy Spirit? - John MacArthur](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - If you have ever had the opportunity of teaching water-skiing at camp, you find that one of the biggest problems with the beginning water-skier is that they pull back on the rope because they want to help the boat get them up. There is all the power in the world in the boat to get them out of the water, and yet, they insist on helping instead of depending on the boat to do what it is supposed to do. It is only when the skier learns to be **totally dependent** upon the boat to do for them what they are not able to do themselves that they begin to experience some success in the art of waterskiing. Boy that'll preach!!!

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**Spurgeon** - It is simple enough for a man that hath the Spirit in him to believe, when he hath the written Word before him and the witness of the Spirit in him; that is easy enough. But for the poor, tried sinner, who cannot see anything in the Word of God but thunder and threatening—for him to believe—ah, my brethren, it is not such a little matter as some make it to be. It needs the fulness of the power of God's Spirit to bring any man to such a faith as that. Well, when the sinner has thus believed, then the Holy Spirit brings all the precious things to him. There is the blood of Jesus; that can never save my soul, unless God the Spirit takes that blood, and sprinkles it upon my conscience. There is the perfect spotless righteousness of Jesus; it is a robe that will fit me and adorn me from head to foot, but it is no use to me till I have put it on; and I cannot put it on myself; God the Holy Spirit must put the robe of Jesus' righteousness on me. There is the covenant of adoption, whereby God gives me the privileges of a son; but I cannot rejoice in my adoption until I receive the spirit of adoption whereby I may be able to cry, "Abba, Father." So, beloved, you see that every point that is brought out in the experience of the new-born Christian, every point in that part of salvation which we call its beginning in the soul, has to do with God the Holy Spirit. There is no step that can be taken without him, there is nothing which can be accomplished aright without him.

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## Entry-Level Christians

Read: Galatians 3:1-14

Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh. —Galatians 3:3

Most of us begin our careers by filling entry-level positions. These are the lowest paying jobs in the workplace. After we've been around for a while and proven ourselves, we generally move up to jobs with increased responsibility and compensation. Good employees don't usually stay at the entry level very long.

Christians shouldn't stay at the "entry level" for long either. Paul rebuked the Galatians because they were still at the entry level in their spiritual lives. Their stubborn dependence on the Mosaic law kept them from growing. They had begun in the strength of the Holy Spirit but had regressed to trusting in their own good deeds rather than in Christ (Gal. 3:3).

The believers in Corinth had a similar problem. They were constantly quarreling, focusing on personalities and human accomplishments (1 Cor. 3). They were behaving like spiritual babies rather than mature believers (1 Cor 3:1-2).

The problem still plagues us today. We take pride in our own efforts instead of what Christ has done for us. God isn't impressed by our good works.

Let's not stay at the entry level. Instead, let's grow in grace and serve the Lord from a heart of love. Relying on the Spirit, we can live in a way that honors Christ. By David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It is our Father's will,  
And precious in His sight,

That Christians learn to walk  
In wisdom, love, and light.  
—Hess

Some Christians who should be on the front lines are still in basic training.

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**TRUE FREEDOM** - Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (Galatians 3:3).

An article in our local newspaper told about an inmate in a penitentiary who had lived all but sixteen months of his thirty-nine years in various penal institutions. Born in a women's reformatory of a convict mother, he spent the first fourteen years of his life in prison as a ward of the court. When he was released, he committed a succession of crimes. He explained his behavior by saying,

"I don't know how to live on the outside. My home is inside, and I want to stay here for the rest of my life."

This unfortunate man found security in his bondage.

Likewise, adhering to external religious restraints can be easier than serving God in the liberty of the Spirit. This is why some first-century believers in Galatia wanted to live under the Mosaic law, even though in Christ they were no longer bound by it. Apparently they discovered that "freedom" can be frightening.

Many Christians follow a similar pattern. They look for security by placing themselves under a legalistic system that calls for no more than good external behavior. In many instances, the do's and don'ts are merely cultural, not biblical. Although their outward conduct may be honorable, they are actually escaping into a subtle kind of bondage. Obedience to accepted standards has value only when our actions reflect a changed heart and express gratitude to God for His salvation.

We must not hide behind the walls of legalism to avoid the freedom of life on the outside. —M. R. De Haan II [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Only those who are bound to Christ are truly free.

#### Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?

Greek - tosauta epathete (2PAAI) eike ei ge kai eike

Amplified: Have you suffered so many things and experienced so much all for nothing (to no purpose)—if it really is to no purpose and in vain?

Barclay Is the tremendous experience you had all for nothing—if indeed you are going to let it go for nothing?

Wuest So many things did you suffer in vain? If indeed they really were in vain? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Phillips Has all your painful experience brought you nowhere? I simply cannot believe it of you!

NET Galatians 3:4 Have you suffered so many things for nothing?— if indeed it was for nothing.

GNT Galatians 3:4 τοσαυτα πθετε εκ ; ε γε κα εκ .

NLT Galatians 3:4 Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it?

KJV Galatians 3:4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

ESV Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain?

ASV Galatians 3:4 Did ye suffer so many things in vain? if it be indeed in vain.

CSB Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so much for nothing-- if in fact it was for nothing?

NIV Galatians 3:4 Have you suffered so much for nothing--if it really was for nothing?

NKJ Galatians 3:4 Have you suffered so many things in vain-- if indeed it was in vain?

NRS Galatians 3:4 Did you experience so much for nothing?-- if it really was for nothing.

YLT Galatians 3:4 so many things did ye suffer in vain! if, indeed, even in vain.

NAB Galatians 3:4 Did you experience so many things in vain?-- if indeed it was in vain.

NJB Galatians 3:4 Can all the favours you have received have had no effect at all -- if there really has been no effect?

GWN Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so much for nothing? I doubt that it was for nothing!

BBE Galatians 3:4 Did you undergo such a number of things to no purpose? if it is in fact to no purpose.

- **Did you suffer so many things in vain:** Eze 18:24 Heb 6:4-6 10:32-39 2Pe 2:20-22 2Jn 1:8
- [Galatians 3: The Purpose of the Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-3: Whatever Happened to Holy Spirit?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched: An Argument from Experience](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries

## WERE YOUR EXPERIENCES FOR NOTHING?

**Lenski** observes that "First we have a question as to how the Galatians began (Gal 3:2), next a question as to how they propose to finish (Gal 3:3), now a question as to what lies between. ([Interpretation of St.Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? - Amplified** = "Have you suffered so many things and experienced so much all for nothing (to no purpose)—if it really is to no purpose and in vain?" **NLT** "Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it?" This is Paul's third question which refers to the experience of the new converts. There is debate whether the word "suffer" should not better be rendered "experiences." The former sense obviously means they were persecuted, while the latter could refer to the spiritual blessings they experienced. Commentaries are divided. Acts records no episodes of Christian converts being persecuted, but Luke does quote Paul in Acts 14:21-22+ alluding to persecution (**tribulations**) of believers...

"After they (Paul and Barnabas) had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "**Through many tribulations ([thlipsis](#)) we must enter the kingdom of God.**"

**Boice** comments on the meaning of **suffer** in this verse - "There is some ambiguity in the question "Have you suffered so much for nothing... ?" It may imply actual suffering, as the English word generally does. Or it may refer simply to the Galatians' previous spiritual experiences. **NEB** takes this approach by translating, "Have all your great experiences been in vain... ?" Neither view makes a great deal of difference for interpreting the letter as a whole, but the latter seems to fit the immediate context better. In this case, the experiences of the Galatians are further amplified by the reminder in v. 5 that God was working miracles in their midst through the power of his Holy Spirit. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Wuest** comments that here Paul "speaks of the sufferings which the Galatian saints went through as a result of having received the Lord Jesus as Saviour. The only record of any persecutions in the Galatian cities is in Acts 14:2, 5, 19, 22+ (BUT THIS REFERS TO PAUL'S SUFFERING NOT THE CONVERTS). We are left somewhat in the dark regarding these sufferings, their nature and extent. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** on **did you suffer so many things** - You had to struggle and endure much contention within your own spirit to get upon the ground of faith at all. Are you going to throw all that away? Is all the experience of your past life to go for nothing, and are you now going to begin on a lower and baser platform?

**Max Anders** feels that "**Suffer** probably does not mean persecution as some believe but in this context may be translated experienced. Paul is asking, "Have you experienced so many blessings of the Holy Spirit in vain?" By turning to a works message, they were discounting the saving and sanctifying work that the Holy Spirit had exemplified in their lives. ([Holman New Testament Commentary - Galatians](#))

**William Hendriksen** says "The implied lesson, always applicable, is surely this, that the Lord wants everyone to profit spiritually by the experiences through which he has passed. He wants his people to use those experiences—in the present case blessings, but the lesson applies to all experiences—to good advantage. ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossian, and Philemon](#))

**Norman Bartlett** - It will minister richly to our stability and fortitude in Christian living if we get the real force of this appeal to the Galatians. In common with many other followers of CHRIST in that first century, the Galatian converts had undoubtedly been called upon to endure persecution of greater or lesser intensity in defense of their new-found faith. But, if Paul contends, addressing the Galatian Christians, this salvation could have become yours through conformity to Judaistic practices, and not by faith entirely apart from works, then you have needlessly gone through great sufferings. Again, granted that you were right and the Judaizers wrong, then, in following their counsel in substituting a gospel of works for the Gospel of grace, all the rewards you have been laying up for yourselves through your sufferings and sacrifices for the SAVIOUR (As described in Mt 5:12+ = "your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Ro 8:17+ = "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.") will have been forfeited. **Pertinent applications to our own experience are not far to seek.** Whenever we avoid bearing the cross of ridicule, reproach and persecution for JESUS' sake through temporizing and conformity to popular forms of works-righteousness, we neutralize our past witness and limit our future rewards. Why sell cheap what has cost us dear in the way of reproach for the name of CHRIST? Furthermore, GOD may even be using the fires of present affliction for the SAVIOUR for the forging of stronger anchors of conviction in days to come. The more we suffer for our faith, the more precious does it become to us, and the less likely shall we be, under future pressure from legalistic quarters to exchange our faith in Christ for any form of works-righteousness. ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**Suffer** (3958)(**pascho**) originally was a "neutral" word that described essentially what happens to a person, what they experience, whether good or bad, favorable or unfavorable.. Often it means to undergo something, usually with the implication of physical or psychological suffering, experiencing something trying, distressing or painful. The doctrine of suffering is not a popular topic but Scripture is clear we will suffer for our faith if we are the "real deal." In fact suffering is a gift of God's grace in one sense as Paul describes in Phil 1:29+ writing to the saints at Philippi "to you it has been granted [charizomai](#) derived from [charis](#) = grace) for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer** ([pascho](#) in the [present tense](#)) for His sake." (cf 2 Ti 3:12, Jn 16:33, etc)

**Warren Wiersbe** on suffering - "When you are in the furnace, your Father keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Wuest** comments that "Paul appeals to the Galatians not to let these sufferings be in **vain** by turning their backs on grace and putting themselves under the legalistic system of the Judaizers." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Phillips** - Paul looked upon such a move as the height of folly. What would they gain? Nothing! Judaism had nothing to offer. What would they lose? Everything! Their sufferings for Christ's sake would one day be rewarded (2 Ti 2:12). One day, they would actually reign with Christ. If they drew back, they would forfeit their reward (Heb. 10:38), and all of their past sufferings for the Lord's sake would have been in vain. Paul earnestly hoped that they would not take that final step—"If it be yet in vain." It was another argument to add to the others, another weight tossed into the scale.

**If indeed it was in vain?** - This statement leaves open the possibility suffering (or experience) was not in vain. **Phillips** = "I simply cannot believe it of you!" **NLT** = "Surely it was not in vain, was it?" **GWN** = "I doubt that it was for nothing!" The phrase leaves a loophole for doubt, implying an unwillingness to believe on the part of the speaker w. some hope that the situation is not irretrievable. In adding the words **If indeed it was in vain** Paul implies that it is hard for him to believe that the Galatians would abandon the Gospel and embrace the teachings of the Judaizers. He expected better things from them comments that "Paul clings to hope about them with alternative fears." **Lenski** adds "Do they now intend to say that all of that suffering was in vain, a great mistake, all to no purpose? But he himself adds that he can scarcely believe that they now think so...." "If, indeed, in vain" already expresses the doubt about its all being in vain and  $\kappa\alpha$  increases this: Paul will not even think of it until he must. He will think only that the Galatians will answer: "No, no; it was and is not in vain!" (Ibid) **MacArthur** adds "In other words, "I hope what I have heard about you is not true or that you have come back to your senses."

**H A Ironside** comments that Paul "cannot believe that it is in vain, for he looks back and remembers the exercises they went through, the joy that came to them when they professed to receive Christ, and the love that seemed to be welling up in their hearts one for another, and for him as a servant of God and for the Saviour Himself. He says, "I remember the afflictions you were ready to endure on behalf of the gospel; I cannot believe you were not converted, that it was not real. You have been misled, you have gotten into a fog, and if I can, I want by the grace of God to deliver you."" ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Vain** (1500)(**eike**) means without a cause or legitimate reason, for no purpose, and being without any result. Fruitlessly, needlessly.

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek eikē usually means "at random." The word refers to an action done without a plan or purpose. The papyri demonstrate a similar usage. The Septuagint translators used the word once at Proverbs 28:25 to mean "without due consideration." The New Testament exhibits four meanings for this word. In Matthew 5:22, the meaning appears to be "without cause," "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Eikē, however, does not appear in some manuscripts in this verse. In Galatians Paul used the word to mean "without result" or "in vain," "I am afraid of you, lest I have

bestowed upon you labor in vain” (4:11). “Without purpose” is the meaning in Romans 13:4, “If you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing” (NIV). The same sense may be intended in 1 Corinthians 15:2, “...unless ye have believed in vain.” ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**

Greek - ο ουν epichoregon (PAPMSN) humin to pneuma kai energon (PAPMSN) dunameis en humin ex ergon nomou e' ex akoes pisteos

Amplified: Then does He Who supplies you with His marvelous [Holy] Spirit and works powerfully and miraculously among you do so on [the grounds of your doing] what the Law demands, or because of your believing in and adhering to and trusting in and relying on the message that you heard?

Barclay Did He who generously gave you the Spirit, and Who wrought mighty things among you, do so because you produced the deeds the law lays down, or because you heard and believed?

Phillips Does God, who gives you his Spirit and works miracles among you, do these things because you have obeyed the Law or because you have believed the Gospel? Ask yourselves that.

Wuest Therefore, the One who is constantly supplying the Spirit to you in bountiful measure, and constantly working miracles among you, by means of law works is He doing these things, or by means of the message which proclaims faith? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:5 Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard?

GNT Galatians 3:5 ο ν πιχορηγ ν μ ν τ πνε μα κα νεργ ν δυν μεις ν μ ν, ξ ργων ν μου ξ κο ς π στεως;

NLT Galatians 3:5 I ask you again, does God give you the Holy Spirit and work miracles among you because you obey the law? Of course not! It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ.

KJV Galatians 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

ESV Galatians 3:5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith--

ASV Galatians 3:5 He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

CSB Galatians 3:5 So then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

NIV Galatians 3:5 Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

NKJ Galatians 3:5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?--

NRS Galatians 3:5 Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

YLT Galatians 3:5 He, therefore, who is supplying to you the Spirit, and working mighty acts among you -- by works of law or by the hearing of faith is it?

NAB Galatians 3:5 Does, then, the one who supplies the Spirit to you and works mighty deeds among you do so from works of the law or from faith in what you heard?

NJB Galatians 3:5 Would you say, then, that he who so lavishly sends the Spirit to you, and causes the miracles among you, is doing this through your practice of the Law or because you believed the message you heard?

GWN Galatians 3:5 Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you through your own efforts or through believing what you heard?

BBE Galatians 3:5 He who gives you the Spirit, and does works of power among you, is it by the works of law, or by the hearing of faith?

- **He who provides you with the Spirit** : Ga 3:2 2Co 3:8
- **and works miracles among you**: Ac 14:3,9,10 19:11,12 Ro 15:19 1Co 1:4,5 2Co 10:4 12:12 13:3
- **do it by the works of the Law** Ga 3:2
- [Galatians 3: The Purpose of the Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-3: Whatever Happened to Holy Spirit?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5: Ministries of the Holy Spirit- 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:1-5 Bewitched: An Argument from Experience](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries

**Lenski** sums up Paul's questions in Galatians 3:1-5 -These questions are to stir the thoughtless Galatians into doing some mighty necessary thinking. Let them wake up! A few proper questions will make them throw out the Judaizers. The same treatment ought to be accorded the deceivers of our time. Oh, if only all of us would think! Put the Word and true Christian experience with the Word into simple honest questions and answers like a catechism, and you are armed and proof against deceit. ([Interpretation of St.Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**So then** ("therefore") is a [term of conclusion](#) and this **so then** or **therefore** tells us that Paul wants to bring us to a settled conviction about this matter. And that is that the same Holy Spirit Who came to dwell within us at salvation is the same Holy Spirit Who is carrying us on to spiritual maturity." ([Anderson](#)) **Ridderbos** says the **therefore** "summarizes, recapitulates, and lays what has been said once more upon the mind and conscience of the readers."

**Gromacki** on **Spirit** and **miracles** - The fact of these divine operations could not be questioned; the means, however, was the issue. Were they done "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith"? These were the only two possible options (cf. Gal 3:2). In no way could they have occurred by faith and works. ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith** - "**He**" refers to God the Father (Jn 14:26) but could also include God the Son (Jn 15:26). And Paul gives another "multiple choice" as in Gal 3:2, where it their receiving the Spirit and now it is from the viewpoint of God giving the Spirit. The answer is obvious and is the same as in verse 2 - the supernatural manifestations were because "of your believing in and adhering to and trusting in and relying on the message that you heard?" (Amplified). As **Stott** says "God gave them the Spirit (Gal 3:5) and they received the Spirit (Gal 3:2), not because they obeyed the law, but because they believed the gospel. This, then, was a fact of their experience."

**THOUGHT** - While works miracles may refer to specific instances of mighty works that were clearly supernatural, we need to remember that the GREATEST miracle is your life! Your regeneration was a miracle wrought by the Spirit. And the wonderful changes (also wrought by the Spirit) that have occurred in your life continue to be evidence of His miraculous work. Too often we get so caught up in various things like healing, etc, when we hear miracles and forget that the greatest miracle was God's Spirit taking a man or woman dead in their trespasses and sins and making them alive in Christ! The world needs to see your miracle beloved. Let your light shine (Mt 5:16)!

**Wiersbe** - "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!" ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Don Anderson** observes that "If the Holy Spirit comes in when we accept Christ by faith—and He does— then the obvious answer to our maturity in spiritual things is the in-living Christ who wants to be released to operate in our lives by the same faith....Whereas **works** can keep us from salvation in Christ, so even after we become a Christian **works** once again can keep us from spiritual growth. How subtle and easy it is for us as Christians to feel that any fruit that is going to come out of our lives in being changed is going to be something which we are going to do on our own efforts. And so we contribute greatly to hypocrisy and phoniness and real insincerity by feeling that Christian growth and development is dependent upon us. We need to recognize His analysis of things in John 15:5, and that is, without Him we can do nothing. ([Notes](#))

**MacArthur** says: Paul's argument is itself powerful: If a person has received eternal salvation through trust in the crucified Christ,

received the fullness of the Holy Spirit the same moment he believed, and has the Father's Spirit-endowed power working within him, how could he hope to enhance that out of his own insignificant human resources by some meritorious effort?

**Wuest** explains " In Gal 3:2, Paul is speaking of the **initial entrance of the Spirit** into the hearts of the Galatians at the moment they placed their faith in the Lord Jesus. In Gal 3:3, he refers to the **sanctifying work of the Spirit** in the believer's life. In this verse, the subject of the **charismatic manifestations of the Spirit** is introduced, namely, the act of the Holy Spirit in enduing certain members of the Galatian churches with special gifts of the Spirit. All these Paul brings to bear upon his contention that the grace way of salvation must be God's way since it is accompanied by the supernatural ministry of the Holy Spirit." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Gromacki** has an interesting note on **provides** - The word was used of a benefactor of the chorus at a pagan festival who would supply the costumes and the cost of training. Thus there was nothing more of the Spirit that the Galatians could get through the Judaizers. In fact, the false teachers had contributed nothing that was spiritual or miraculous. ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Provides** (supplies) (2023) ([epichoregeo](#) from **epi** = upon + **choregeo** = supply) means to furnish upon and as men took pride in the liberal fulfilment of this duty, the word came to denote a liberal supply, a generous and lavish provision. **Epichoregeo** means "to defray the expense of providing a chorus at the public feast" while the preposition (epi-) expresses strongly the idea, "to supply abundantly." The [present tense](#) indicates that this "lavish supply" of the Holy Spirit (cp Titus 3:6+, cp "lavished upon us" in Eph 1:8+) is a the believer's blessed continual provision and that His provision was continually being experienced by the churches in Galatia.

All uses of **epichoregeo** in NT - 2 Co. 9:10; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2:19; 2 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:11. Note especially "Now He who **supplies** (epichoregeo in [present tense](#)) seed to the sower and bread for food will supply ([choregeo](#)) and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness." (2 Co. 9:10) And also see what awaits faithful saints "for in this way (see 2Pe 1:10) the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly ([plousios](#)) **supplied** to you." (2 Pe 1:11+).

**THOUGHT** - If we refuse to accept this provision, that is our choice. But the only alternative for living the spiritual life is our empty, weak fleshly works, of which Jesus said would amount to absolutely nothing apart from Him. We are "connected" to Him by complete dependence on the supernatural "sap" of the Spirit to bear any fruit of eternal value. (Jn 15:5)! Even as this picturesque verb meant to richly supply everything an ancient chorus needed so that it might be a grand production, so believers are richly supplied with the Holy Spirit so that our life might be a "grand production" that brings glory to our Father (Mt 5:16+).

**Wuest** adds that **epichoregeo** was "derived from **chorus**, a chorus, such as was employed in the representation of Greek tragedies. The verb originally meant 'to bear the expense of a chorus,' which was done by a person selected by the state, who was obliged to defray all the expense of training and maintenance." Strachan adds, "It was a duty that prompted to lavishness in execution. Hence **choregeo** came to mean 'supplying costs for any purpose,' a public duty or religious service, with a tending, as here, towards the meaning, 'providing more than is barely demanded.' " Thus, the word means "to supply in copious measure, to provide beyond the need, to supply more than generously." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Who works miracles among you** - See some of these miracles Luke recorded in Acts 14:3, 8-11+.

**Wuest** explains why Paul described the Spirit as the **one Who works miracles** - "The word **miracles** is from **dunamis** ([word study](#)), used in 1 Cor 12:10 and in 2 Cor 12:12. In each place, the reference is to the Holy Spirit conferring miracle-working power upon certain members of the early Church. In the view of Paul, it was the same Spirit Who was performing His work of sanctification in the lives of the Galatian saints, who was also bestowing miraculous powers upon them." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

What were these "**miracles**"? We cannot know for certain, but we can know He is still at work performing these supernatural acts. Take for example the situation when a wife genuinely, from the heart grants her unfaithful but repentant husband forgiveness. That is a miracle!

## THE SOURCE OF A SUPERNATURAL LIFE THE "ENERGY" OF THE SPIRIT

**Works** (1754) ([energeo](#) from **en** = in + **érgon** = work. ~ "energetic") means to work effectively to cause something to happen. To energize. It is used only of superhuman power. The [present tense](#) pictures the "energizing" supernatural work of the Spirit in believers as an ongoing, continual process. In Php 2:13NLT-note Paul writes that "God is **working** ([energeo](#) which is in the [present tense](#) = continuously working) in you (Who is this, but the indwelling Spirit, the Gift of God, His "Chief Operating Officer" if you will!), giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."

**Wuest** notes that Paul's use of the [present tense](#) "of the participles ([epichoregeo](#) and [energeo](#)) informs us that the work of the Holy Spirit in both respects was continually going on in the Galatian churches, even at the time of the inroad of the Judaizers, although

His work was being hindered by the act of the Galatians slowly turning away from His ministrations and depending instead upon self effort. The point however is that these Galatians still had the attesting power of the **miracles** among them, proving that **grace** and not **works** was the way of salvation. Yet in spite of all this irrefutable proof, they were forsaking the place of grace to take their stand under law. Over against all this, the Judaizers had nothing as an evidence that their message was from God. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Miracles** (1411)(**dunamis** from **dunamai** = to be able, to have power) power especially achieving power. It refers to intrinsic power or inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way (power, might, strength, ability, capability), the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. In this context clearly it speaks of supernatural manifestations of power - miracles, wonders, powerful deeds (Translated as miracle (2x), miracles (17x), miraculous powers (3x))

**Ralph Earle** adds that "While there is a crisis moment in which the Holy Spirit comes into the believer's heart, yet there is also a sense in which the Spirit is being supplied richly to us as we walk in the light." (Word Meanings in the NT) But do not misunderstand. When we received the Spirit, we received all of the Spirit we would ever receive. The goal is for the Holy Spirit now to get more and more of us as we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As **Ian Thomas** says it is "Allowing the Holy Spirit to occupy the whole of your personality with the adequacy of Jesus Christ."

**Grant Osborne** - The Spirit is always working in their midst, and they know it. As a church and as individual believers, they have the Spirit guiding and empowering their lives. Paul's point is that this could not take place on the basis of their works. It is not that they are paid wages for living in righteousness, with the Spirit the currency of the payment. The Spirit's working of miracles comes by faith, not works. ([Galatians Verse by Verse](#))

**Do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?**- In other words Paul wants to know whether God has given them the Spirit and the miracles because they had "earned" this by their obedience to the Law or because they had believed the Gospel?

**Campbell** has "from the hearing that leads to faith."

**MacArthur** has "through saving faith granted when hearing the Gospel."

**Amplified** has "because of your believing in and adhering to and trusting in and relying on the message that you heard?" What had they heard from Paul? The truth of the Gospel of grace. The point of this question would be "How then, can you be duped by the Judaizers into thinking that He came to you, or will eventually come to you, by works of the Law?" Like the Judaizers, many groups and movements today want to introduce special conditions or requirements that supposedly add blessings to the finished and perfect work of Christ-such as a greater fullness of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, or a more complete salvation. But all such things are forms of works righteousness, adding things that men can do to what Christ has already done and that only He could have done." (MacArthur)

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**LOSING SIGHT OF CHRIST** - A painting by the Flemish painter Hendrik Leys (1815–1869) illustrates what happens when Christians lose sight of the crucified Christ. The painting is called "Women Praying at a Crucifix near St. James in Antwerp." The women themselves are portrayed with painstaking detail. Careful attention is paid to every fold in the fabric of their gowns. Likewise, the background is painted to show the beauty of the garden by the church wall. There is one thing missing from the painting, however, and that is the cross itself. Leys shows the women at worship, but not the Christ they have come to adore. "So what do we see?" asks the Dutch art critic Hans Rookmaaker (1922–1977). "People from a past period, full of faith, reverent, praying—but we do not see the object of faith, the crucified Christ." Often, this is precisely our problem in the Christian life. Recovering Pharisees that we are, we sometimes lose sight of the object of our faith: Christ having been crucified for our sins. But when we bring him back into the picture, and see him portrayed as the Savior who not only died, but also rose again, then we regain the vision to live for him by faith. (Ryken)

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**The Futility of Works: An Illustration** An Englishman by the name of Ebenezer Wooten had just concluded a preaching service in the village square. The crowd had dispersed, and he was busily engaged in loading the equipment. A young man approached him and asked, "Mr. Wooten, what must I **do** to be saved?" Sensing that the fellow was trusting his own righteousness, Wooten answered in a rather unconcerned way, "It's too late!" The inquirer was startled. "Oh don't say that, sir!" But the evangelist insisted, "It's too late!" Then, looking the young man in the eye, he continued, "You want to know what you must **do** to be saved. I tell you it's too late now or any other time. The work of salvation is done, completed, finished! It was finished on the cross." Then he explained that our part is simply to acknowledge our sin and receive by faith the gift of forgiveness.

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**Ray Stedman** tells a true story to illustrate the need for Paul's teaching. He writes "I will never forget the young man who came into my study one day, Bible in hand, and announced that he had been reading the Bible. He didn't know a lot about it, but he said,

"Would you circumcise me?" I blinked three or four times, then said, "Why?" He said, "I've been reading in this Bible that if you want to know God you have to be circumcised. I want to know God, so I want to be circumcised." I had the joy of telling him what circumcision meant, that it was simply a sign of something that was already true by faith. That boy became a Christian and is still in our congregation and growing in the Lord." (Read full sermon text [The Father of Faith](#))

### Galatians 3:6 Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Greek - kathos Abraam episteusen (3SAAI) to theo kai elogisthe (3SAPI) auto eis dikaiosunen

Amplified: Thus Abraham believed in and adhered to and trusted in and relied on God, and it was reckoned and placed to his account and credited as righteousness (as conformity to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action).

Barclay Was it not with you exactly as it was with Abraham? Abraham trusted God, and it was that which was credited to him as righteousness.

Phillips You can go right back to Abraham to see the principle of faith in God. He, we are told, 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'

Wuest Just as Abraham believed God, and his act of faith was credited to him, resulting in his righteousness. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:6 Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,

GNT Galatians 3:6 καθ ὡς ἠπίστευσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν Ἀβραάμ, ὡς ἠλογίσθη αὐτῷ ὡς δικαιοσύνην.

NLT Galatians 3:6 In the same way, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

KJV Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

ESV Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

ASV Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

CSB Galatians 3:6 Just as Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness,

NIV Galatians 3:6 Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

NKJ Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

NRS Galatians 3:6 Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,"

YLT Galatians 3:6 according as Abraham did believe God, and it was reckoned to him -- to righteousness;

NAB Galatians 3:6 Thus Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

NJB Galatians 3:6 Abraham, you remember, put his faith in God, and this was reckoned to him as uprightness.

GWN Galatians 3:6 Abraham serves as an example. He believed God, and that faith was regarded by God to be his approval of Abraham.

BBE Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham had faith in God, and it was put to his account as righteousness.

- **Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD**; Ga 3:9 Ge 15:6 Ro 4:3-6,9,10,21,22 9:32,33 Jas 2:23
- **IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**, Ro 4:6,11,22,24 2Co 5:19-21
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:13 The Curse of God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## SALVATION IS BY GRACE THRU FAITH IN OLD & NEW TESTAMENT

### Abraham's Chronology for Background:

- **Age 75** (Ge 12:4+) (Sarai = 65). God told him He would make Abe a father of many nations.
- **Age 86** (Ge 16:16) Abe went into Hagar producing Ishmael
- **Age 99** (Ge 17:1, 17:17) In Ge 12:3+ God preached the Gospel to Abraham (Gal 3:8) and not only would the Jews find salvation but so would the Gentiles. The seed that God promised was in fact Jesus Christ, (Gal 3:16) Abraham **circumcised** in Ge 17:24, age 99.

Note that from Galatians 3:6 to the end of Galatians 4 (Gal 4:31) Paul resorts to the **Old Testament** to refute the false teaching of the Judaizers that one needed to perform works of the law (including circumcision) in order to be saved. Paul begins by addressing the question of how was the great Jewish patriarch Abraham justified, declared righteous, saved?

Recall the last words of Galatians 3:5 are **by works of the Law or by hearing with faith** While Paul does not specifically mention circumcision, circumcision would be included in "**works**." (cf Gal 5:2, 3+) So here we see the great chasm that separates every other religion in the world from Christianity - **works** versus **faith**. Paul will now elaborate on the doctrine of justification and demonstrate from the life of the esteemed patriarch Abraham that justification is by **faith** and not by **works**, including **circumcision** or **keeping the Mosaic Law**. Remember that the Judaizers pointed to the Law of Moses as the means to salvation, but Paul is about to demolish their false teaching!

And so Paul had just stated that God had given them the Holy Spirit when they heard, received and believed the Gospel and were justified. The gift of their salvation and the Spirit was not the result of their **works**, but of their **faith** in the Gospel. In light of the role of **faith**, Paul immediately illustrates his point with a discussion of **Abraham**. In so doing he turns to the very Scriptures which the false teachers were using to show the necessity of **circumcision**! What did the Old Testament really say? Paul quotes from Ge 15:6 putting forth the example of Abraham as proof that the only way of salvation in the Old or New Testament is by grace through faith. Paul goes on in Galatians 3:6-9 to explain that the true children of Abraham are justified in the same way as Abraham was justified, by faith, not works. It almost seems too simple doesn't it? But it is the "Gospel" truth!

**Donald Campbell** explains that "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." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Even so** ([kathos](#)) is probably better rendered "**just as**" (NET, ESV, CSB, NKJ, etc) which emphasizes that Paul is now going to make a comparison to father Abraham, who will be mentioned 8 times in Galatians 3 (Gal 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29).

As **Martin Luther** says "Let us begin with Abraham and learn how this friend of God was justified and saved. Not because he left his country, his relatives, his father's house; not because he was circumcised; not because he stood ready to sacrifice his own son, Isaac in whom he had the promise of posterity. Abraham was justified because he believed."

Note that Paul quotes the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) (rather than the Hebrew) of Genesis 15:6. It is also notable that this verse represents the first Biblical uses of 3 important [soteriological](#) words - **believe**, **reckon** and **righteousness**.

**Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS - Amplified** = "Thus Abraham believed in and adhered to and trusted in and relied on God, and it was reckoned and placed to his account and credited as righteousness (as conformity to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action)." Paul is quoting from Genesis 15:6. Glance at **Abraham's Chronology** above and notice where Genesis 15 would fit in that chronological sequence. Now that you have that in your mind, notice when Abraham was circumcised (Ge 17:24). What can you conclude? Abraham was accounted as righteous (justified) before God more than a decade before he was circumcised. **Circumcision** IS NOT necessary for salvation! Not only that we know that the Mosaic Law was not given to Moses and Israel until some 430 years later in Exodus. What can you conclude about the relationship of **justification** and the **Mosaic Law**? This is not "rocket science" beloved, as it is crystal clear that Abraham was declared righteous by God Himself by grace (grace permeates the passage even though the word is not actually found there, because Abraham did not deserve or merit God's favor) through faith and his justification had absolutely NOTHING to do with the **Mosaic Law**!

**THOUGHT** - Beloved follower of Christ, can I encourage you to commit to memory the general chronology of the major events in Abraham's life? Then memorize Genesis 15:6 and remember that this life changing event occurred more than a decade before he was **circumcised** and over 400 years before the **Law** was given to Moses, so that neither played a role in his salvation (justification). And now pray for Jewish men and women with whom you might share this Biblical truth. I have used this chronology a number of times with Jewish

doctor friends of mine and have found that they are usually ignorant of the facts and also are surprised. So far I have seen no conversions, but I am planting some good God glorifying seed. My prayer for you as you read this is that God might send you seeking Jewish hearts, fill you with Spirit enabled boldness and His Word of truth and supernaturally enable you to redeem the opportunities He gives you to speak the glorious Gospel of our Messiah, Whom even Abraham believed (see Gal 3:8, Gal 3:16). In the Name of Yeshua. Amen.

As Paul repeatedly stresses, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, accompanied by the corollary truth of having Christ's perfect righteousness (1 Co 1:30, Ro 3:21, 2 Co 5:21 Php 3:9) imputed to us while He is made sin for us and bears our penalty, is not merely a divine afterthought following the failure of Israel under the law. It was the very means by which Abraham, the patriarchal father of Israel, was saved and which continues to apply today, the New Covenant in His blood being in essence an extension on one hand and a fulfillment on the other of the Abrahamic Covenant.

**John Phillips** - The point Paul thus makes with the Galatians is clear. The Judaizers were proud of being "Abraham's seed" (John 8:33, John 8:39, cf Mt 3:9). Very well! How was Abraham saved? Simply by believing the Lord! No more, no less! That, itself, cut the ground from beneath the feet of the Judaizers. But Paul had only just begun. If that was how Abraham was saved, how are all other men saved? On the same principle exactly. ([Exploring Galatians](#))

**Wuest** gives some additional background on why Paul would use Abraham as an illustration of justification by faith

The occasion for his argument is found in the fact that the Judaizers taught that the natural descendants of Abraham were his children, and thus accepted with God. All of which meant that only the circumcised could be saved. Thus, circumcision was a prerequisite of salvation. This teaching was based on a misapprehension of Genesis 12 and Genesis 17. They argued that no one could participate in the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham, and so in the Messianic salvation which was inseparably connected with it, unless he was circumcised. The mistake they made was in failing to distinguish between the purely Jewish and national covenant God made with Abraham, which had to do with the earthly ministry and destiny of the Chosen People as a channel which God would use in bringing salvation to the earth, and that salvation which came through a descendant of Abraham, the Messiah. **Circumcision** was God's mark of separation upon the Jew, isolating him in the midst of the Gentile nations, in order that He might use the nation Israel for His own purposes. **It had nothing to do with the acceptance of salvation by the Jew.** Over against this contention, Paul argues that Abraham was justified by faith, not by circumcision. In Romans 4:9+ and Ro 4:10+, he proves his case conclusively when he shows that Abraham was declared righteous before he was circumcised, which demonstrates that his circumcision had nothing to do with his acceptance of salvation." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Vine** comments on what it meant that **Abraham believed God** - Abraham accounted that God was able to fulfill His promise (FOR THE SON OF PROMISE - ISAAC), and this he did, not ignoring the natural impossibility, but looking it squarely in the face; see Romans 4:19+.

**Donald Campbell** makes an interesting comparison - I know a man who married a woman who was extremely wealthy. When he accepted her as his wife, all her money was added to his bank account. In the same way, when Abraham placed his faith in God, all God's righteousness was added to Abraham's spiritual account. My friend became as wealthy as his wife, and Abraham became in God's eyes as righteous as God. How? God credited to him his own divine righteousness. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - Generally speaking, ancient Rabbis did not really admire Abraham's faith. They believed he was so loved by God because he was thought to have kept the law hundreds of years before it was given. For these and other reasons, when Paul brought up Abraham, it would have been a complete surprise to his opponents, who believed that Abraham proved their point.

**Gerald Borchert** - Abraham's faith (cf. Rom 4:3) in an exemplary proof-text that confirms the difference between works of the law and the hearing of faith discussed in the previous section. In contrast to Paul's understanding of Abraham's faith, the rabbis would have argued that Abraham was judged righteous because he had been faithful in the time of testing and was consequently rewarded (cf. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 15:6; *Exodus Rabbah* 3:12; see also Longenecker 1990:113-114). The rabbis understood the reward as the establishment of the everlasting covenant of Genesis 17:1-8 with its unbreakable sign of circumcision (Gen 17:9-14; cf. Sir 44:19-21; 1 Macc 2:52; *Jubilees* 17:15-18)...Paul had been brought up with a rabbinic perspective, but when he became a Christian, he realized that Abraham did not merit the covenant. Instead, the covenant was a promise from God that Abraham accepted by faith. This distinction was foundational for Paul; it went to the heart of his conflict with the Galatians and their misguided teachers because they had undoubtedly relied on Abraham as their role model for the place of both circumcision and human effort in being justified ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 14: Romans and Galatians](#))

**Newton** points out what was most likely the erroneous reasoning of the Judaizers in trying to convince others that salvation was

attained by faith plus works. Newton suggests (and I agree) that the Judaizers "spoke of the 'righteous Abraham' and made the deduction that he became righteous due to his circumcision and his strict observance to the Law. With convincing argument they applied this to the modern need for "works" in order to be justified. But they neglected making a right interpretation. For Abraham was declared righteous because of his faith in the promise of God ten years before God commanded him to be circumcised! And his obedience to God came about without a codified Law which did not come until over 400 years later! Paul gives his argument for justification through faith by looking at the Galatian believer's experience in Galatians 3:1-5. Now he draws a conclusion in Gal 3:6: "Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." Paul is drawing a conclusion between Abraham's justification and those in the present when he uses the phrase "even so" (Greek *kathos*). It is often translated "just as," so that the inference he implies is that there was no difference in how Abraham was justified and how you are justified. He appeals to Genesis 15:6, quoting the text to show that before Abraham's circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14), Abraham's faith in the promise of God to him was accounted to him as righteousness. God did not accept Abraham because of anything which he did or any work that he attempted. He simply believed God and God accounted him as righteous before Him. ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

**Abraham believed God** - The NT quotes Ge 15:6 three times - Gal 3:6, Romans and James. This is one of the clearest statements in all Scripture about justification (cp Ro 3:24). Abraham "trusted" God, and this, rather than his works, was the ground upon which he was accorded "righteousness." The Hebrew word translated believed means "to say amen." God gave a promise, and Abraham responded with "Amen!" It was this faith that was counted for righteousness. Like Paul, who wrote this epistle to Rome, Abraham was sovereignly and directly chosen by God. Neither Abraham nor Paul was searching for God when they were divinely called and commissioned. Abraham had probably never heard of the true God, whereas Paul knew a great deal about Him. Abraham was seemingly content with his idolatrous paganism, and Paul was content with his traditional, but false, Judaism. When God called Abraham, or Abram, which was his original name, He gave no reason for selecting that pagan from the millions of others in the world. Nowhere in Scripture is the reason given. God chose Abraham because that was His divine will, which needs no justification or explanation. Abraham was a man of faith (Ro 1:16 4:18-21 Ga 3:6, 7, 9 Heb 11:8-10). But faith is not a meritorious work. It is never the ground of justification—it is simply the channel through which it is received and it, too, is a gift (Ep 2:8 2 Pe1:1). The one "work" that "earned" Abraham being declared righteous by God was not a work at all, but the non-act (the heart attitude) of trusting God. Wuest adds: "It was the act of Abraham placing himself in such an attitude of trust in and acceptance of God's blessings that made it possible for God to bestow righteousness upon him. It is like the proffered hand of a drowning man that makes it possible for the life guard to save him. There is nothing meritorious in the act of a drowning man in stretching out his hand in order to be saved. It is the efficient medium through which he is saved. Thus, the act of faith on the sinner's part is not meritorious but only the efficient medium through which God is able save him. The "it" therefore refers to the outstretched hand of faith of a sinner reaching out for salvation that God grasps in His own to lift him out of the mire of sin and place him upon the Rock, Christ Jesus."

In Romans Paul appeals to the Scriptures just as in Gal 3:6 -

"For what does the Scripture say? "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Ro 4:3<sub>+</sub>)

**Comment:** The Scripture is virtually personified (Ro 9:17 Jn 19:37 Jas 4:5) by Paul who puts much validity in what the Scripture says as he knows the Jews prided themselves on having the Scriptures (Ro 2:17-19, 20) It is not important what man says about "the way" but only what God the Author and Perfector of our faith says (see esp Isa 8:20) For the apostle and his readers the Scripture was the final and infallible court of appeal. Rabbis appealed to biblical citations, sometimes prefacing them with, "What does Scripture say?" Jewish teachers often commented on Abraham's faith as reflected in Ge15:6, which they read as "faithfulness," one of his works.

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. (Jas 2:23<sub>+</sub>)

## **GOD MADE A PROMISE ABRAHAM SAID "AMEN!"**

As alluded to above, when Abraham believed God it was as if he had said "Amen!" The Hebrew word for **Amen** (0543) is derived from the verb **aman** which means to be firm, dependable, durable, steady, stable, sure, established, trustworthy. **Aman** was used to acknowledge and emphasize what was valid, sure and true, or important and significant and this was the word Moses used (the first use of **aman** in all of Scripture) when he wrote that Abraham "**believed** (Hebrew = **aman**; Lxx = **pisteuo**) **God**." (Ge 15:6) By the way, if you have not yet memorized this verse take a moment to jot it down on a card and spend time the next few days memorizing and meditating on the great truths in this passage (See preceding [THOUGHT](#)).

**John MacArthur** points out that "It was not the greatness of Abraham's faith that saved him but the **greatness of the gracious Lord** in Whom he placed his faith. **Faith** is never the basis or the reason for justification, but only the **channel** through which God works His redeeming grace. **Faith** is simply a convicted heart reaching out to receive God's free and unmerited gift of salvation."

**Norman Bartlett** on **faith** - When it is said that Abraham believed GOD, what is meant is his personal trust in GOD, his acceptance of God's Word absolutely, simply because it was His Word....It is to be noted, however, that **faith** is the condition, not the ground, of acceptance with GOD. It is simply the hand that seizes the life preserver thrown to a drowning man. It is the channel through which flows the grace that transforms deserts into gardens. ([Galatians 3:1-22 - Doctrinal Exposition](#))

**William Hendriksen** explains the relationship of **faith** and **obedience** - Abraham's life is, in fact, an illustration of the manner in which men, in all ages, are saved. Confidence in God, come what may, and resulting obedience to God's revealed will, characterized Abraham's life. Of these two—confidence and obedience—the former is basic throughout. Abraham obeyed because he believed. He heeded God's command because, first of all, he trusted God. The work of obedience proved that the confidence was genuine ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon](#))

**Believed** (4100) (**pisteuo**) means to consider something (or Someone = God) to be true and therefore worthy of our total trust. And remember that the Greek verb **pisteuo** in the context of salvation means more than simple intellectual assent. The respected Greek lexicon author W E Vine defines belief as consisting of

- (1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Thes 2:11 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** [**pisteuo**] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")
- (2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** [**pisteuo**] in His name") and
- (3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender.

**Newton** on **faith** - We must understand that the idea of faith or believing is **not simply acknowledging historical facts**. Certainly we must do that. Primarily it involves the matter of trust or clinging to or depending upon the revelation of God in Christ. What did Abraham believe? He did not have the full revelation which is ours; nor did he even have an Old Testament canon. He simply had the promises of God. "*Abraham's faith is seen as a 'readiness to surrender unreservedly to the word of the Lord, regardless of how incredible it seemed'*" (Ridderbos)...With the barest understanding, Abraham heard the word of the Lord related to him personally and to his posterity. Though he had been reared in a pagan, idolatrous land, he laid aside his idolatrous lifestyle, turning his back upon his pagan heritage (**Ed**: compare repentance by pagans in 1 Th 1:9-10 **note**), and trusted in the Lord God Who called him out (Acts 7:2-4). When his wife was barren and beyond childbearing age (cp Ge 17:19), he trusted in the promise of God that he would be the father of many nations and that through his seed, all the families of the world would be blessed (Ge 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4). Genesis 15:6 expresses the doctrine of justification by faith in its embryonic form: "Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteous." Abraham's faith was placed on his account before God as righteousness. It was not his works but his faith that God accepted. With the eyes of faith, Abraham rested in the Lord and his promise (THAT IS - BY FAITH ABRAHAM EVEN LOOKED FORWARD TO CHRIST), so that our Lord could say, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56) . ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

While we do not know exactly what Abraham knew when he believed God in Genesis 15:6, we do now that the Gospel had been preached to him (Gal 3:8), so presumably he had some inkling of the Messiah, the Redeemer, the only One Who could save men from their sins. We will have to wait until we meet him face to face in the future to ask him "Abraham, how much of the Messiah and His death, burial and resurrection did you know?"

**AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS** - **Reckoned** (as discussed more below) is a bookkeeping term which means to credit to someone's account. What is **IT** which was reckoned? As **Vine** says **IT** refers to "the fact that he believed God; **faith**, which, though it is not specifically mentioned here, is mentioned at Romans 4:9 (See below)**Vine** states that "whatever is '**reckoned**' to a person cannot have been his **originally and naturally**." **Newton** explains that "Abraham was credited before God as being just or righteous before Him. Was it because of his circumcision or his works? The text is clear: that which was **not his originally or naturally** was credited to him through to faith alone." ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

Genesis 15:6+ Then he **believed** in the LORD; and **He reckoned **it** to him as righteousness**.

Romans 4:3+ For what does the Scripture say? "**ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND **IT** WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"

Romans 4:5+ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith is credited as righteousness**,

Romans 4:9+ Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, **FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"

Romans 4:22+ Therefore **IT WAS ALSO CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

James 2:23+ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, **"AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,"** and he was called the friend of God.

As sinners, we have NO righteousness that would be acceptable to God. But God has given His Word of promise. When we respond to Him in faith, against our name in His "account book" He makes an entry that says in effect, 'This person is righteous in My sight!' Our faith has been credited to us as righteousness. Some might complain that this concept of salvation is too crude. But that same person, if he went to his bank and found that someone had credited his account with the gift of \$10 million, wouldn't complain about "crude." He'd more likely shout for joy! In Christ God has credited to us something far more precious than worldly wealth. Our response should be "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor 9:15)

**Reckoned** (3049) (**logizomai** from **lógos** = reason, word, account) means to reckon and refers to a process of careful study which results in the arriving at a conclusion. In the present context the sense is to charge or credit to Abraham's spiritual account the righteousness of Christ. Paul speaks extensively about **reckoning** righteousness to Abraham in Romans 4, especially in Ro 4:3, Ro 4:5, Ro 4:6, Ro 4:9, Ro 4:10, 11, Ro 4:22, 23, 24). Notice that reckoned is passive voice and in this context would be a "divine passive," indicating God is the subject.

**Wuest on logizomai** - The word is used in the papyri as a business term: for instance, "put to one's account; let my revenues be placed on deposit at the storehouse; reckoning the wine to him at 16 drachmae the monochore; a single artabae being reckoned at 180 myriads of denari; I now give orders generally with regard to all payments actually made or credited to the government. Thus Abraham believed God, and his act of faith was placed to his account in value as righteousness. He believed God and his act of faith was credited to him for righteousness. He believed God and his act of faith was placed on deposit for him and evaluated as righteousness. He believed God and his act of faith was computed as to its value, and there was placed to his account, righteousness. He believed God, and his act of faith was credited to his account for righteousness. Finally, he believed God, and his act of faith was credited to him, resulting in righteousness. All this does not mean, however, that Abraham's act of faith was looked upon as a meritorious action deserving of reward. It was not viewed as a good work by God and rewarded by the bestowal of righteousness. That would be salvation by works. But the fact that Abraham cast off all dependence upon good works as a means of finding acceptance with God, and accepted God's way of bestowing salvation, was answered by God in giving him that salvation. Abraham simply put himself in the place where a righteous God could offer him salvation upon the basis of justice satisfied, and in pure grace. God therefore put righteousness to his account. He evaluated Abraham's act of faith as that which made it possible for Him to give him salvation.

**Newton** - The concept of 'reckoning' is known as **imputation**. If we can think of this for a moment in terms of a legal accounting term, it may help us grasp its significance in our justification. Suppose you owed someone \$100 trillion. I think it is safe to assume that none of us can even begin to think in those terms. Such a debt would be staggering! It would be impossible for us to pay. So we must face the consequences of our failure to satisfy this debt. We could plead with the creditor that we are good people, that we do kind acts of service for others, that we even try to balance our books monthly! The fact is, we also have another side to us. We actually hate the creditor and refuse to have any kind of relationship to him. Still we make our pleas, but the creditor cannot legally accept any of our pleas or actions. The only thing acceptable would be the satisfaction of the debt: \$100 trillion. But we do not have the resources to pay such a debt. Nor would the combined efforts of our friends be enough to pay such a debt. It is a debt which we cannot pay. But suppose that the creditor, who had absolutely no obligation to us, pursued a course to satisfy this debt. He did this without any help on our part. He did this because of his own great love and purpose. At an immense cost to himself, he paid our debt! Out of his own desire, he took his own resources and applied them to our account. The \$100 trillion was not ours, but he treated it as ours. He credited his resources to our account, so that our debt might be completely satisfied. That which seemed to be unspeakable and impossible, he did; and we believed him. This illustration does not do justice to all the work of Christ, but hopefully it serves to demonstrate imputation. That which is not ours, that which did not originate with us, that which is even impossible with us is credited as ours before God's judicial demands, through faith in Jesus Christ. We are accounted before God as righteous or justified. The merits of Jesus Christ in His righteous fulfillment of the Law and His vicarious death are applied to our account before God. Of this **Martin Luther** could exclaim, "This unspeakable gift therefore excelleth all reason, that God doth account and acknowledge him for

righteous, without works, which embraceth His Son by faith alone, who was sent into the world, was born, suffered, and was crucified for us" [Commentary on Galatians, 131]. ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

**Spurgeon** - Abraham He was the father of the faithful—that is, of the believing—not of those who trust in their own works. These are only like Ishmael, who must be cast out of the chosen family. But the true children, the real Isaacs, are those who are born according to the promise of grace. (He believed God) That is the old way, the way of faith. It is not here recorded that Abraham did anything, though he did much, but the one thing that was “accounted to him for righteousness” was this: that he “believed God.” He was not saved by his works, but by his faith. His faith was the means of the imputation to him of the righteousness of the Savior who was yet to come. That is the scriptural doctrine: Faith is counted or imputed for righteousness. God counts them righteous who believe in Jesus. He not only absolves you from sin, but He justifies you, accounts you as having kept the law.

**Righteousness** (1343)([dikaiosune](#) from [dikaios](#) = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense [dikaiosune](#) conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. **Dikaaiosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ ([Click here](#) to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

**Wuest - Justification** is the act of God removing from the sinner his guilt and the penalty incurred by that guilt, and bestowing a positive **righteousness**, Christ Jesus Himself in whom the believer stands, not only innocent and uncondemned, but actually righteous in point of law for time and for eternity. This is what God did for Abraham when he **believed** Him. This is what the Judaizers were attempting to merit for themselves by their own good works. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

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**Phil Newton** applies Abraham's story to the situation with many today who still seek salvation by their works - It is a historical fact that some of the biggest battles fought by the church of Jesus Christ were not against the non-religious world, but against those who professed to have a belief in the Lord God, yet denied that salvation comes only through faith. Augustine fought this battle in the 4th century, as did John Wycliffe in the 14th century. Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, Latimer **all fought against the prevailing and popular belief that God would accept the works of man for righteousness**. A man need not abandon himself to Christ alone. He could continue to find acceptance with God on the basis of his religious practice, his good works, his participation in the sacraments, his acts of service, his giving. Just as the Judaizers in Galatia appealed to the Old Testament examples, so have many through the centuries, appealing to the skewed interpretation that God accepts us on the basis of our works. To this, the Apostle rose in defiance. He begins his argument that shows "faith has always been the God-required response that brings salvation (Eph. 2:8-9)" [John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 72]....Paul appealed to Scripture as the foundation of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He wanted the Galatians to understand that his message of faith alone in Christ alone was not some new twist, but rather that it was anchored in the timelessness of the Word of God. Even the patriarch Abraham was saved by faith! The troubling reality of our own day is that multitudes are abandoning the clear teaching of Scripture concerning the way of salvation. They embrace the notion that God accepts something other than faith alone in Christ alone. The Scripture still stands with the timeless message of faith in Jesus Christ alone as the way to be justified. Are your eternal hopes resting in anything other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Then you need to hear the biblical truth of justification through faith in Christ alone. ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

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#### **TODAY IN THE WORD Galatians 3:6-9**

The Book of Virtues, William Bennett's best-seller, kicked off a national trend linking stories and values--or rather, a recognition of the already-existing link between what we value and the stories we tell. The idea is that the best stories show characters and actions that we will want to imitate or ideas that we will want to incorporate in our lives. A story, then--from history, literature or other sources--can act as a moral teacher.

Mark Twain's story of Huckleberry Finn, for example, forces us to evaluate the morality of Huck's actions as he befriends an escaped slave and helps him--an action his society condemns but which readers have many reasons to find admirable. In the novel, we witness Huck's inner moral wrestlings and choices. The way we understand and respond to Huck's struggles tells a lot about our own moral character and choices.

In his attempt to prove the doctrine of justification by faith, Paul appealed to the story of Abraham. Jews or Judaizers would have had high regard for Abraham. In fact, the Judaizers were urging the Galatians to be circumcised as Abraham had been. Paul appealed to them on the basis of the fact that the children of Abraham were not under law but under promise.

Abraham's faith (v. 6) was anchored in the person of God and His promises. Abraham committed himself totally and unreservedly to his God. Righteousness was not inherently his but was given to him by God on the basis of faith; works were not involved in obtaining justification. This lesson would not have been lost on the Galatian Judaizers .

APPLY THE WORD Since Paul uses Abraham to illustrate his points both here and later in Galatians 3, this might be a good time for you to refresh yourself or your family on the history of Abraham and Sarah.

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### Galatians 3:6-14. THE ROYAL AIR John Henry Jowett

EMERSON says somewhere that he has noticed that men whose duties are performed beneath great domes acquire a stately and appropriate manner. The vergers in our great cathedrals have a dignified stride. It is not otherwise with men who consciously live under the power of vast relationships. Princes of royal blood have a certain great "air" about them. The consciousness of noble kinships has an expansive influence upon the soul. The Jews felt its influence when they called to mind "our Father Abraham."

So is it with men and women of glorious kinships in the realm of faith. Their souls expand in the vast and exalted relations. "The children of faith" have vital communion with all the spiritual princes and princesses of countless years. They have blood-relationship with the patriarchs, and psalmists, and prophets, and they dwell "in heavenly places" with Paul, and Augustine, and Luther, and Wesley.

Surely, such exalted kinship should influence our very stride, and set its mark upon our "daily walk and conversation." It ought to make us so big that we can never speak a mean word, or do a petty and peevish thing.

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### Galatians 3:7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

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Greek - Ginoskete (2PAI) ara hoti oi ek pisteos outoi huioi eisin (3PPAI) Abraam

Amplified: Know and understand that it is [really] the people [who live] by faith who are [the true] sons of Abraham.

Barclay So you must realize that it is those who make the venture of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Phillips Can you not see, then, that all those who "believe God" are the real "sons of Abraham"?

Wuest You perceive, therefore, that those who are of faith, these are sons of Abraham. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:7 so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham.

GNT Galatians 3:7 Γιν σκετε ρα τι ο κ π στεως, ο τοι υ ο ε σιν βρα μ.

NLT Galatians 3:7 The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God.

KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

ESV Galatians 3:7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

ASV Galatians 3:7 Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.

CSB Galatians 3:7 then understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons.

NIV Galatians 3:7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

NKJ Galatians 3:7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

NRS Galatians 3:7 so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham.

YLT Galatians 3:7 know ye, then, that those of faith -- these are sons of Abraham,

NAB Galatians 3:7 Realize then that it is those who have faith who are children of Abraham.

NJB Galatians 3:7 Be sure, then, that it is people of faith who are the children of Abraham.

GWN Galatians 3:7 You must understand that people who have faith are Abraham's descendants.

BBE Galatians 3:7 Be certain, then, that those who are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham.

- **Be sure:** Ps 100:3 Lu 21:31 Heb 13:23
- **that it is those who are of faith:** Ga 3:26-29 Joh 8:39 Ro 4:11-16,24 9:7,8
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur

- [Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

**Therefore** - [term of conclusion](#) - Based on what he has just quoted from Genesis 15:6 (that Abraham was justified by faith), the conclusion is that all who believe as Abraham believed are spiritual children of Abraham the "father of faith" so to speak. **Lenski** says "From the incontestable fact laid down by the Scriptural πιστευσε, **'he believed,'** (in Gal 3:6) Paul at once draws an equally incontestable conclusion with the [illative](#) οα. (= **therefore**)." ([Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Wuest** says Paul's ["argument"](#) is, "Since faith was the way Abraham was justified, it follows that those who exercise like faith, are his true followers."

**Be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham- Amplified** - "Know and understand that it is [really] the people [who live] by faith who are [the true] sons of Abraham." **Those who are of faith** is a description of those who had believed unto salvation, whether Jew or Gentile. Now pause a moment and remember to whom Paul is writing. Are these not primarily Gentiles who have believed the Gospel of truth taught by Paul? And the answer is yes they are primarily Gentiles, those who originally did not have access to the Pentateuch (Torah), so it is implicit that Paul taught them these truths from the Old Testament. And of course we know the Gospel is present in the Old Testament from Galatians 3:8.

**Grant Osborne on be sure** - "Know" (NIV: "Understand") always points to a truth that readers should have realized but somehow have missed (WE CAN "BE SURE" PAUL TAUGHT THEM!). Paul is saying it is evident from the Genesis account that only those who come by faith can be the children of Abraham. The Galatians' failure to understand that obvious truth is appalling to him. ([Galatians: Verse by Verse](#))

**Be sure** (1097) ([ginosko](#)) means to acquire information through some modality, as through sense perception (e.g., reading Paul's words in this epistle!). In addition [ginosko](#) involves experiential knowledge, not merely the accumulation of known facts. Note some (Lenski, Vine) interpret **be sure** as in the **imperative mood**, a command to know or realize. And so **Vine** explains that the Judaizers "had been persuading the Galatians that only by circumcision could they become **'sons of Abraham'**"; but now the apostle shows that because of his **faith**, not because he had been circumcised, Abraham was accepted by God, entered into covenant ([Abrahamic](#)) relation with Him (see [Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)) and received all his privileges and blessings, and this he impresses upon them by the imperative **"know ye."**

**Those...of faith** (**ek** = out of + **pisteos** = faith) is literally "out of faith." The pronoun **"those"** is emphatic (as in Ro 8:14+ = "these are...") **Vine** says **"those**, be they Jews or Gentiles, who seek justification not by works but by faith, **those** whose spiritual life is derived from (VINE SAYS FAITH - BUT MORE ACCURATELY LIFE & CHARACTER ARE BOTH FROM GOD, FAITH IS THE HAND THAT RECEIVES THE GIFT FROM GOD!), and whose spiritual character is formed by, **faith**. Such, of course, acknowledge that they are without resources in themselves, and that they depend solely upon God. To them **faith** is not a merit by which they might be commended to God, it is the expression of realized need, and of submission to, and dependence upon (AND A GRASPING OF OR RECEIVING FROM), God for its supply. "

**Spurgeon on those who are of faith** - Those who are justified by **faith** in Jesus, those whose **faith** is counted for righteousness, they are the children of believing Abraham—not those who are under the **law of Moses**, not those who trust in **works** and **boasters in circumcision**. These, even among the Jews, are but His children by the power of nature, to whom no more belongs than to Ishmael. **Abraham was the father of the faithful, or believing**. In his grandest aspect he is not the sire of a rebellious nation, but of the believing seed. Abraham is the father of the believers, and believers are all the children of Abraham.

**Campbell** rightly observes that Paul is "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; literally "sons"). Abraham and his spiritual descendants, both Jews and Gentiles, have all been declared righteous by faith." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Faith** (4102) ([pistis](#)) means trust or confidence and in the active sense equates with belief. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

**Wuest** points out that "The phrase **"sons of Abraham,"** is not to be understood in a genealogical sense but rather in the ethical sense of the term. Abraham was accepted by God on the basis of faith, and God deals with all men on the same moral basis. God is no respecter of persons. Thus the faith exercised by Abraham is declared to be the fundamental condition of acceptance with God.

**Spurgeon on sons of Abraham** - Race has nothing to do with this matter; an end has been put to all that. God is not the God of the

Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Here is a new race whose distinction is not that they were born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but by the will of God. This is the token by which they are known: They believe God, and it is accounted to them for righteousness—even as it was accounted to Abraham.

Paul is simply reaffirming the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 17:7 that "'I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your **descendants** after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your **descendants** after you.'" When we first read that promise, we see "**descendants**" and the first thing we think of is Jewish descendants, but that is actually only a partially correct interpretation. Why? Simply because not all of the ethnic Jews became Abraham's spiritual descendants (See Romans 2 passage below and Jesus' discussion of John 8:38-47 below). Only those who had faith like Abraham became his "descendants." And notice that this passage leaves the Gospel door "wide open!" That is, ANYONE, Jew or Gentile, who exercises faith like Abraham entered into the unconditional Abrahamic covenant.

**Those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham:** Abraham's true children in the spiritual sphere are not those who are his natural offspring (by blood, ethnic Jews) or those who assiduously adhered to the law but are those who simply believe. Paul sounded a similar warning to "religious" Jews declaring...

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is **circumcision** that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart (a truth the Jews had been clearly taught in Dt 10:16, Dt 30:6+), by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Ro 2:28, 29+).

**Related:** Excursus on [Circumcision](#)

The Jews thought they were children of Abraham but Jesus gave them a rude awakening in John 8:38-47.

"I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from **your father.**" 39 They answered and said to Him, '**Abraham is our father.**' (THIS IS THE SAME THING THE JUDAIZERS THOUGHT!) Jesus \*said to them, "**If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham** (**COMMENT:** JESUS is not telling them that **deeds** save, but is saying that if they obeyed God as Abraham did, their **obedience** would show they had **believed** like Abraham [SEE [Obedience of faith](#); [Relationship of faith and obedience](#)]. The one thing Abraham did was to believe God! The fruit of his belief was the gift of personal righteousness before God and a heart that now prompted performance of righteous deeds out of love, not out of legalism. **W E Vine** adds "The words of the Lord recorded in John 6:29 are also to the point here; the only "**work**" that God recognizes is a right attitude of heart toward His Son, and whatever proceeds therefrom."). 40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God (WRONG AGAIN - IN FACT THEY REJECTED JESUS THE WAY INTO THE FAMILY OF GOD - read John 1:11+, John 1:12+, John 1:13+. Note also God is not the "Father" of everyone born, only those who are born again!)." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me (AND THIS LOVE PROMPTS OBEDIENCE AS IT DID IN ABRAHAM - See Genesis 22:1-2, 18, Jn 14:15); for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 "Why do you not understand ([ginosko](#)) what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 "**You are of your father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father (**COMMENT:** The "fruit" of your life points to the "root!"). He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45 "But because I speak the truth, **you do not believe Me** (**COMMENT:** A striking contrast with Abraham). 46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do **you not believe Me**? 47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because **you are not of God.**" (**COMMENT:** You are not God's children! God is not your Father, even though in your deceived state of mind you think He is - Jn 8:41)

**Wiersbe** adds "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." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

As an aside another truth illustrated by this exchange between Jesus and the Jews is that when you are deceived, you don't know it!

**David Guzik** has a lengthy note on **sons of Abraham** writing that "This was a strong rebuke to the Jewish Christians who tried to bring Gentile Christians under the law. They believed they were superior because they descended from Abraham and observed the law. Paul said that the most important link to Abraham was **not the link of genetics** and **not the link of works**, but it is **the link of faith**. This would have been a shocking change of thinking for these particular opponents of Paul. They deeply believed that they had a standing before God because they were genetically descended from Abraham. **At that time, some Jewish Rabbis taught that Abraham stood at the gates of Hell just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally slipped by.** John the Baptist dealt with this same thinking when he said, "Do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones (Matthew 3:9, cf Lk 3:8+)" **Paul knocked down their blind reliance on genetic relation to Abraham and showed that what really mattered was faith in Jesus.** It's the same today when people believe God accepts them because they come from a Christian family. God is a Father, not a grandfather; everyone must have their own faith in God. **Are sons of Abraham:** This was a great comfort to the Gentile Christians who were regarded as "second class Christians" by others. Now they could know that they had a real, important link to Abraham and could consider themselves sons of Abraham. Sadly, Christians have taken this glorious truth and misapplied it through the centuries. This has been a verse that many claim in support of [replacement theology](#) – the idea that God is finished with the people of Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group, and that the Church spiritually inherits all the promises made to Israel.. **Replacement theology has done tremendous damage in the Church, providing the theological fuel for the fires of horrible persecution of the Jews.** If Galatians 3:7 were the only verse in the Bible speaking to the issue, there might be a place for saying that the Church has completely replaced Israel. But we understand the Bible according to its entire message, and allow one passage to give light to others. iii. For example, Romans 11:25+ (hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in) **states clearly that God is not finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group.** Even though God has turned the focus of His saving mercies away from Israel on to the Gentiles, He will turn it back again. **This simple passage refutes those who insist that God is forever done with Israel as Israel, and that the Church is the New Israel and inherits every promise ever made to national and ethnic Israel of the Old Testament.** We are reminded of the enduring character of the promises made to **national and ethnic Israel** (such as Genesis 13:15 and Genesis 17:7-8). God is not "finished" with Israel, and Israel is not "spiritualized" as the church. While we do see and rejoice in a continuity of God's work throughout all His people through all generations, we still see a distinction between Israel and the Church – a distinction that Paul understands well. All who put their faith in Jesus Christ are sons of Abraham; but **Abraham has his spiritual sons and his genetic sons, and God has a plan and a place for both.** Yet no one can deny that it is far more important to be a spiritual son of Abraham than a genetic son. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Galatians 3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."**

Greek - proidousa de e grae hoti ek pisteos dikaioi (3SPAI) ta ethne o theos proeueggelisato (3SAMI) to Abraam hoti eneuologethesontai (3PFPI) en soi panta ta ethne

Amplified: And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify (declare righteous, put in right standing with Himself) the Gentiles in consequence of faith, proclaimed the Gospel [foretelling the glad tidings of a Savior long beforehand] to Abraham in the promise, saying, In you shall all the nations [of the earth] be blessed.

Barclay Scripture foresaw that it would be by faith that God would bring the Gentiles into a right relationship with himself, and told the good news to Abraham before it happened—in you shall all nations be blessed.

Phillips The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles "by faith", really proclaimed the Gospel centuries ago in the words spoken to Abraham, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'

Wuest And the scripture, forseeing that on a basis of faith God justifies the Gentiles, announced the good news beforehand to Abraham, namely, All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you."

GNT Galatians 3:8 προῖδο σα δ γραφ τι κ π στεωσ δικαιο τ θνη θες, προευηγγελ σατο τ βρα μ τι νευλογηθ σονται ν σο π ντα τ θνη·

NLT Galatians 3:8 What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would declare the Gentiles to be righteous because of their faith. God proclaimed this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."

KJV Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

ESV Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

ASV Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed.

CSB Galatians 3:8 Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and told the good news ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you.

NIV Galatians 3:8 The 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."

NKJ Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

NRS Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you."

YLT Galatians 3:8 and the Writing having foreseen that by faith God doth declare righteous the nations did proclaim before the good news to Abraham --

NAB Galatians 3:8 Scripture, which saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, "Through you shall all the nations be blessed."

NJB Galatians 3:8 And it was because scripture foresaw that God would give saving justice to the gentiles through faith, that it announced the future gospel to Abraham in the words: All nations will be blessed in you.

GWN Galatians 3:8 Scripture saw ahead of time that God would give his approval to non-Jewish people who have faith. So Scripture announced the Good News to Abraham ahead of time when it said, "Through you all the people of the world will be blessed."

BBE Galatians 3:8 And the holy Writings, seeing before the event that God would give the Gentiles righteousness by faith, gave the good news before to Abraham, saying, In you will all the nations have a blessing.

- **The Scripture:** Ga 3:22 Gal 4:30 Jn 7:38,42 Jn 19:37 Ro 9:17 2Ti 3:15-17
- **foreseeing** : Acts 15:15-18
- **that God would justify the Gentiles by faith** Ro 3:28-30 Ro 9:30
- **preached the gospel beforehand** Heb 4:2
- **ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.:** Ga 3:16 Ge 12:3 18:18 22:18 26:4 28:14 49:10 Ps 72:7 Isa 6:13 65:9 Ac 2:25,26,35 Rev 11:15
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#) - Phil Newton
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## **THE FORESIGHT OF SCRIPTURE: SALVATION IN EVERY AGE BY FAITH**

**The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU."** - As Wuest discusses below this verse more literally begins "**And** the Scripture." **Amplified** = "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify (declare righteous, put in right standing with Himself) the Gentiles in consequence of faith, proclaimed the Gospel [foretelling the glad tidings of a Savior long beforehand] to Abraham in the promise, saying, In you shall all the nations [of the earth] be blessed."

**Wuest** - This verse contains Paul's answer to the false assumption of the Judaizers that inasmuch as it is in Abraham that all nations were to be blessed, they (THE GENTILES IN THOSE NATIONS) would have to be incorporated in his descendants by the rite of circumcision. By the use of the word **AND**, from **de** ([1161](#) - "de" most commonly denotes continuation and further thought development, taking its specific sense from the context) (UNFORTUNATELY THE NASB OMITTS THE "**AND**" cf Gal 3:8NET, Gal 3:8ESV), Paul asserts that the blessing of Abraham, namely, the one he received from God, JUSTIFICATION, was received by him

through faith, and that it is through the exercise of a like faith that the Gentiles become his spiritual children, and not through submission to circumcision. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**The Scripture** - The Scripture is personified ([personification](#) is a [figure of speech](#) in which inanimate things are credited with the qualities and powers of human beings) as a prophet (foreseeing) and a preacher (in Ro 4:3± as a witness taking the stand). This personification is a [figure of speech](#) expressing the thought that **God's divine foresight is expressed in the Scriptures**. It is notable that Jews had a familiar question they would ask, "What did the Scripture foresee?" (THE JUDAIZERS WOULD HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH THIS SAYING). And so personifying the Scriptures was a common Jewish [figure of speech](#). Because **Scripture** is God's Word, when it speaks, God speaks. (Read that again! It begets the question - Do you really believe it? Then why don't you read His Word more often to hear Him? A question directed only to those lax in reading the Scriptures, in hearing from their Father!) This truth should cause us all to fall on our face in wonder and awe and thanksgiving -- what a privilege we have to hear directly from the Living God through His living Word! Why do we see such a proliferation of Christian books, especially fiction and pop psychology? (Read Eccl 12:12) In my personal opinion, if you want to read books other than the Bible, consider reading biographies of the great men and women of faith who make up the modern day "great cloud of witnesses" and who demonstrate how the abundant life is lived in actual practice.

Here are ALL the NT passages in which Scripture is personified as SPEAKING -

Gal 3:22 Gal 4:30 Jn 7:38,42 Jn 19:37 Ro 1:2 Ro 4:3 Ro 9:17 Ro 10:11 Ro 11:12 1 Ti 5:18

**Vine on [personification](#) of Scripture** - The New Testament writers, like the Jews generally, John 7:42, not infrequently personify the Scriptures, representing them as (GOD HIMSELF) saying the things recorded in them; see John 19:37; Romans 4:3; James 4:5, e.g., and cp. Romans 9:17, where the message sent by God to Pharaoh through Moses, and recorded by him in Exodus 9:16, is quoted as what "the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh." In the present passage **Scripture** is credited with more pronouncedly [sentient](#) (endowed with feeling and unstructured consciousness) qualities, "**foreseeing**," and with active powers, "**preached**." Cp. also Gal 3:22, "The **Scripture** hath shut up all things under sin." "In such cases *hē graphe* ("the Scripture") stands obviously for the Author of the Scriptures—God, by Whose [inspiration](#) they were written (2 Ti 3:16±)" (Ellicott). That this is the case is plain from the obvious fact that the book of Genesis, in which "**the Scripture**" referred to is found, was written by Moses more than four centuries after the words were spoken. Cp. Mt 11:13, "the Law prophesied until John".

**The Scripture** (1124) ([graphe](#) from [grapho](#) = to write; English = graphite - the lead in a pencil!) means first a writing or thing written, a document. The majority of the NT uses of [graphe](#) refer to the Old Testament writings, in a general sense of the whole collection when the **PLURAL FORM** of [graphe](#) is used. Here in Galatians 3:8 [graphe](#) is singular which always refers to a particular passage and is used in such a way that quoting Scripture is understood to be the same as quoting God ("*hē graphe*" = "the Scripture" - see other uses in Lk. 4:21; Jn. 7:38; 42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24; 19:28; 19:36; Ro. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; Gal. 3:8; 3:22; 4:30; 1 Ti 5:18; Jas. 2:23; 4:5). So here in Galatians 3:8 **The Scripture** is Paul's appeal to the Word of God and ultimately the God of that Word!

**Donald Campbell** reiterates that "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 Ti 3:16±; 2 Peter 1:20–21±) provide important support for believing in the [absolute and total inspiration](#) and [authority of Scripture](#)." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

## JUSTIFICATION OF GENTILES BY FAITH

**Foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith** - **Scripture** is depicted by Paul as acting like an Old Testament prophet, foretelling what would occur in the future. The simple, straightforward conclusion is that the **Gentiles** would be justified in the same way as Abraham -- both were justified **by faith**. **Faith** is the key that unlocks the door into the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life! And by the way, what was Abraham when he was justified? Was Abraham a Jew? Of course not. He was a former pagan idol worshipper, certainly a practice linking him closer to being a Gentile than a Jew! In referring to the OT passage, Paul is showing that what God was now doing with the Gentiles in Galatia was no different than what He had done with Gentiles in the past.

**Wuest** - Paul attributes [foresight](#) to Scripture. This is a [figure of speech](#) (**ED**: specifically a [personification](#)) expressing the thought that God's divine foresight is expressed in the Scriptures.

The Scriptures referred to would include Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 18:18 (compare also Ge 22:18) (see [additional note below](#))

And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families (JEW AND GENTILE) of the earth shall be blessed." (Ge 12:3)

since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations (GENTILES) of the earth will be blessed? (Ge 18:18)

We see a parallel passage by Luke in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council which addressed the false teaching "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1+):

"With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written, 16'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, 17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND **ALL THE GENTILES** WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,' 18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO (cf "Scripture foreseeing.") (Acts 15:15-18+)

**Warren Wiersbe** - James quoted Amos 9:11+ during the Jerusalem conference when the leaders discussed the matter of the place of the Gentiles in the church (Acts 15). The question was, "Must a Gentile become a Jew in order to become a Christian?" But note that James did not say that Amos 9:11+ was fulfilled by the Gentiles' coming into the Church, but that the prophets (plural) agreed with the Gentiles' being a part of the Church (Acts 15:13-18). After all, if believing Gentiles are one day going to be a part of the [Messianic Kingdom](#) (David's dynasty restored), why can't they be a part of the Church today? Why should they be forced to become Jewish proselytes in order to become Christians? However, some interpret Amos 9:11+ and the words of James to mean that the Church is the "tabernacle of David" so that the Old Testament prophecies about the kingdom are now fulfilled in the church. How the church is like David's kingdom "as in the days of old" is difficult to understand, and the references to Edom (Amos 9:12+) and the fruitfulness of the land (Amos 9:13-15+) are also difficult to apply to the Church. (Commentary on Amos - Be Concerned)

**Foreseeing** (4275) (**proeido** from **pró** = before + **eído** = to see, perceive, know) means to see ahead of oneself (speaking of time), to look forward, to see beforehand, to catch sight of, to portend, and to see afar off (speaking of distance) as in [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) of Ge 37:18 ("When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them") In the NT the idea is to foresee or to know beforehand. The only other NT use is by Luke in Acts 2:31+ of David's Spirit inspired prophetic vision of Christ as recorded in Psalm 16:10 - "he (David under the inspiration of the Spirit) **looked ahead** and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY."

**Proeido** is used 3 times in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Gen 37:18, Ps 16:8, Ps 139:3

**Lenski** has an interesting thought asking "how can Paul say that the Scripture proclaimed to Abraham when the Scripture was not written until long after Abraham's time? Here the identification of the Scripture with God is still stronger than it was in the participle. But the real point to be noted is that what God spoke directly and in person to Abraham, that is what all nations were to read as good news, the same good news that it was to Abraham. Abraham did not receive it in the form of writing, he received the substance without which there would never have been inspired writing. Abraham heard it  $\pi\rho$ , "in advance" of the time when the Gentiles were to be so blessed." ([Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Would justify** (1344)(**dikaioo**) means that the Gentile believers, those who are in Christ by grace through faith, would be declared righteous, and treated as righteous (positional righteousness is perfect because it is Christ) by God. The present tense could be paraphrased "forseeing that God is justifying the Gentiles." **Dikaioo** is in the [present tense](#) that indicates this would continually be God's way of justifying the Gentiles. In a very real sense Paul saw fulfillment of this prophecy in the conversion of the Gentiles in Galatia!

Paul's uses of **dikaioo** in Galatians - 8x in 6v - Gal. 2:16+ (3x); Gal. 2:17; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 5:4.

**Martin Luther** wrote that ""The faith of the fathers was directed at the Christ who was to come, while ours rests in the Christ who has come."

**By faith** - Literally "out of faith" which means as a result of faith.

**Faith** (4102) see preceding discussion on [pistis](#). **Pistis** is used 22x in 20v (note frequency in Galatians 3)

Gal. 1:23; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:7; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:9; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 3:25; Gal. 3:26; Gal. 5:5; Gal. 5:6; Gal. 5:22; Gal. 6:10

**Bruce Barton** on **by faith** or **belief** - THE TRUST COMPANY - As used in contemporary language, "belief" takes on two distinct meanings. On the one hand, people use the term merely to denote recognition or to admit existence. Phrases such as "I believe in UFOs"; "I believe in God"; and "I believe in doing the right thing" employ the term believe for little more than to concede the possible

reality of the object, being, or action described. The speaker may actually harbor quite a negative personal attitude toward what is described. "I believe in God" may well be followed by the sentiment "and I want to have nothing to do with him," or "I believe in God—why can't he be satisfied with that?" Such would be the perspective of those whom James describes in James 2:19. Intellectual assent requires no submission, trust, or obedience. **On the other hand**, the belief response required by the gospel means active trust or commitment. We must not merely believe about Christ, but we must personally rely on him. Christian belief involves a total personal response to what Jesus has done for us. We begin a lifelong process of commitment to Christ. Those who come to Christ in this way parallel the response of Abraham, who trusted implicitly in what God had revealed about himself. As in Abraham's belief and our own, no law, circumcision, or any other act of symbolism or personal devotion and no personal merit can make us acceptable to God. We can only trust in God's boundless grace. ([Life Application Bible Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Faith** is not believing in spite of evidence—that's superstition—but obeying in spite of circumstances and consequences.

## PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

**Preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham** ("announced good news beforehand") [cf Heb 4:2+, Heb 4:6+]: This verse contains Paul's answer to the false assumption (or outright lie) of the Judaizers that inasmuch as it is in Abraham that **all the nations** were to be **blessed**, they would have to receive the rite of circumcision (cf Acts 15:1+). That was not the truth of the Scripture! The good news was announced to Abraham that some day the Messiah would come from his (Abraham's) seed (or lineage) (Gal 3:16) and that the Gentiles ("**all the nations**") could be saved by faith in what they knew and understood of the Messiah. As Jesus said (to the Jews) "Your father (speaking of ethnicity) Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." (Jn 8:56).

**MacArthur - Gospel** means "good news," and God's good news to mankind has always been salvation by faith alone, prompted by the power of His grace. Salvation by works would not be good but bad news....When Gentiles are saved, they are saved as Gentiles, just as Jews are saved as Jews. But no one from either group is saved or not saved due to racial or ethnic identity. Those who are saved are saved because of their faith, and those who are lost are lost because of their unbelief. A Gentile has absolutely no advantage in becoming a Jew before he becomes a Christian. In fact, by expecting salvation through the rite of circumcision, a person, whether Jew or Gentile, nullifies the grace of God and declares, in effect, that "Christ died needlessly" (Gal. 2:21+). ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon** - The apostle tells us that the Gospel was preached to Abraham. The true Gospel is no new thing; it is as old as the hills. It was heard in Eden before man was driven from the garden (**ED**: the [protevangeliu](#)m in Genesis 3:15+), and it has since been repeated in sundry ways and in diverse places, even to this day. Oh, that its very antiquity would lead men to venerate it, and then to listen to its voice! It is "Gospel," or Good News—the *best* of news for fallen men. Oh, that they would receive it with gladness!

**Wuest** - The Good News announced to Abraham was that some day the Saviour would arise out of his nation Israel, and that the Gentiles would be saved through Him as Abraham was saved. Thus, Abraham rejoiced to see the coming of that day (John 8:56). Abraham was therefore to become the pattern to all who would follow, of how a sinner, Jew or Gentile, must appropriate salvation. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Lenski** writes that Abraham "heard it as good news. We are told by some interpreters that this was not "the gospel," and that our versions should not translate thus. That is an incorrect contention; it is the very sum and substance of the gospel. On this statement made to Abraham rested Abraham's faith, the faith by which he was declared righteous, the faith that was reckoned to him for righteousness. That is the same gospel we have today, save that now the promise has become fulfillment." ([Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Preached the Gospel beforehand** (only NT use)([4283](#)) (**proeuaggelizomai** from **pro** = before + [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) = preach the Gospel) means to bring good news ahead of time, to proclaim the gospel before, to spread good news in advance of it actually coming to pass. Found only in Gal 3:8 (no uses in Septuagint). The [aorist tense](#) indicates that a point in time in the past God preached the Gospel, the Good News about Jesus Christ, to Abraham and the [middle voice](#) signifies "He (God) Himself preached it" which is fascinating! How much did God tell Abraham about Jesus? We simply do not know. What we know for certain is that God told him "**ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU**" and that was sufficient to convey the sense of good news to sinners who otherwise would spend eternity separated from their Creator!

**Gilbrant** adds that "**Proeuaggelizomai**, a rare verb in Greek literature, means "to announce glad tidings before it comes to pass." It does not occur in the Septuagint, Josephus, or the Apostolic Fathers, but it does occur twice in the writings of Philo. For example, the fluttering of the wings of a fledgling is a "welcome promise" of the bird's ability to fly (On the Change of Names 158). Philo also used it in reference to God's creation week when the darkness anticipated the coming of the sun (On the Creation of the World

34)." ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

It is interesting that Genesis 3:15+ is often referred to as the **protevangeliu**m which Derek Kidner describes as "the first glimmer of the Gospel." Several of the early Church fathers, such as Justin Martyr (160 AD) and Irenaeus (180 AD) regarded Genesis 3:15 "as the Protoevangelium, the first Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament."

Paul quotes from the OT to emphasize that the blessing promised to Abraham was given by God to **all the nations**, to Gentiles ("nations") and not just the Jews. In fact there was not even a nation of Israel when God gave this blessing to Abraham! Not only that, as alluded to above, there was no Mosaic Law and no works were required.

**Saying, "ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU** (Gal 3:16 Ge 12:3 Ge 18:18 Ge 22:18 Ge 26:4 Ge 28:14 Ge 49:10 Ps 72:7 Isa 65:9 Rev 11:15): Paul combines 2 OT passages from the [Septuagint](#), putting "**all the nations**" (panta ta ethne) in (Ge 18:18) for "all the tribes" (pasai hai phulai) in Genesis 12:3. Through the exercise of a like faith (cp faith of the Jew Peter in 2 Pe 1:1+) the Gentiles might become Abraham's spiritual children. They were born into the family of God not by submitting to **circumcision of the flesh** but by surrendering to "**circumcision of the heart**" (See [Excursus](#)).

Paul is quoting from the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), Gal 3:8 reading "*eneulogethesontai en soi panta ta ethne*" The following two passages are the closest to the Greek text in Galatians 3:8. Examination of these passages shows that the phrase "all the nations" from Ge 18:18 is substituted for all the families (or tribes) in Ge 12:3. **Hansen** comments that "This combination of texts in his quotation indicates that Paul's primary purpose is to demonstrate that Scripture witnesses to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the blessing promised to Abraham."

[Lxx](#) of Ge 12:3: eneulogethesontai (3PFPI) en soi pasai ai phulai (**all the tribes**) tes ges (of the earth)

[Lxx](#) of Ge 18:18 kai eneulogethesontai (3SFPI) en auto panta ta ethne (**all the nations**) tes ges (of the earth)

Putting together Ge 12:3+ and Ge 17:10 the Judaizers argued, "*Isn't it obvious that if the rest of the world, that is, Gentiles, are to share in the promised blessings to Abraham, they must first take on the sign that marks God's people, the sign of circumcision? If all the nations of the earth will be blessed in Abraham, they will have to become like Abraham and be circumcised.*" The Judaizers' false assumptions are a good example of proof-texting.

A **proof text** is a passage of scripture presented as proof for a theological doctrine, belief, or principle. Proof-texting (sometimes "proof-texting" or "proof texting") is the practice of using isolated, out-of-context quotations from a document to establish a proposition in eisegesis (introducing one's own presuppositions, agendas, or biases).

## ALL NATIONS BLESSED IN ABRAHAM

**Spurgeon on in you** - That is, "**In you**, because you are the father of believers. You are a sort of head and prototype of men who believe in me. So, 'In you all the nations will be blessed.' And in your seed, too, as you will be the father of the Christ, all nations will be blessed."

**W E Vine** explains that "When this declaration of the purpose of God to **bles**s mankind was first made in the form of a promise to Abraham the human race had but recently begun to be divided into separate groups, tribal and national, and **the nation Israel had as yet no existence**. The developments among men described in Genesis 11:1-9 were part of the purpose of God, see Deuteronomy 32:8; along these lines He had designed that the world should be prepared for the coming of His Son, and for its own salvation. To Abraham God imparted a knowledge of His purpose, and, indeed, of the Agent (MESSIAH) in its accomplishment (John 8:56). When, at length, the nation Israel was brought into being, it became possible for Him to reveal His mind to them with increasing definiteness. To Israel were the promises given, and to them were committed "**the oracles of God**," in which the promises were enshrined, (Ro 3:2+, Heb 5:12+). But that "**all nations**," and not Israel only, were in the mind of God for salvation is plain from each section of the Scriptures, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, as Paul shows in the epistle to the Romans (See passages below from Romans)." ([Collected Writings](#))

Romans 9:25-27+ As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" 26 "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." 27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED;

Romans 10:18-21+ But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; "THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD." 19 But I

say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, "I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU." 20 And Isaiah is very bold and says, "I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME." 21 But as for Israel He says, "ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE."

Romans 15:9-12<sup>+</sup> and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME." 10 Again he says, "REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE." 11 And again, "PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM." 12 Again Isaiah says, "THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE."

**Lenski** has an interesting discussion of the meaning of **in you** (in thee) explaining that it is used "in the sense of "in union or connection with thee." The circle drawn by the preposition has within it, first of all, Abraham himself, and as it is drawn around him by God it is drawn also around all the Gentiles. It is one and the same circle of blessing. The neuter plural subject here has the plural verb in the Greek as it may have when persons are referred to. While Abraham is the forefather of the Jews, when he received this promise he was as much a Gentile as the Gentile Galatians themselves. He was still uncircumcised, a point which Paul drives home so forcibly in Ro 4:10-12. The astonishing thing to him was not "Gentiles" but the vast number, "all the Gentiles." But "**in thee**" contains vastly more. This means Isaac over against Ishmael. This does not imply that Ishmael could not share in the blessing but that Isaac would be the progenitor of the Messiah, and that the line would continue through Jacob (not Esau), Judah, David, etc. "In thee" speaks of the Messiah, of the Messianic blessing. This world-wide blessing in the Seed of Abraham (v. 16), in Christ, was put in the form of promise for Abraham, for him to believe it." ([Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Blessed in you** - How? This refers to spiritual blessings not material blessings. Justification by faith and the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:2, 5, 14) would certainly be the chief of these blessings the Gentiles would receive. How sad we tend to focus on material blessings which are fleeting and pale in comparison to the spiritual blessings which are eternal and priceless! Lord, stamp eternity on our eyes, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

**Spurgeon** answers "Just as Abraham was blessed, so are **the nations** to be blessed, that is, by **faith**. By faith, they become his spiritual seed; by faith, they enter into his covenant; by faith, they receive the blessings of grace."

**Will be blessed in (1757)** (**eneulogeo** from **en** = in + **eulogeo** = to bless) means to bless in or through someone. This verb is used in Acts 3:25 but not in most accurate texts so that Gal 3:8 is the only definite NT use. There are seven uses of **eneulogeo** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Ge 12:3; Ge 18:18; Ge 22:18; Ge 26:4; Ge 28:14; 1 Sa 2:29; Ps 10:3; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8. Will be blessed is future tense (the passage in the OT is viewed as a prophecy) and the [passive voice](#) (the blessing comes from an external source, God which is the so-called "divine passive"). Blessing is again mentioned in Galatians 3:9, but there the future tense is changed to the [present tense](#) (continually blessed) but still in the [passive voice](#), the "divine passive."

The related word **eulogia** is used in Gal 3:14<sup>+</sup> "in order that in Christ Jesus the **blessing** of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

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In **C.I. Scofield's study notes** he makes a statement that by itself might leave one with the impression that OT saints were saved by keeping the law. Here is his note on Luke 2:25

The righteous or just man is so called because he is right with God; and **he is right with God BECAUSE he has observed "all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly"** (Luke 1:6; cp. Ro 10:5; Phil 3:6). (**Ed comment** - That statement is very misleading and might suggest salvation in the OT is works based. The following context helps clarify and this is why he IS RIGHT WITH GOD, NOT BECAUSE he observed all the commandments, etc. In Luke 1:6 they were "right" because of justification by faith and thus they were able to walk blamelessly. Their blameless walking did not make them righteous!). The O.T. righteous man was not sinless (Eccl 7:20) but one who, for his sins, trusted the coming Messiah and offered in faith the required sacrifice (e.g. Lev 4:27-35).

Scofield's best-known student was Lewis Sperry Chafer, co-founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. Chafer, a prolific author, wrote dispensationalism's first unabridged systematic theology. Chafer's system became the standard for several generations of dispensationalists trained at Dallas. Yet Chafer wrote a misleading editorial entitled "Justification" in the April, 1946 (Volume 103) issue of *Bibliotheca Sacra* which is quoted in part:

"A distinction must be observed between JUST men of the Old Testament and the JUSTIFIED according to the New Testament. According to the Old Testament, men were JUST because they were true and faithful in

keeping the Mosaic law. Micah defines such a life after this manner: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). **Men were therefore just because of their own works for God, whereas New Testament justification is God's work for man in answer to faith** (Ro 5:1)"

Can you see how this statement by one of evangelicalism's leading voices in the first half of the 20th century might lead to some confusion and suggest God saved men in the OT by a different mode than He saved men in the NT? In fairness to Dr. Chafer I do not believe from the remainder of this editorial or his other writings that he really believed a man was truly justified except by faith apart from works for he goes on to say "JUSTIFICATION is the declaration by God respecting the Christian that he has been made forever right and acceptable to God....A RIGHTEOUSNESS from God is received and possessed on a FAITH principle in answer to FAITH in Christ Jesus, and it reaches unto and comes down upon all who BELIEVE. "Being justified freely"-NOT HOPING TO BE JUSTIFIED BY REASON OF A GOOD MANNER OF LIFE."

My intent is not to be critical of Dr. Chafer but simply to illustrate how such a statement as quoted could possibly be misinterpreted, especially if it were lifted out of context.

### Galatians 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Greek - hoste oi ek pisteos eulogountai (3PPMI) sun to pisto Abraam

Amplified: So then, those who are people of faith are blessed and made happy and favored by God [as partners in fellowship] with the believing and trusting Abraham.

Barclay So, then, it is those who make that same venture of faith who are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Phillips All men of faith share the blessing of Abraham who "believed God".

Wuest So that those who are believing ones are being blessed in company with believing Abraham. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:9 So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer.

GNT Galatians 3:9 στε ο κ π στεως ε λογο νται σ ν τ πιστ βρα μ.

NLT Galatians 3:9 So all who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith.

KJV Galatians 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

ESV Galatians 3:9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

ASV Galatians 3:9 So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.

CSB Galatians 3:9 So those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith.

NIV Galatians 3:9 So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

NKJ Galatians 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

NRS Galatians 3:9 For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.

YLT Galatians 3:9 'Blessed in thee shall be all the nations;' so that those of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham,

NAB Galatians 3:9 Consequently, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham who had faith.

NJB Galatians 3:9 So it is people of faith who receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith.

GWN Galatians 3:9 So people who believe are blessed together with Abraham, the man of faith.

BBE Galatians 3:9 So then those who are of faith have a part in the blessing of Abraham who was full of faith.

- Ga 3:7,8,14,29 4:28 Ro 4:11,16,24
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur

- [Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## ABRAHAM THE BELIEVER

**So then** - Paul is drawing a conclusion. See discussion of the value of learning pause and ponder by [interrogating with the 5W/H questions](#) the [terms of conclusion](#) such as **therefore, consequently, so then**. "The conclusion is drawn, therefore, that Gentiles obtain righteousness as a consequence of trusting God for it, not by observing Jewish practices." (Kent)

**Donald Campbell** explains the **so then** - The apostle concluded this phase of his argument by stating that though **provision** was made for "all nations" (Gal 3:8), **only those who have faith** receive the blessing of justification. Thus Paul drew a distinction between **God's provision** and **human appropriation**. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Boice** - The reader is now at the peak of the first section of Paul's argument. It is a throwback to the question of Gal 3:5. Who are the ones who enter into spiritual blessing? The answer is: Those characterized by the approach of faith are blessed along with Abraham, who had faith. Besides, since the blessing of Abraham is declared to have been intended for the Gentiles also, how could the Gentiles be blessed except by faith? To have been blessed in any other way would have involved their ceasing to be Gentiles. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Wuest** - This is a definite statement of the proposition which Paul wishes to prove. The emphasis is upon the fact that the believing ones are blessed with salvation, rather than those who depend upon good works as the Judaizers did. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer**- Not those who are of works but those who believe like Abraham. This emphasizes that the way of salvation for Jews and Gentiles is the same as for Abraham, by **faith** not by works of the law (or circumcision). Paul made this same point in Romans 4:11<sup>±</sup> writing that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe (cp **all who are of the faith**) without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them." In other words, the order was (1) salvation by faith (2) receipt of the sign of circumcision.

**Morris** says **Those who are of faith** "are those whose characteristic is **faith**; it is not that they sometimes have an impulse to believe, but rather that believing is their constant attitude; **faith** is characteristic of them." ([Galatians: Paul's Charter for Christian Freedom](#))

**Faith** (4102) see preceding discussion on [pistis](#). **Hansen** notes that "**Faith** has been the emphasis in this section. Noun and verb forms of *faith* occur seven times in verses Galatians 3:1-9. No longer will anyone be excluded from the blessing on the basis of race; those of faith from all nations enjoy the blessing. Abraham is now the prototype of the universal people of faith, not simply the progenitor of the Jewish race. So it is not necessary to belong to the Jewish race to participate in the blessing of Abraham. All that is necessary is faith like Abraham's." (Ibid)

**MacArthur** - To be **blessed** means to be the recipient of all that divine love, grace, and mercy bestows on those who are in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:3<sup>±</sup>; Eph 2:6-7<sup>±</sup>).

**Wiersbe** on **are blessed** - 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). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

The greatest blessing is justification, God's declaration that we are not guilty of our countless sins against Him, and that we will forever stand before Him in perfect righteousness because of faith in the Gospel of His Son. What greater blessing could we ask for?

**Are blessed** (2127) ([eulogeo](#) from **eu** = good + **lógos** = word; see cognates [eulogetos](#) and [eulogia](#)) means speak good or well. When eulogeo is used by men toward men it means to speak well of with praise and thanksgiving (English "[Eulogy](#)" = an address in praise for one deceased ). To say good or positive things. **Eulogeo** can be from men to God, from men to men, and from God to men. When God blesses men He grants them favor and confers happiness upon them.

The future "**Will be blessed in you** (Abraham)" is now changed to the present **are blessed with Abraham**. And so **eulogeo** is in the [present tense](#) (continually blessed) and the [passive voice](#) (the active blessing comes from an external source, i.e., God = so-called "**divine passive**"). In Greek, the divine passive occurs when an action is done by an unmentioned force, but in this context is clearly God.

**Lenski** agrees writing that **are blessed** "changes the future tense (Gal 3:8) used in the promise into the constant [present](#): ever and ever blessed; the [passive](#) again makes God the agent. The essential blessing for all these believers is the fact that, like Abraham, their faith is reckoned for righteousness or, as Paul puts it in his own words: "God declares them righteous." With justification there go all the other spiritual blessings that are described at length in Romans 5 to 8. ([Interpretation of St.Paul's Epistle to the Galatians](#))

**Phil Newton** - In verse nine we again see one of the Apostle's conclusions of his argument from Scripture concerning justification by faith alone...What does it mean to be "**blessed with Abraham, the believer**"? Paul is using this to address one subject. He is not speaking of all the tangible, material blessings which belonged to Abraham. Certainly, God blessed him enormously with great wealth, power, and prominence. But that is not the issue of this text nor its Old Testament context. Here the whole matter is righteousness before God, which means to be justified before God. For justification is the legal declaration of righteousness for the sinner. To be **blessed with Abraham** is synonymous with **being justified or declared righteous with him before God**. The great concern of the Apostle was how a sinner might be declared righteous before a thrice holy God. Everything else is non-essential in comparison to our need for righteousness before God. All eternity is at stake with this matter. Our whole existence hangs in the balance over the subject of justification. By the conclusive phrase, "So then," Paul is reminding us that there is no doubt that only those who are of faith are justified even as Abraham was justified. ([Galatians 3:6-9 Abraham's True Children](#))

**Abraham, the believer** - Literally "the believer Abraham." Other versions translate it "Abraham, the man of faith," or "faithful Abraham" (KJV).

**The believer** (the **faithful**)(4103)(**pistos** from **peitho** = to persuade - induce one by words to believe, have confidence) is someone who is worthy of faith or keeps promises and is applied to God, humans, His Word, etc **Pistos** means dependable (worthy of reliance or trust), trustworthy, steadfast, unswerving. Pistos is used 77x in 63v and is most often translated as **faithful** (44x in NAS).

**Gromacki** adds that this "adjective **faithful**" shows that he had an active faith. He was a constant believer. At no time did he add works in order to gain or maintain his justified standing....so both the Jew and the Gentile must only trust God in the same way to receive the same righteousness. There is no difference in the way that Abraham was justified and the means by which all subsequent generations have been declared righteous. ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Webster** says that "**Faithful**" means firm in adherence to whatever one owes allegiance and implies unswerving adherence to a person or thing or to the oath or promise by which a tie was contracted.

**Vincent** summarizes of the meaning of **pistos**

(1), of one who shows Himself faithful in the discharge of a duty or the administration of a trust (Mt 24:45). Hence, trustworthy (2Ti 2:2). Of things that can be relied upon (2Ti 2:11).

(2), Confiding; trusting; a believer (Gal 3:9; Acts 16:1; 2Cor 6:15; 1Ti 5:16)" (Word Studies in the New Testament) In Gal 3:9 refers to "Abraham, the **believer**" the faithful one.

**Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."**

Greek - hosoi gar ex ergon nomou eisin (3PPAI) [hupo](#) kataran eisin gegraptai (3SRPI) gar hoti epikataratos pas os ouk emmenei (3SPAI) pasin tois gegrammenois (RPP) en to biblio tou nomou tou poiesai (AAN) auta

Amplified: And all who depend on the Law [who are seeking to be justified by obedience to the Law of rituals] are under a curse and doomed to disappointment and destruction, for it is written in the Scriptures, Cursed (accursed, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment) be everyone who does not continue to abide (live and remain) by all the precepts and commands written in the Book of the Law and to practice them.

Phillips Everyone, however, who is involved in trying to keep the Law's demands falls under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.'

Wuest For as many as are of the works of the law are under curse, for it stands written, Cursed is every one who is not remaining constantly in all things which stand written in the book of the law in order to do them. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the book of the law."

GNT Galatians 3:10 σοι γ ρ ξ ργων ν μου ε σ ν, π κατ ραν ε σ ν· γ γραπται γ ρ τι πικατ ρατος π ς ς ο κ μ νει π σιν το ς γεγραμμ νοις ν τ βιβλ το ν μου το ποι σαι α τ .

NLT Galatians 3:10 But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God's Book of the Law."

KJV Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

ESV Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

ASV Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.

CSB Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written: Everyone who does not continue doing everything written in the book of the law is cursed.

NIV Galatians 3:10 All 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."

NKJ Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

NRS Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law."

YLT Galatians 3:10 for as many as are of works of law are under a curse, for it hath been written, 'Cursed is every one who is not remaining in all things that have been written in the Book of the Law -- to do them,'

NAB Galatians 3:10 For all who depend on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not persevere in doing all the things written in the book of the law."

NJB Galatians 3:10 On the other hand, all those who depend on the works of the Law are under a curse, since scripture says: Accursed be he who does not make what is written in the book of the Law effective, by putting it into practice.

GWN Galatians 3:10 Certainly, there is a curse on all who rely on their own efforts to live according to a set of standards because Scripture says, "Whoever doesn't obey everything that is written in Moses' Teachings is cursed."

BBE Galatians 3:10 For all who are of the works of the law are under a curse: because it is said in the Writings, A curse is on everyone who does not keep on doing all the things which are ordered in the book of the law.

- **all:** Ga 3:11 Ga 2:16 Lu 18:9-13 Ro 4:15 7:9-13 8:7
- **under:** De 11:26-28 29:20 Isa 43:28 Mt 25:41
- **Cursed:** De 27:26 Jer 11:3 Eze 18:4 Ro 3:19,20 6:23 Jas 2:9-11
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10: A Call to the Unconverted](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse; and the Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Christ: A Curse for Us](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## THE LAW CAN ONLY CURSE AND CONDEMN

**Wuest** summarizes Paul's argument in Galatians 3:10-14 - The Judaizers taught that the **law** was a means of justification. But Paul now shows that the **law** is a means of condemnation (Gal 3:10), and that it is the Lord Jesus Who rescues us from its condemnation through the blood of His Cross (Gal 3:13-14). ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Jack Arnold** entitles his sermon on Galatians 3:10-14 "[The Two Alternatives.](#)" - In Galatians 3:10-14, the Apostle Paul's whole point is that salvation is not by any law-works but is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. To work for salvation is to totally misunderstand the Biblical teaching on salvation.

**Utley** points out that "In the next step in the argument, Paul moved from Abraham to the strict legal requirements of the Mosaic Law. The argument challenges the bad theology of the Judaizers. Trusting in adherence to the Law characterized the Pharisees of Jesus' day (cf. Ro 10:2-5+). Paul asserted that self-effort to obtain right standing is only a road to damnation (cf. Gal 2:16). Paul knew this road well! Although Paul was primarily referring to the Mosaic Law, the referent is "**law**" in general or human effort by means of some **external moral standard**. Which **standard** is not important—the essential truth is that fallen mankind cannot claim that their moral accomplishment deserves acceptance by God. We call this approach **self-righteous legalism**. It is alive and well and thrives among religious people! ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**For (gar)** - term of explanation - **Gromacki** explains "The connective "**for**" (gar) joins this section to the preceding two. Both the Galatians and Abraham had experiences of justification by faith "**for**" it was impossible for them to have gained the righteousness of God by legalistic works." ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse**- This must have been a shock to Paul's readers because the Judaizers had been teaching the Galatians that the pathway to divine blessing was **works of the Law**, when in fact these **works** were really the antithesis of blessing being in fact the broad road to destruction and a divine curse (Mt 7:13+ - Of course I am not implying true believers in Galatia would lose their salvation, but they certainly would lose the blessing of their salvation. That's what legalism always does - it steals the joy of our salvation! Are you joyless? Do a self-exam for any forms of legalism.) The phrase **of the works of the Law** means "who are seeking to be justified by obedience to the Law of rituals" (Amplified) Having shattered the Jews' confidence in their physical relation to Abraham, Paul now shows that the Law brings a curse quoting from the Lxx of [Dt 27:26] arguing that man cannot possibly keep all the laws (Ja 2:10+). How utterly illogical would it be for the Galatian believers to seek to gain divine acceptance by their futile human efforts, as advocated by the Judaizers! The life of faith brings blessing, while life under the Law puts a man under a curse! "Law is unbending, it yields nothing to weakness, its standard is never lowered, not even by a hairbreadth; law makes no compromise, and finds no room for mercy!" (Vine)

**Spurgeon** - "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," even as the Shorter Catechism puts it, "They have lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so are made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." Dare you sleep to-night under the curse? Will you wake tomorrow and go forth to your business under the curse? Can you sport, and laugh, and frolic, under the curse? God grant that we may be sufficiently sensible to be filled with anguish at the sound of these dreadful words—"under the curse"!

**Are under a curse:** The Greek pictures someone "**under**" a load, a load they cannot carry, a load (of sin) which will eventually kill them and carry them to eternal separation from God! This recalls Jesus' offer to "carry our load"...

**Come** to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 **Take** My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mt 11:28-30+)

[Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy](#)

Weak and wounded, sick and sore;

Jesus ready stands to save you,

Full of pity, love and power.

Justification by faith is based on what God does for man, whereas justification (an impossibility) under Law is based on what man does for God so that these two ways of seeking justification proceed in opposite directions, ultimately even opposite destinies, respectively Heaven or Hell! Failure to perfectly keep the law brings divine judgment and condemnation. One violation of the law deserves the curse of God and warrants one spending eternity in Hell! If you want to live under the law, then have it your way, but you can't choose the your consequence for breaking the law, the consequence of being cursed forever (Ga 3:13). If you do not abide by all the law written in the book, seeking to keep the whole law but breaking it only once, then you are guilty of breaking all the Law (it is like a unit - think of breaking a portion of a window - you have in fact broken the entire window!) (cf. Jas 2:10+) And if you are

guilty of breaking all the Law, you are under God's condemnation and curse. And this includes eternal death, because the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23+).

**ILLUSTRATION** - Seeking righteousness under the Law is like a man scaling a cliff—one slip and he's dead—for the Law demands the full penalty for even the tiniest transgression. As breaking a single link causes a chain to fail, so does breaking a single requirement of the Law cause one's righteousness to crumble. ([Lovett's Lights on Galatians](#))

**ILLUSTRATION OF BREAK ONE GUILTY OF ALL** - You say, "I don't understand that." Well, suppose you're hanging over a fire by a forged chain of steel, and it has nine links of forged steel, and one is crepe paper. How safe for you! It doesn't make any difference if one link breaks or if all ten break: you go in the fire, because God demands perfection.

**ILLUSTRATION** - A ship that is moored to a dock by a chain is only as secure as the weakest link in that chain. If a severe storm comes and causes even one link to break, the entire ship breaks away. So it is for those who try to come to God by their own perfection. They will be lost and forever wrecked. (MacArthur)

**Don Anderson** - The Law locks us in to DOING! The difference between FAITH and the LAW is: in FAITH the focus is on what GOD DOES FOR MAN, and in LAW it is on what MAN DOES FOR GOD. And it has all been DONE (cf John 19:30+)!! ([Notes](#))

**Under a curse** ([hupo](#) kataran) - **Under** ([hupo](#)) is used to describe every human's condition in relation to the power and mastery of sin - "**under** sin" (Gal 3:22) and because we are all "**under** sin," we are all "**under** a curse." When a man is justified by faith, he is no longer "**under** law (and the curse) but **under** grace." (Ro 6:14+). The **curse** is removed by Christ Who became a **curse** for us (Gal 3:13-14) and at the same time perfectly fulfilling the Law for us (Ro 8:4+).

**Robertson on under a curse** - Picture the **curse** hanging over them like a [Damocles' blade](#). Cf. Ro 3:9+ "**under sin**".

#### [Nothing in my hands I bring.](#)

Simply to the Cross I cling.

Not the labor of my hands,

Could fulfil Thy law's demand.

Could my zeal no respite know,

Could my tears forever flow.

These for sin could not atone.

Thou must save, and Thou alone.

**Curse** (accursed) ([2671](#)) ([katara](#) from [katá](#) = down, against [intensifies meaning of following verb] + [ara](#) = a curse, originally = wish," "petition," but came to be used for curse from time of Homer and in NT found only in Ro 3:14) means a [malediction](#) (literally to speak evil), [imprecation](#) (uttering evil) on these men and in this passage is used in the sense of a legal action, of a curse by God because of sin. **Katara** represents the object of a curse (Christ becoming a curse for us!), in other words the thing accursed (Gal 3.13)

**John Calvin** says: The argument is drawn from the contradictory nature of the two schemes; for the same fountain does not yield both hot and cold. The law holds all living men under its curse; and from the law, therefore, it is in vain to expect a blessing.

**Spurgeon** - All that the law can do for sinners is judge them, condemn them, and curse them. All the people in the world who think themselves good, all the mere moralists, all those who, however amiable they may be, however excellent and religious they may be, are trusting to be saved by good works, are all under the curse, as surely as the drunkard, or the liar, or the swearer is under the curse. That is all that Moses (the Law) can say to you, and all that the Old Testament can reveal to you. Apart from faith in Christ, all its rites and ceremonies, all its laws and precepts, if you are resting in them, can only land you under the curse, because you cannot continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. You have not so continued thus far, you will not so continue, and nothing but an absolutely perfect obedience to the law could save a man by the way of works. As that obedience is not possible, we come under the curse if we come under the law. Do not look to Moses to bring you into Canaan; that can only be done by "Joshua," Jesus.

**FOR** - Always pause and ponder ([interrogate with the 5W/H questions](#)) this [term of explanation](#) asking the Spirit to open the words to your understanding. This one is fairly easy isn't it? He is quoting the OT to explain why those who seek to be righteous by being doers of the Law are doomed by that Law! They are cursed, doomed and destined for destruction.

**It is written** - This should settle every argument. God said it that settles it whether I understand or accept it! Paul goes to Scripture with which the Jews would be familiar to prove his point just as he did to prove his point that Abraham was saved by faith alone and not by circumcision or keeping the Law.

**F Whitfield** - "It is written" should be in the heart and on the lips of every Christian. "It is written" should decide every controversy, settle every doubt, and overcome every difficulty.

**Cursed** (1944) (**epikataratos** from **epi** = upon + **kataratos** = cursed) is an adjective which means to be under divine condemnation, doomed to punishment. In the [Nestle-Aland](#) it is used only in Gal 3:10, 13, but in the [Textus Receptus](#) is also used in Jn 7:49.

**Epikataratos** is used far more frequently in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) than in the NT. Note the first two uses - "The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, **Cursed** ([Lxx](#) = epikataratos) are you more than all cattle." (Ge 3:14+) and "Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; **Cursed** ([Lxx](#) = epikataratos) is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life." (Ge 3:17+) The use in Jeremiah 11:3 parallels Paul's words of warning here in Galatians 3:10 "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "**Cursed** ([Lxx](#) = epikataratos) is the man **who does not heed the words** of this ([Mosaic conditional](#)) covenant (see Jer 11:4)." In a similar use in Jeremiah 17:5 "Thus says the LORD, "**Cursed** ([Lxx](#) = epikataratos) is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and **whose heart turns away** from the LORD."

**Epikataratos** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) - Take a moment to see what God curses in these passages.

Gen. 3:14; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 4:11; Gen. 9:25; Gen. 27:29; Gen. 49:7; Deut. 27:15; Deut. 27:16; Deut. 27:17; Deut. 27:18; Deut. 27:19; Deut. 27:20; Deut. 27:21; Deut. 27:22; Deut. 27:23; Deut. 27:24; Deut. 27:25; Deut. 27:26; Deut. 28:16; Deut. 28:17; Deut. 28:18; Deut. 28:19; Jos. 6:26; Jos. 9:23; Jdg. 5:23; Jdg. 21:18; 1 Sam. 14:24; 1 Sam. 14:28; 1 Sam. 26:19; Ps. 119:21; Prov. 24:24; Isa. 65:20; Jer. 11:3; Jer. 17:5; Jer. 20:14; Jer. 20:15; Jer. 48:10; Mal. 1:14

**Vine** says: The fig-tree that disappointed its Creator in failing to fulfil the end of its existence, and was condemned therefore by the Lord Jesus to perpetual barrenness, was said by Peter to have been "**cursed**" ([kataraoimai](#)) by Him (Mark 11:21). Men who because of their alienation from God fail to fulfil the end of their being, and so disappoint their Creator, are finally to be pronounced "cursed", i.e., they are to be rejected from the eternal kingdom and to be judged worthy of, and sent into, the eternal fire, Mt. 25:41. ([Collected Writings](#))

**Written** (1125) ([grapho](#)) in the [perfect tense](#) indicates the permanence of this writing (cf Mt 24:35) and also underscores that the authority of what is written is binding. The inspired Word was written down at some point of time in the past by Spirit controlled men (2 Pe 1:21+) and STANDS written! It follows that we can stand firm on the written Word!

**John Eadie** says Paul "introduces another argument from the opposite point of view. Believers alone are blessed; and that they who are of faith are alone blessed is plain from the fact, that they who stand in antagonism to them, or they who are of the works of the law, are under curse—are not only negatively unblessed, but positively under curse."

**Gaebelein** says: The law demands obedience, but it has no power to give a nature which delights in the law to keep it, nor can it bestow the power to fulfill its demands. Nothing can the law give to the sinner, but the curse.

**CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO PERFORM THEM:** As [explained below](#) Paul quotes from the Septuagint not the Hebrew. In Dt 27:26 the Hebrew text reads "Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them." Do you see the difference in Paul's quotation here in Gal 3:10? The phrase "**does not confirm the words**" in the Septuagint is "**does not abide by all things written in the book of the law**" There are three significant changes: (1) **everyone** (for "**he**" in Dt 27:26), (2) **abide** for "confirm" ([see "abide" below](#), "carefully obey") and (3) **all things** ([pas](#)) for "the words of this law," three changes which leave no "crack in the door" not allowing anyone even one "slip-up" of disobedience. One might paraphrase it "Everyone obeying all the time in all things."

And so (in my opinion) the key (not seen in the Hebrew translation) is "**all things**" not "some things" for the Law is not a "religious cafeteria" where people can pick and choose which laws they will obey and which they will disobey! No one can keep **ALL** the commands of the law—not even strict Pharisees like Saul of Tarsus (Ro 7:7-12+). That's why Jesus said "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:20+) Jesus is not implying that someone would be able to surpass the rigid self-righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. As we have alluded to above James explains "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all." (Jas 2:10+) Everyone stumbles in at least one point! The scribes and Pharisees were unable to keep the whole law, and even the laws they kept were done externally, to impress men, because internally they still disobeyed (cf Mt 5:21-22+)! Thus they too were under the curse of the Law and destined for eternal punishment because their self-righteousness was nothing but filthy rags (Isa 64:6KJV).

**ILLUSTRATION OF FILTHY RAGS** - In my first pastorate (Jack Arnold), I ministered mostly to farmers. One time I went into this old farmer's house in order to talk to him about his personal relationship with Christ. I explained the whole gospel to him in detail. When I finished, he pointed to the wall and hanging on the wall

was a framed picture containing the Ten Commandments. He said, "See those laws, son, they are all we have to do if we are going to get to heaven. If we try to keep the Ten Commandments, God will accept us." I then asked him if he kept the law and he said he did the best he could, but admitted sometimes he failed. He could not see that the law actually condemned because he was so blinded by his own self-righteousness and good works. Here was a sincere man, but he was sincerely wrong about the Mosaic Law being the way to heaven. ([Jack Arnold](#))

Paul is quoting not from the Hebrew text, but from the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) text of Deuteronomy 27:26 as discussed below. Also included are other similar statements regarding curses in Deuteronomy...

Deuteronomy 27:26 '**Cursed** is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

**Comment** - Notice that Paul does not quote the Hebrew but the [Septuagint](#) which adds "all" ([pas](#)) twice so that "he who does not confirm" is translated in the Septuagint as "everyone ([pas](#)) who does not abide by all ([pas](#)) things." Notice Paul does not add "And all the people shall say, Amen." All ([pas](#)) the people of Israel agreed (compare Ex 24:1-8, especially Ex 24:3, 7) to what Moses had just stated about the curse and said "Amen" or "Let it be so"! But they quickly turned aside and broke God's law. So much for making promises we cannot keep.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, we need to search our hearts to make sure we are not trying to please God by our keeping of little rules and regulations. Legalism is subtle and although it won't "curse" a believer, it will blunt grace and result in a impotent, graceless life, certainly not an abundant life that God desires for all His children (Jn 10:10). The only way we can say "Amen" to God's Word which calls for our obedience is by continually relying on His Spirit to give us the desire (so it is out of love, not legalism) and the (supernatural) power to obey and walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord (Php 2:13NLT+). And we do that by beginning our day by walking out filled with His Spirit (Eph 5:18+, cf Gal 5:16+) and filled with His Word (Col 3:16+), and in this way we can experience the abundant life that God desires for ALL of His children to experience! Are you experiencing it? If not, confess any known (and unknown) sins, cast off any and all legalistic tendencies and walk out in the supernatural power of the Spirit of Christ to live the abundant life for the glory of Christ and God our Father (Mt 5:16+). Amen!

**John Phillips** - Great and terrible were the curses of the Law, and comprehensive and far-reaching too. Deuteronomy 27:1-26 records a round dozen curses, and Deuteronomy 28:1-68 records a half dozen more, followed by a series of horrifying illustrations... The following verses of Deuteronomy 28 expanded and illustrated these curses of the Law. The children of Israel would be pursued by disease, drought, deportation, and dread. "In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear" (Dt 28:67). Such was the curse of the Law. And such has been the agelong history of the Jewish people to this very day. Scarcely a country in the world has not lifted up its hand, at one time or another, against the Jews. Even as Paul wrote his Galatian epistle, the Judaizers were themselves living under bondage to a foreign power that was occupying their land and ruling them with an unfeeling iron hand. "How about *that*?" Paul demands. "Did your Judaizing friends tell you that? You want to put yourselves under the Law? Then make sure you keep it *all*, every jot and tittle of it, every verse and every line, every duty and every demand, every rule, every rite, every ritual, and every requirement. Don't leave out a single one for a single moment—or the curse of the Law will be upon you. There are no excuses and no exceptions." ([Exploring Galatians](#))

Deuteronomy 11:26-28 "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a **curse**: 27 the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; 28 and the **curse**, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

Deuteronomy 29:20 "The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every **curse** which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

**Abide** (continueth = KJV; [present tense](#) - continually)(1696)([emmeno](#) from **en** = in + **meno** = remain) literally means "remain in" and thus to stay in a place over a period of time and is used here by Paul to describe the impossibility of one continually ([present tense](#)) abiding by all of the Law. The present tense indicates the necessity of one maintaining an unbroken, continual observance (obedience to) the whole law! This leaves no room for exceptions, rationalizations or excuses ("Well, yes, I just slipped up on that

one a bit when I got angry with my wife," etc).

**Spurgeon on abide/continueth** - "Cursed is every one that **continueth not** in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Oh! sirs; it is not some hectic flush upon the cheek of consumptive irresolution that God counts to be the health of obedience. It is not some slight obedience for an hour that God will accept all the day of judgment. He saith, "**continueth**"; and unless from my early childhood to the day when my grey hairs descend into the tomb, I shall have continued to be obedient to God, I must be condemned....Oh! there is no man here that can hope to escape. We must every one of us bow our heads before God, and cry, "Guilty, Lord, guilty—every one of us guilty—"**Cursed** is every one that **continueth not** in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." When I look into thy face, O law, my spirit shudders. When I hear thy thunders, my heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels. How can I endure Thee? If I am to be tried at last for my life, surely I shall need no judge, for I shall be my own swift accuser, and my conscience shall be a witness to condemn...Oh! would to God that some poor soul in this place would say, "Then I am cursed to-night; I am cursed of God, and cursed of His holy angels—cursed! cursed! cursed!—for I am under the law." I do think, God the Spirit blessing it, it wants nothing more to slay our carelessness than that one word— "cursed!" "Cursed is every one that **continueth not** in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

**Book** (975)(**biblion** from **biblos** = the inner bark of a papyrus plant, hence a **scroll**, a book) is the diminutive form of **biblos** and means a book, a roll, a volume, a document, a **scroll**, a writing. Ancient writing were in the form of **scroll**, which was "sheets of **papyrus** glued together and rolled at each end to collect a long literature work in a form for public reading or private study." (Holman; See also [Hastings' Dictionary](#))

**Book of the Law** - phrase used 19x in the Bible - Deut. 29:21; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 31:26; Jos. 1:8; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 8:34; Jos. 23:6; Jos. 24:26; 2 Ki. 14:6; 2 Ki. 22:8; 2 Ki. 22:11; 2 Chr. 17:9; 2 Chr. 34:14; 2 Chr. 34:15; Neh. 8:1; Neh. 8:3; Neh. 8:18; Neh. 9:3; Gal. 3:10

**To perform them** - To do every jot and tittle of the Law. Note it does not say just know the law or teach the law but to actually do the law. The point is that if one wants to be justified by the Law, they have to **perform** the Law and **perform** it in **all things**. **Morris** has an interesting note that "Jewish keepers of the law would overlook *small* transgressions. Paul would not." To be sure some sins are worse than others, but because of God's holiness and demand for perfection, there are no small sins before our great God!

**Lehman Strauss** - The curse is twofold: (1) a present condition of alienation from God in this life, (2) final banishment from His presence in eternity. A man must render an obedience to the law which is complete and continuous or else be subject to its curse. Doing the best we can is not good enough. We are violators, and since the law is a "ministration of death" and a "ministration of condemnation" (2 Cor. 3:7, 9), all who are under the law are condemned because they have failed to keep it. ([Devotional Studies on Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians](#))

**Wiersbe**: "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." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

As **Spurgeon** says "You may have kept the law in many points, but if you have broken it in one, you are under its curse. If you want to send a message by the telegraphic wire, it may be perfectly sound for one hundred miles, but if it is only broken in one inch—not only that, but if it is simply cut across—you cannot send the message by it. The law roars like a lion upon us in this sentence. If there is in any one of us a solitary violation of the command of God, we are cursed by Him. If we have at any time throughout life, in any measure or degree—in deed, word, or thought, by omission or commission—diverged from absolute perfection, we are cursed. Such is the statement of God Himself, by the mouth of His servant Moses, in Deut 27:26+. There is no exception; all sins are included in it, and we are all of us included. God will not take part payment. Holiness is a very different thing from that morality which some men boast of....If we had accomplished obedience for twenty years, yet still, if in the next year we broke the law, we would come under its curse. A thief is not excused because he was honest beforehand, nor a murderer because previously he had not shed blood. A Methuselah would be under the law in his nine hundredth year. The curse still might fall on him, even though up till then he had stood firm.

**Jerry Bridges** - The curse falls on everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Law. This is an impossibly exacting standard. No college demands a perfect 4.0 GPA for graduation. If it did, only a scant few would graduate. But Paul tells us this is what the Law of God demands. Some may react strongly to the rigorous demand of the Law for absolutely perfect obedience. Why isn't 90 or 95 percent obedience good enough? Why does God insist on 100 percent? After all, even highway patrolmen usually allow a five- to ten-mile-per-hour violation of the speed limit before ticketing us. In the final analysis, we should seek no justification from God for the exactness of His Law. After all, God is God. He is the Creator who brought the whole universe into existence by His spoken command. He is the One on whom each of us depends for life and breath. He is the One who has the absolute right to establish the rules of the game, the laws by which we are to live. And He's the One who has the right to attach sanctions to those laws for breaking them. (Holiness Day by Day)

**J Vernon McGee** says that the important word here is **ABIDE** ([emmeno](#) in [present tense](#)) - I am willing to grant that maybe there was a day in your life when you felt very good, when you were on top of the world and singing, "Everything's coming up daisies." On that day you walked with the Lord and did not stub your toe. Then you say, "Well, because I did that, God saved me." But notice what this verse says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not (abid) in all things which are written in the book of the law." How about that? Do you keep the law day and night, twenty-four hours every day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks out of the year in thought, word, and deed? If you are a human being, somewhere along the line you let down. You are not walking on top of the world all the time. My friend, when you let down, the law can only condemn you. I know a fine preacher who is always going around saying, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord." Someone asked his wife if he was like that all the time. She said, "No, he has his bad days." We all have bad days, don't we? If you are going to put yourself under the law, my friend, and you have a good day, you are not going to be rewarded for it. Suppose I had kept all of the laws of Pasadena, which is my home city, for twenty years. Then I wait at my house for the officials of Pasadena to come and present me with a medal for keeping those laws. Let me tell you, they do not give medals for keeping the law in Pasadena. If I had kept every law for twenty years and then stole something or broke a speeding law, I would be arrested. You see, the law does not reward you. It does not give you life. The law penalizes you. Faith, my friend, gives you something. It gives you life. (Thru The Bible)

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#### **NOTES ON 7TH DAY ADVENTISM** ([see also What is Seventh Day Adventism?](#))

Our concern is to be sure that individual Adventists are confronted with the one true gospel. If an Adventist will admit that Mrs. White was fallible, that no record in heaven could possibly bring a believer into condemnation, and that the works of the Law such as Sabbath-keeping are not necessary conditions of salvation, then other things being equal, he should be acknowledged as an evangelical. On the other hand, if the Adventist persists in defending Mrs. White's infallibility, the Investigative Judgment and the Old Testament dietary laws, he chooses for himself the Galatian heresy and places himself under the curse of the Law (Ga 3:10) and of preaching another gospel (Galatians 1:8-9). In response, to those who believe faith must be demonstrated by obedience to God's commandments:

1. Stress the biblical teaching that a man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ apart from the deeds of the Law (Ro 3:28; Ro 4:6; Ga 2:16; 3:10-14) .
2. Point out that the Law of Moses [the ceremonial and moral aspects] has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. By His perfect life He met all the requirements of the moral aspect of the Law; by His death He fulfilled all the ceremonial ordinances which prefigured His incarnation and sacrifice (Ro 5:10; Col 2:16-17) .
3. The law or commandment which Christians are called upon to follow is the law of love (e.g. Mt 22:37-40; Ro 13:8-10). To those who believe the Sabbath is binding on the believer, you might point out that:
  1. Constantine did not, as Adventists claim, change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. He enacted that the first day of the week should be a public holiday, but centuries before Constantine, Christians gathered together for worship on the first day of the week.
    - a. Reference to worship on the first day of the week can be found in Scripture. See Acts 2:41 Acts 20:6-7 1 Co 16:2 Rev 1:10 (Note: both the Didache and Ignatius refer to Sunday as the "Lord's Day" ["Kuriake"]) .
    - b. In addition, references to worship on the first day of the week can be found in the writings of the early church fathers—Ignatius (110 AD); Justin Martyr (100-165 AD); Barnabas (120-150 AD); Irenaeus (178 AD); Bardaisan (154 AD); Tertullian (200 AD); Origen (225 AD); Cyprian (200-258 AD); Peter of Alexandria (300 AD) and Eusebius (315 AD).
  2. There is no indication in the New Testament that the observance of the Sabbath was binding on Gentile believers. On the contrary we find such words as these: One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord (Ro 14:5-6). Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to . . . a Sabbath day (Col 2:16)

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**John Phillips - Seventh-day Adventists**, who come forcibly under the indictment of Galatians 3:10, have the same problem. Some years ago, when I was living in the Canadian north, I crossed verbal swords with a man who wanted to impose the Law on me. In wintertime, the temperature would frequently dip to forty-five degrees Fahrenheit below zero and would often hover at minus twenty degrees Fahrenheit. All plumbing had to be buried deep underground because in a severe winter the frost line went down some six feet into the ground. I can remember one winter when the temperature hit an arctic fifty-four degrees Fahrenheit below zero. The frost on the windowpanes was nearly an inch thick. It came through the front door and stood white and menacing on the inside panels. The doorknob was so cold that if one touched it with bare hands, the fingers stuck to it and could only be pulled away at the

cost of torn skin. The furnace in our house never stopped running for days. Those who had more primitive housing had a full-time job feeding logs on the fire.

With this in mind, I said to this Seventh-day Adventist, "Tell me, what do you do in the wintertime here in Prince George, when the temperature dips below zero? How do you ever manage to keep the Law on a day like that? The Law says, 'Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day'" (Exod. 35:3).

He had no answer. I continued, "What kind of suit are you wearing? Are you wearing a suit with a mixture of fabrics—wool and cotton, for instance?" Sure enough he was. "Well," I said, "even as you stand there trying to persuade me to put myself under law, you are under the curse of the Law yourself. The Law says, 'Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together'" (Deut. 22:11).

"Indeed," I continued, "you are not even making any attempt to wear the kind of garment that the Law demands. The Law says, 'Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself (Deut. 22:12). You want me to commit myself to keep the Sabbath and take upon myself responsibility to keep the Mosaic Law when you not only do not keep it yourself but also cannot keep it; by not keeping it, you put yourself under its curse. You certainly aren't going to get me under that curse too." ([Exploring Galatians](#))

**Galatians 3:11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."**

Greek - hoti de en nomo oudeis dikaioutai (3SPPI) para to theo delon hoti o dikaios ek pisteos zesetai (3SFMI)

Amplified: Now it is evident that no person is justified (declared righteous and brought into right standing with God) through the Law, for the Scripture says, The man in right standing with God [the just, the righteous] shall live by and out of faith and he who through and by faith is declared righteous and in right standing with God shall live.

Phillips It is made still plainer that no one is justified in God's sight by obeying the Law, for: 'The just shall live by faith.'

Wuest But that in a sphere of law no one is being justified in the sight of God is clear, because, The righteous man shall live by means of faith. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:11 Now it is clear no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous one will live by faith.

GNT Galatians 3:11 τι δ ν ν μ ο δε ς δικαιο ται παρ τ θε δ λον, τι δ καιος κ π στεω ς ζ σετ αι·

NLT Galatians 3:11 So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."

KJV Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

ESV Galatians 3:11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

ASV Galatians 3:11 Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith;

CSB Galatians 3:11 Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith.

NIV Galatians 3:11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

NKJ Galatians 3:11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

NRS Galatians 3:11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

YLT Galatians 3:11 and that in law no one is declared righteous with God, is evident, because 'The righteous by faith shall live;'

NAB Galatians 3:11 And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for "the one who is righteous by faith will live."

NJB Galatians 3:11 Now it is obvious that nobody is reckoned as upright in God's sight by the Law, since the upright will live through faith;

GWN Galatians 3:11 No one receives God's approval by obeying the law's standards since, "The person who has God's approval will live by faith."

BBE Galatians 3:11 Now that no man gets righteousness by the law in the eyes of God, is clear; because, The upright will be living by faith.

- **that no one is justified by the Law** Ga 2:16 1Ki 8:46 Job 9:3 40:4 42:6 Ps 19:12 130:3,4 143:2 Ec 7:20 Isa 6:5 53:6 64:6 Jas 3:2 1Jn 1:8-10 Rev 5:9 7:14,15
- **The righteous man:** Hab 2:4 Ro 1:17 Heb 10:38
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse; and the Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:11: Life by Faith](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Christ: A Curse for Us](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## **RIGHT STANDING BEFORE GOD ACHIEVED ONLY BY FAITH**

In Galatians 3:10 Paul showed the futility of seeking to be justified by trying to keep the law (**works of the Law**) by quoting from Moses (the "Law giver"! ). He shows that even Moses taught that unless one has perfect obedience he would be cursed (Dt 27:26<sup>+</sup>). By showing that no one can be justified by keeping the law because no one can keep it perfectly, Paul has in effect boxed men like the Judaizers into "a cursed corner" so to speak. Now in Gal 3:11 Paul shows that the way out of being boxed into this "cursed corner," by again quoting from the Old Testament to show that the way of escape from the "cursed corner" is **by faith**. He does not yet tell us **by faith** in Christ but he will in Gal 3:14. In summary, in Gal 3:10-14 Paul is building his iron-clad argument that one cannot be justified by **works**, but can only be justified **by faith**, and that personal faith is in the Person of Christ.

**Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident**- Earlier in Galatians 2:16 Paul had written " that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus." And in Galatians 3:11 Paul quoted from the OT (Deut 27:26<sup>+</sup>) as Scriptural proof that the Law cannot accomplish justification. Now he will quote from the OT again (Habakkuk 2:4) to show that justification can only be by faith. Paul presents a clear antithesis between justification by the Law and by faith. The two ways are mutually exclusive, the Law leading to a curse and eternal death, while faith leads to eternal life.

Paul makes a similar parallel statement in the first part of Romans 3:20 "because **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight**; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."

**No one (oudeis)** is a strong negation meaning not even one, not the least! So that even in the Old Testament, Paul is saying that obedience to the Law was not the basis for being justified and he will go on to explain this ("**for**" - NAS, ESV; "**because**" - NET, Wuest) by quoting Habakkuk 2:4 which explains that it is **by faith**. So not only were the Judaizers in error in Galatia in the first century, they would have been in error in Habakkuk's day (606-604 BC)!

**Barclay** says "therefore the only logical choice is to abandon the way of legalism and to venture upon the way of faith, of taking God at His word and of trusting His love."

**Eadie** says "Justification is not of **works**, for legalists are under curse, since they cannot render perfect obedience, is the one argument (Galatians 3:10); but the second is, Justification cannot depend on works, for the Scripture (REFERRING TO Hab 2:4) asserts its connection with **faith**."

**Justified** (declared righteous before God) (1344)(**dikaioo** from **dike** = right, expected behavior or conformity, not according to one's

own standard, but according to an imposed standard with prescribed punishment for nonconformity) primarily means to deem to be right. **Dikaioo** describes the act by which a man is brought into a state of right relationship with God. **Dikaioo** is a legal term having to do with the law and the courtroom, where it represented the legally binding verdict of the judge. This is the sense in which Paul uses **dikaioo** in this passage.

**Evident** (1212)(**delos**) is an adjective which means clearly visible and hence clear, plain, clear to the understanding or mind. **Delos** pertains to that which can be clearly and easily able to be known.

In 1 Cor 15:27 Paul writes "For HE (GOD THE FATHER) HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS (CHRIST'S) FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is **evident** that He (THE FATHER) is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him (CHRIST)."

**Delos** is found only 3x in the NT - Matt. 26:73 (Peter "your talk gives you away" as a follower of Christ); 1 Co. 15:27; Gal. 3:11.

**Delos** in the **Septuagint** - Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 14:41; 1 Sam. 28:6; Hos. 3:4

**Don Anderson** on Habakkuk 2:4 - This verse became famous in the REFORMATION in that this is the verse the Lord used with MARTIN LUTHER. On this occasion Martin had gone to Rome. It was considered to be an act of great merit to climb the SCALA SANCTA, the great sacred stairway, on hands and knees. He toiled upward seeking that merit that he might win and suddenly there came to him the voice of heaven, "the just shall live by faith." "The just shall live by faith," not by works of the law. This is the whole argument of the epistle. ([Notes](#))

**For THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH:** The Amplified Version has "The man in right standing with God [the just, the righteous] shall live by and out of faith and he who through and by faith is declared righteous and in right standing with God shall live."

Here in Galatians 3:11 Paul uses Habakkuk 2:4 to explain how the just **shall live** which is **by faith**, not by law.

The point is that NO ONE except Jesus Christ Himself has lived his entire life by faith...all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Paul's earlier OT quote (Gal 3:10. Dt 27:26+) showed that justification does not come from keeping the law. This quote from Hab 2:4 shows that justification is by faith alone.

Habakkuk 2:4+ "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the **righteous** will live by his faith.

Romans 1:17+ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE **RIGHTEOUS** man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

Hebrews 10:38+ BUT MY **RIGHTEOUS** ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

**Righteous** (1342)(**dikaioo**) describes being in accordance with what God requires. The **righteous man** does what he ought, not to gain favor but because he has favor (grace). He is the person who conforms to the standard, will or character of God.

It is interesting that **dikaioo** was applied to model citizens in the Graeco-Roman world, but even they fell far short of God's standard, because He demands perfect obedience to the Law, something only achieved by Christ and something reckoned to those who put their faith in Him. So when God the Father looks on our account ledger, He sees we are no longer spiritual debtors because His Son has paid the price in full for our sin debts.

**Spurgeon on SHALL LIVE BY FAITH** - The apostle quotes from the Old Testament, from Hab 2:4, and thus confirms one inspired statement by another. Even the just are not justified by their own righteousness, but live by faith. It follows then most conclusively that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. If the best of men find no justification coming to them through their personal virtues, but stand accepted only by faith, how much more such imperfect beings, such frequent sinners as ourselves?

**Cross References on Righteous Man** - Ge 15:6 Hab 2:4 Ge 6:9 2 Sa 4:11 Ps 5:12 64:10 92:12 Pr 9:9 Pr 12:10 Pr 13:5 Pr 20:7 Pr 24:16 Pr 25:26 Eccl 3:17, 7:15, 7:20 Isa 57:1 Ezek 3:20, 21 18:24, 26 33:12 Mt 1:19, 10:41, Mt 27:19 Luke 23:50 Ro 1:17, 5:7 Gal 3:11 1 Ti 1:9 James 5:6,16 2 Pe 2:8

Genesis 15:6+ Then he (Abram) believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as **righteousness**

Genesis 6:9 These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a **righteous** man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.

**How was Noah "righteous"?** There is only one way -- **by faith** in God's promises just Abram (ultimately

in His promised Seed, the Deliverer, Christ Jesus). While we do not fully understand all of the specifics, Paul tells us that even in the OT, the Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal 3:8+). And in Genesis 3:15+ we have the so-called the first form of the Gospel. So even before the flood, there was good news available to sinners for Peter describes "Noah, a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5+).

2 Peter 2:8+ for by what he (**NOAH**) saw and heard that **righteous** ([dikaos](#)) man, while living among them, felt his righteous ([dikaos](#)) soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds

**Shall live** (2198)([zao](#)) refers literally to natural physical life (Gal 2:14+) but in this passage **zao** refers to supernatural, spiritual life which was Paul's meaning in Galatians 2:20+ Paul explaining that " it is no longer I who **live**, but Christ **lives** in me; and the life which I now **live** in the flesh I **live** by faith in the Son of God." So there Paul describes his "faith life" in Christ, clearly referring to his supernatural, spiritual life. Similarly in Galatians 2:19+ Paul testified "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might **live** (spiritually live) to God." And in Galatians 5:25+ Paul said "If (SINCE) we **live** (spiritually, supernaturally) by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

**Zao** in Galatians - Gal. 2:14; Gal. 2:19; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 5:25

**By faith** (ex pistis) - Literally out of faith.

**Faith** (4102) see preceding discussion of [pistis](#) frequently used in Galatians and especially in Galatians 3:

Gal. 1:23; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:7; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:9; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 3:25; Gal. 3:26; Gal. 5:5; Gal. 5:6; Gal. 5:22; Gal. 6:10;

**Gutzke on by faith** - Believing is to the soul what swallowing is to the body. Now swallowing is something a person does. When it is said that swallowing is the way one lives, what is really meant is swallowing food, not just any substance. A person could swallow poison, but that would be fatal. The same thing is true of believing. When it is said "the just shall live by faith," it is meant that the just man will live by believing the promises of God. It does not mean believing anything and everything. As a person can swallow poison to his hurt; so he can believe error to his hurt. Both will be fatal. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ brings life eternal, and that is vital. To say, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe, just so you believe," means that one might just as well say, "It doesn't make any difference what you swallow." But that is obviously false. It's what a person believes that makes the difference. Or should it be said whom a person believes makes the difference? Believingly only commits the person to the things in which he believes. If he happens to believe the right thing, he is fortunate. If he believes the wrong thing, he's fooled. How is anybody ever cheated? How does one person ever take advantage of another? Is it not true that one person believes in the other? It happens when one believes another person is honest, when he actually is not. Believing in his honesty did not make him honest. It does make a difference whom one believes, what one believes; even so with reference to the things of God. It makes a difference whether a person believes in Him. ([Plain talk on Galatians](#))

**Hendriksen on by faith** - It is the man who has placed his entire confidence in God, trusting him implicitly, and accepting with gladness of heart the gracious provision which that merciful Father has made for his salvation, it is he, he alone, who shall live. This living consists in such things as: a. enjoying the peace of God which passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7), in the knowledge that in the sight of God's holy majesty the believer is righteous (Rom. 5:1; 8:15); b. having fellowship with God "in Christ" (John 17:3); c. "rejoicing greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1:8); d. "being transformed into the image of the Lord from glory to glory" (II Cor. 3:18); and e., last but not least, striving to be a spiritual blessing to others to the glory of God (I Thess. 3:8).

**Harrison** says: God's method of making men good is through the goodness of Another; not by man's doing anything, but rather by his believing what God Himself has done. ([Galatians 3 Faith versus Works](#))

**Strauss**: "This secret which God made known to the prophet Habakkuk had its primary application to Israel in those dark days following the cutting-off of King Josiah. Israel's hope was in the coming of Messiah, and it is to His coming that the **five 'its'** of verse three refer (Read Hab 2:3+). They were to wait for HIM. But the Hope of Israel is also the Hope of all nations in all ages, for the **five 'its'** in the prophecy of Habakkuk become '**He**' in Hebrews 10:37+, where we read: 'For yet a little while, and **He** that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' If all seemed hopeless to Israel, God would assure His people that there was still hope if they would but believe in Him who was to come. But faith must be exercised. In this vision given to Habakkuk Israel would find food for her faith. Though circumstances all around them seemed to contradict their hopes, they would live in the present through faith in Messiah's coming."

**Spurgeon on by faith** - It is through faith that a man becomes just, for otherwise, before the law of God he is convicted of being unjust: being justified by faith, he is enrolled among the just ones. It is through faith that he is at first quickened and breathes the air of heaven, for naturally he was dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is the first sure sign of the spiritual life within the human breast. He repents of sin and looks to Jesus, because he believes the testimony of God's Son; he believes that testimony because he has

received a new life. He depends upon the atoning blood of Jesus because his heart has received the power to do so by the Holy Ghost's gift of spiritual life.

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**Good Works Cannot Liberate Us** - When I was a teenager, I became fascinated, appalled, and grieved by the literature of the Holocaust . . . One scene that haunts me is a picture from Auschwitz. Above the entryway to the concentration camp were the words, Arbeit macht frei. The same thing stood above the camp at Dachau. It means, "work makes free"—work will liberate you and give you freedom. It was a lie—a false hope. The Nazis made the people believe hard work would equal liberation, but the promised "liberation" was horrifying suffering and even death. Arbeit macht frei. One reason that phrase haunts me is because it is the spiritual lie of this age. It is a satanic lie. It's a religious lie. It is a false hope—an impossible dream for many people in the world. They believe their good works will be great enough to outweigh their bad works, allowing them to stand before God in eternity and say, "You owe me the right to enter into your heaven." It is the hope of every false religion—arbeit macht frei. But it's the love of God that liberates. It's the blood of Jesus Christ that liberates. He died in my place, and I am free. (Johnny V. Miller -The Great Rescue)

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**Habakkuk 2:4 The just shall live by faith** - It was this text that revolutionized the life of Martin Luther. How hard he had tried, as a zealous and conscientious monk, to accumulate merit enough to earn his salvation! He had fasted and prayed until he was reduced to a mere skeleton. He had flagellated himself until he was a mass of cuts and sores. He had done penance and gone on pilgrimages. Then, one day, as he crawled on hands and knees up Pilate's staircase in Rome and prayed earnestly to the Virgin Mary on every step, the light dawned. The voice of God cut through his ritual prayers and thundered in his soul, "The just shall live *by faith*." He rose from his knees, brushed off the dust of that place, marched boldly back down those stairs, and on out of the Church of Rome altogether. (Phillips)

**Galatians 3:12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."**

Greek - ο δε νομος ουκ εστιν (3SPA1) εκ πιστεως αλλ ο ποιησας (AAPMSN) αυτα ζησειται (3SFMI) εν αυτοις

Amplified: But the Law does not rest on faith [does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith], for it itself says, He who does them [the things prescribed by the Law] shall live by them [not by faith].

Barclay - But the law is not based on faith. And yet the Scripture says: 'The man who does these things will have to live by them.'

Phillips And the Law is not a matter of faith at all but of doing, as, for example, in the scripture: 'The man who does them shall live by them.'

Wuest And the law is not of faith; but the one who has done them shall live in them. [Eerdmans Publishing](#)

NET Galatians 3:12 But the law is not based on faith, but the one who does the works of the law will live by them.

GNT Galatians 3:12 ὁ νόμος οὐκ ἐστὶν κτιστὴρ, ἀλλὰ ποιησάσας αὐτὰ ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς.

NLT Galatians 3:12 This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, "It is through obeying the law that a person has life."

KJV Galatians 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

ESV Galatians 3:12 But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

ASV Galatians 3:12 and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them.

CSB Galatians 3:12 But the law is not based on faith; instead, the one who does these things will live by them.

NIV Galatians 3:12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

NKJ Galatians 3:12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

NRS Galatians 3:12 But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, "Whoever does the works of the law will live by them."

YLT Galatians 3:12 and the law is not by faith, but -- 'The man who did them shall live in them.'

NAB Galatians 3:12 But the law does not depend on faith; rather, "the one who does these things will live by them."

NJB Galatians 3:12 and the Law is based not on faith but on the principle, whoever complies with it will find life in it.

GWN Galatians 3:12 Laws have nothing to do with faith, but, "Whoever obeys laws will live because of the laws he obeys."

BBE Galatians 3:12 And the law is not of faith; but, He who does them will have life by them.

- **the Law is not of faith:** Ro 4:4,5,14,16 9:30-32 10:5,6 11:6
- **He who practices them:** Lev 18:5 Ne 9:29 Eze 20:11,13 Mt 19:17 Lu 10:25-28 Ro 10:5,6
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse; and the Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Christ: A Curse for Us](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## LAW SAYS DO AND LIVE

Several commentaries suggest that the motivation for Paul quoting from Leviticus 18:5 is that some of the Galatians might be wondering "*Perhaps both faith and works of the law are necessary for salvation. Perhaps both are needed*" In other words, they would be saying something like "*Yes, Paul was correct, but the Judaizers are also correct.*" Paul says absolutely not! The two ways are not compatible!

**Wiersbe** for example proposes that "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<sup>+</sup>), as well as the history of Israel (Ro 10:1-10<sup>+</sup>), prove that **works righteousness** can never save the sinner; only **faith righteousness** can do that. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Guzik** suggests why Paul quotes Lev 18:5 - Some might come back to Paul and say, "*Look, I'll do the best I can under the law and let faith cover the rest. God will look at my performance, my effort, and my good intentions and credit to me as righteousness. The important thing is that I am really trying.*" Paul proved from the Old Testament itself that this simply isn't good enough. No, the paths of approval by the law and faith don't run together, because the law is not of faith. The man who does them shall live by them: The quote from Leviticus 18:5 is clear. If you want to live by the law, you must do it. Not try to do it, not intend to do it, and not even want to do it. No, it is only the man who does them who shall live by them.

Law says, "Do and live!"

But grace says, "Believe and live!"

- Warren Wiersbe

**However, the Law is not of faith** - The word for **not** (ouk) signifies absolute negation. "Absolutely not of faith" is the idea. **The Amplified Version** is helpful here ([Click for a helpful explanation](#) which will enrich your use of this version) is very helpful (I often use it as in this passage as a "mini-commentary"). And so the Amplified reads "But the Law does not rest on faith [**does not require faith, has nothing to do with faith**]," (The bracketed notes in the Amplified are just that -- notes but not translation per se ([Click here](#) for the distinction between words and phrase in brackets [ ], parentheses ( ) and *italics* in the Amplified Version). Paul is saying that keeping the Law to gain salvation is utterly incompatible with faith. **Phillips** paraphrases it this way "the Law is not a matter of faith at all but of **doing**." **Law** and **faith** are opposing principles. **Law** is antithetical to **faith** as a means of justification before God.

### Faith and Law

are not two sides of the same coin!

**James Montgomery Boice** says "**faith** excludes **law**, and **law** by its very nature excludes **faith**."

**A T Robertson** - Law demands complete obedience and rests not on mercy, faith, grace.

**Don Anderson** - In other words, you do not mix the two together. They are OPPOSITES, just like OIL AND WATER. Even if a man kept all the law, the righteousness that he would have would be inferior, because it would be his own, whereas Paul's gospel offers us the righteousness of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. (cf Isa 64:6, Ro 4:4-5) ([Notes](#))

**John MacArthur** - Justification by **faith** and justification by keeping the **law** are mutually exclusive, as Paul's OT quote from Lv 18:5 proves. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Lange** says "The law will have doers, that (THEY THINKD) deserve Heaven by works. The gospel will have only sinners, who have done working, but who, repenting them of their sins (or broken into contriteness by the law), seek medicine, help and grace in Christ and His Father's compassion. They now see aright their guiltiness, together with the loathsomeness of sin

**William Hendriksen** - **Law** is the very opposite of **faith**. The two cannot be combined. **Leaning on law** means leaning on self. **Exercising faith** means leaning on Christ. As avenues by which men attempt to obtain salvation the two simply do not mix. They are thoroughly antagonistic. ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon](#))

**John Phillips** - The Law said, "This do, and thou shalt live." *Do! Do! Do!* The word runs like a refrain down through the commandments of the Law. (Ex 18:20, Leviticus 18:4-5, Leviticus 20:8, Leviticus 22:31, Leviticus 25:18, Deuteronomy 17:18-19) And so it went on! Do! The people responded, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exod. 19:8). That was what they said in their folly before they knew what the Law contained. "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do," they said, and said again in their folly even after they knew what the Law contained (see also Ex 24:3, 7). ([Exploring Galatians](#))

**Bob Utley** - Here is the basic assumption! In the matter of right standing (salvation) with God, the choice is faith **or** law, not faith **and** law. The Judaizers had turned faith in God into rules for God. Even in the OT the individual Israelite was only right by personal faith in YHWH. Never were all Israelites right with God because of their descent from Abraham.

**Wuest** says that **the Law is not of faith** "means that the two principles of **Law** and of **faith** as a means of justification are mutually exclusive of one another. They are diametrically opposed to each other. Then Paul quotes Leviticus 18:5, "**He who practices them shall live by them.**" Light is thrown upon this statement by the apostle in Romans 10:5 where he quotes this same passage from Leviticus, when he says, "**Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.**" That means that there is a righteousness that a human being could accrue to himself by a perfect obedience to the law, a thing which a fallen sinful human being cannot do, but which a perfect sinless being could do. But **that righteousness** would be different from **the righteousness which God imputes to the believing sinner**. The former would be obtained **by works, and would be a human righteousness**. The latter is obtained **by faith and is a divine righteousness**. Under the legal enactments of the Mosaic law, this could be the futile attempt of a sinner to work out under law a righteousness which God could approve. Under grace, it is the act of a believing sinner accepting as a gift, a righteousness which God has approved, even the Lord Jesus Himself. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** explains **the Law is not of faith** -The very spirit of law is the spirit of works. And as life only comes by faith, it cannot come by the works of the law, for they are not of faith. The law says nothing about faith; it speaks only about doing: "You must carry out my regulations, and you must observe my statutes by following them; I am Yahweh your God. And you shall observe my statutes and my regulations by which the person doing them shall live; I am Yahweh" (Lev 18:4-5). The law demands doing; the gospel enjoins believing. The believing man comes in as an heir of the blessing, but the man who trusts to his own doing is an heir of the curse. We cannot be saved partly by faith and partly by works. The roads are distinct. We must keep the whole law if we would be saved by it (ED: WHICH OF COURSE IS IMPOSSIBLE!). Our only hope is in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ received by faith.

**On the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM."** (Quoting Lev 18:5+): The point is that if you want to be justified before God by the Law then you must live your whole life perfectly...not even one "oops"! Not one false step! LIVE BY THE LAW...just try to make it through even one day (one hour, one minute!) without an evil thought or motive or desire! Good luck!

**Vine** writes on **practices them** that "the doing is to be lifelong, unintermittent, and is never to fall by so much as a hairbreadth below the Divine standard. 'Doeth' is the emphatic word in the sentence." ([Collected Writings](#))

**Donald Campbell** - 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. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Duncan** - The condition that the law lays down for obtaining eternal life is keeping its regulations and keeping all of them perfectly. That's very different from resting in the Lord by faith. That's very different from the empty hand that simply receives as a free gift the blessings of God. The two principles of law and grace of faith and works are incompatible. As Paul says, "The law is not of faith." The two cannot be mixed. That's what the Judaizers were doing. They were mixing faith and law, but they can't be mixed. Trying to mix them in order to gain salvation is like trying to mix salt and water to slake a thirst. It won't work. The water is worthless. The salt

destroys it. The purpose of the law is to create a desire for righteousness, just as salt creates a thirst within a person. It is faith that satisfies, just like water satisfies the thirst. And faith is the means of obtaining the righteousness that the law causes us to desire. So if a person chooses the principle of law keeping to gain life, he will only fail and be condemned. ([Sermon](#))

**Homer Kent** - The law demands "doing," whereas faith receives as a gift what God has already done. Performance of the requirements of God is a delight to the child of God whose heart has been transformed (Ps. 119:26, 47, 77, 97); but when one relies on his performance of God's demands to earn him salvation, he finds himself falling far short of the perfection which God's holiness requires. Those who are relying on conformity to law to save them are under the curse of God because all men have violated God's law. ([The Freedom of God's Sons - Galatians, 1981](#))

**Jack Arnold** - His point is that if a person could keep the law, he could have acceptance with God, but he cannot because he has a sin nature and always breaks the law, proving himself to be a sinner. To get acceptance before God on the basis of law, a person would have to keep the law perfectly, and no one has ever done that—except Jesus Christ. ([Sermon](#))

**Practices** is translated "**does**" by many of the versions. It focuses on what a man can **DO** for himself, not what God has **DONE** for us in Christ. One is reminded of the "rich young ruler" whose opening question to Jesus was "Good Teacher, what shall I **DO** to inherit eternal life?" And what did Jesus do? He immediately pointed him to the Law. Jesus showed him that although the young ruler thought he had kept the commandments, in actual fact, he had never kept them (see Lk 18:22-23+)! (Lk 18:18-27+, cf Mt 19:16-22).

As **Phillips** said "'Do!' demands the Law—"and do it from the heart." The problem is that we cannot do what is demanded. So when the Law says, "This *do* and thou shalt live," we find ourselves confronted with the humanly impossible. The Law says, "*Do!*" Grace says, "*Done!*" On the cross, Jesus cried, "It is finished!" (John 19:30+) All of the doing has been done. By faith we cross over from death to life, from trying to trusting, and from a system that says, "Do!" to a salvation that says, "Done!" ([Exploring Galatians](#))

**Hendriksen** comments that "Those who expect to be justified by observing all the statutes and ordinances of the law should remember that "He who does them shall live by them." They are even more foolish than those who imagine that they can quench their thirst by drinking salt water. Lev. 18:5 now becomes their accuser, but that is their fault!" ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon](#))

**Spurgeon on live by them** - So that the justified man is not justified by the law, but by faith. He stands before God not in what he does, not even in what the Spirit enables him to do. His own prayers and tears and communings with Christ, his own labors, his earnest and indefatigable attempts to extend the kingdom of Christ—all tell for nothing in the matter of his justification. He hangs them all upon the cross of Christ and relies only upon the cross, looking in no manner whatever to anything that comes of himself.

Note that Paul is quoting the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translation of Leviticus 18:5 (+) (As an aside you can always discern direct OT quotes in the NAS version because they are placed in ALL CAPITAL letters. The ESV does not have this useful feature). Here is the Hebrew text.

Here is the Hebrew - 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, **by which a man may live if he does them**; I am the LORD.

Here is the Septuagint - "**HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.**"

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**J Vernon McGee** - This also is an important verse. Faith and law are contrary principles for salvation and also for living. One cancels out the other. They are diametrically opposed to each other. If you are going to live by the Law, then you cannot be saved by faith. You cannot combine them. They are contrary. Let me illustrate this. Our daughter came to visit us while we were in Florida, and we wanted to return to California by train. That was the time when passenger trains were being phased out. We tried to get a train route to California without going through Chicago -- both of us wanted to avoid Chicago. Well, it seemed as though we would have to go halfway around the world to go from Florida to California; so we had to come back by plane. When we got the tickets, I said, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could go by train and plane at the same time -- sit in the plane and put our feet down in the train!" (I would feel much safer with my feet in the train, I assure you). But that's absurd. If we go by plane, we go by plane; if we go by train, we go by train. They have made no arrangements for passengers to sit in a plane and put their feet down in a train. My friend, neither has God any arrangement for you to be saved by faith and by law. You have to choose one or the other. If you want to go by law, then you can try it -- but I'll warn you that God has already said you won't make it. "The law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them." ([Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee](#))

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**Warren Wiersbe** sums up this section with a review of the weakness of trying to live the Christian life by works rather than by faith -

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? ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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**TOO LATE** - During one of his great campaigns, D. L. Moody was accosted by a man who had been to a number of the services and who, although convicted of his need for Christ, had kept on postponing a decision. Now the last night had come. The altar call was over, the people were going home, the work crew was busy folding up the chairs and dismantling the platform, and Mr. Moody was preparing to leave. The man finally plucked up his courage. He came to the evangelist and blurted out, "Mr. Moody, what must I do to be saved?" D. L. Moody looked at him. "I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but you're too late."

"Too late, Mr. Moody?" The man was desperate now. "Surely I'm not too late!"

"Yes, sir," said Moody. "You're too late. As a matter of fact, you're two thousand years too late if you want *todo* something to be saved. All the 'doing' has been done. But if you would like to accept Christ by faith as your personal Savior, you're just in time. You can do that right here, right now." (John Phillips)

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**Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--**

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Greek - Christos hemas exegorasen (3SAAI) ek tes kataras tou nomou genomenos (AMPMSN) huper hemon katara hoti gegraptai (3SRPI) epikataratospas o kremamenos (AMPMSN) epi xulou

Amplified: Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] becoming a curse for us, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified);

Phillips Now Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law's condemnation, by himself becoming a curse for us when he was crucified. For the scripture is plain: 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'

Wuest Christ delivered us by the payment of ransom from the curse of the law by becoming a curse in behalf of us, because it stands written, Accursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (because it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")

GNT Galatians 3:13 Χριστ ς μ ς ξηγ ρασεν κ τ ς κατ ρας το ν μου γεν μενος π ρ μ ν κατ ρα, τι γ γραπται, πικατ ρατος π ς κρεμ μενος π ξ λου,

NLT Galatians 3:13 But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

KJV Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

ESV Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--

ASV Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

CSB Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed.

NIV Galatians 3:13 Christ 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."

NKJ Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree " ),

NRS Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is

written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"--

YLT Galatians 3:13 Christ did redeem us from the curse of the law, having become for us a curse, for it hath been written, 'Cursed is every one who is hanging on a tree,'

- **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law** Ga 3:10 4:5 Isa 55:5-7,10-12 Da 9:24,26 Zec 13:7 Mt 26:28 Ro 3:24-26 4:25 8:3,4 2Co 5:21 Eph 5:2 Tit 2:14 Heb 7:26,27 9:12,15,26,28 10:4-10 1Pe 1:18-21 2:24 3:18 1Jn 2:1,2 4:10 Rev 1:5 5:9 13:8
- **having become a curse for us:** 2Ki 22:19 Jer 44:22 49:13 Ro 9:3
- **for it is written:** De 21:23 2Sa 17:23 18:10,14,15 21:3,9 Es 7:10 9:14 Mt 27:5 1Pe 2:24
- **Cursed:** Jos 10:26,27
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:13 The Curse of God](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse; and the Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:13 Christ Made A Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:13: The Curse Removed](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Christ: A Curse for Us](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## WHOLLY BOUGHT BY HOLY BLOOD

Galatians 3:10 was bad news regarding a cursed but as [Paul Harvey](#) used to say "[And now you know the rest of the story...](#)" the good news that the curse of the law is negated by Christ becoming a curse for us! In His great mercies God has provided for us a way of escape from the curse of the Law!

**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law**- Amplified = "Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation]" Christ bought us of (from is "ek" = out) which gives us the picture of a slave being purchased from the the slave block. We were in bondage to our masters SIN and SATAN and FEAR OF DEATH (Heb 2:14,15), but Christ paid the purchase price to set us free. The **curse** was hanging over us and Christ came between us and the curse and it fell on Him instead of us.

Paul repeats this truth in Galatians 4:4-5+

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He **might redeem** ([exagorazo](#)) those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

To **redeem** is to pay the purchase price. It is as if Christ entered the slave market and paid the required number of [sestertii](#) (Roman coins) for those in bondage.

**Redeemed** (1805)([exagorazo](#) from **ek** = out or from. If something is in something else, then **ek** describes separating it in respect to place, time, source or origin + [agorazo](#) = buy, acquire possessions or services in exchange for money with the result that whatever has been bought is the buyer's by right of possession <> from **agora** = market place where things were exposed for sale, a forum, a place in which the people assemble and where public trials were held) means literally to buy out of (the preposition "**ek**" = out of) the market place. The idea is not just to redeem but to **completely** redeem. **Redeemed** often spoke of buying a slave's or debtor's freedom. Christ's death, because it was a death of substitution for sin, satisfied God's justice and exhausted His wrath toward His elect, so that Christ actually purchased believers from slavery to sin and from the sentence of eternal death (Gal 4:5+; Titus 2:14 1 Pe 1:18 cf. Ro 3:24; 1 Co 1:30; Ep 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12). Thus God could be both Just and Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. If one dies outside of Christ God can only be Just to that person, not their Justifier!

**Exagorazo** - 4x in 4v - Gal. 3:13; Gal. 4:5+; Eph. 5:16±; Col. 4:5± -

**THOUGHT** - Note the last two NT uses of **exagorazo** which are exhortations to believers, to those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29), Christ Jesus and who are now charged to redeem the time or the opportunities ([kairos](#)) God gives each of us! Time is flying by dear believer! Don't waste your life on things which will not endure eternally! Take a moment and study the vital topic [Redeem the Time](#).

Only one life, Twill soon past, Only what's done for (in) Christ will last!

The Welsh translation of Galatians 3:13 says that "Christ hath **wholly purchased** us **from** the curse of the law." The Galatians imagined that Christ only half purchased them, and that they had to purchase the rest by their submission to circumcision and other Jewish rites and ceremonies. Hence their readiness to be led away by false teachers and to mix up Christianity and Judaism. Paul says in essence "No, you have been **wholly purchased** from the curse".

**Guzik on redeemed** - "It isn't just rescuing; it is paying a price to rescue. Simply put, in Jesus, we aren't cursed anymore."

## **Damocles Sword**

**Click to Enlarge**

There are two fascinating **prepositions** in Galatians 3:10 and Galatians 3:13 which present a striking picture of what is at stake in salvation and what awaits all who reject Christ.

In Galatians 3:10 we were **"UNDER"** (preposition = **HUPO**) a curse. In Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed believers **"OUT OF"** (**EK**) from under the curse. The **Sword of Damocles** had been "hanging over our head" so to speak! From the moment of our birth we were **UNDER** this **"SWORD"**. For those who reject Christ's offer, the **"sword"** in effect will fall on them at the end of their life and they will be cursed throughout eternity, cursed with eternal death and cursed with eternal separation from the presence of God their Creator! Dear reader, if you have not accepted Christ as your Redeemer, you must pay the price for your sin yourself (Ro 6:23<sub>±</sub>) and you are in a very real sense even at this very moment **"UNDER"** God's "sword" and in grave danger! You do not know if you will have tomorrow! Do not delay or procrastinate or you will have all eternity to ponder your foolish decision to reject Christ the Redeemer! (cf Jn 8:24) You must make up your mind even as you read this note, for **"Behold now is the (YOUR) Day of Salvation!"** (2 Cor 6:2) **Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved**, (Acts 16:31+, Ro 10:9,10<sub>±</sub>) and Christ will in effect pull you **OUT** (rescue you) from **UNDER** the "sword" (1 Th 1:10<sub>±</sub>) that otherwise will bring about God's curse and condemnation in the exercise of [His perfect justice](#) (see below)!

- [What does it mean that God is just?](#)
- [How do God's mercy and justice work together in salvation?](#)

**Don Anderson** - During the assassination of President Kennedy, the story of the protection of Vice President Johnson came out in that when the shots were heard, the FBI agent threw Vice President Johnson on the floor of the car and covered him with his own body. In essence, this is what Christ did for us—only it cost Him His life. Wonder of wonders that God could love like that. By faith Christ changes places with us. He gets our sins and we get His holiness or righteousness. ([Notes](#))

**Guzik** has an interesting historical note on **redemption** - Redemption came from the practices of ancient warfare. After a battle the victors would often capture some of the defeated. Among the defeated, the poorer ones would usually be sold as slaves, but the wealthy and important men, the men who mattered in their own country, were held to ransom. When the people in their homeland had raised the required price, they would pay it to the victors and the captives would be set free. The process was called redemption, and the price was called the ransom. The image took root in other areas. When a slave had his freedom purchased – perhaps by a relative, perhaps by his own diligent work and saving – this was called “redemption.” Sometimes the transaction took place at a temple, and a record was carved in the wall so everyone would forever know that this former slave was now a redeemed, free man. Or, a man condemned to death might be set free by the paying of a price, and this was considered “redemption.” Most importantly, Jesus bought us out of defeat, out of slavery, and out of a death sentence to reign as kings and priests with Him forever.

**Spurgeon on Christ redeemed us** - The **atonement** is a ransom—that is to say, a price paid. In the present case, the original word is more than usually expressive; it is a payment for, a price instead of. Jesus in His sufferings performed what may be forcibly and fitly described as the payment of a ransom, the giving to justice a quid pro quo for what was due on our behalf for our sins. Christ in His person suffered what we ought to have suffered in our persons.

## **[Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!](#)**

Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child and forever I am.

*Refrain*

*Redeemed, redeemed,*

*Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, redeemed,  
His child and forever I am.*

Redeemed, and so happy in Jesus,  
No language my rapture can tell;  
I know that the light of His presence  
With me doth continually dwell.

Refrain

I think of my blessèd Redeemer,  
I think of Him all the day long:  
I sing, for I cannot be silent;  
His love is the theme of my song.

Refrain

**From the curse of the Law.** Why is the Law which is good, actually a source of "curse" to mankind? (Ga 3:10+). The **curse of the law** is death—the penalty for breaking its commandments. The **curse of the Law** was the punishment demanded because no man could keep from violating its demands. Christ has delivered those under law from paying the penalty of death demanded by the law. Christ did not redeem men from the curse of the law by keeping the Ten Commandments perfectly during His lifetime. Scripture does not teach that His perfect obedience to the law (which was indeed perfect) is reckoned to us. No, rather Christ delivered us from curse of the the law by bearing its dreadful curse on Himself (2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pe 2:24, et al) on the old rugged Cross on Golgotha.

As alluded to above -- The Galatians imagined (or were duped by the Judaizers to believe the lie) that Christ only "half purchased" them, and that they had to purchase the rest performing works of the Law and/or by submission to circumcision and other Jewish rites. Hence their readiness to be led away by false teachers and to mix grace with law, Christianity and Judaism. Paul says here: (according to the Welsh translation) "Christ hath wholly purchased us from the curse of the law."

**Swindoll** - those who attempt to be saved—or, really, to save themselves—by any means other than by grace through faith fool themselves. Instead of receiving a blessing as a result of their efforts to obey the Law, **they fall under a curse**. So how does faith remove us from this curse of the Law? Paul tells us that Christ, Who did live a perfect, righteous life without even the slightest sin, nevertheless suffered the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). By suffering death "on a tree," that is, a cross of wood, Jesus Christ experienced the kind of death the Law reserves for one who is cursed. To validate this point, Paul alludes to a principle found in Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians)

**Spurgeon on curse of the law** - In all the pages of revelation you will find no blessings that the law ever gave to one who had offended it. There were blessings for those who kept it completely—though none ever did—but no blessing is ever written for one offender. Blessings we find in the gospel; curses we find in the law.

## **THE MEANS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE CURSE CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE**

**Having become a curse for us** - By bearing God's wrath for believers' sins on the cross, Christ took upon Himself the curse pronounced on those who violated the law (see Gal 3:10).

2 Corinthians 5:21+ He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on our behalf**, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 9:28+ so Christ also, **having been offered once to bear the sins of many**, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

1 Peter 2:24+ and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross** so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1 Peter 3:18+ For Christ also **died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust**, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Isaiah 53:5-6+ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being **fell upon Him**, And by His scourging we are healed (OF SIN SICKNESS!). All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the **LORD has caused the**

### **iniquity of us all To fall on Him.**

**Ray Pritchard** - Think of it. When Jesus was baptized, the voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." No longer would the voice say that. At the cross, the beloved Son became "a curse for us.

Isaiah's great prophecy of the Messiah's sacrifice alludes to Christ becoming a curse for us...

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; **But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.** (THERE IT IS - HE BECAME A CURSE FOR US!) (Isaiah 53:6+)

That a loving God would send His only Son, His beloved Son to become a curse for sinful, God hating men and women is foolishness to most of the world. Paul says it this way...

For the **word of the cross** is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (IT HAD THE POWER TO SAVE US THE FIRST TIME = JUSTIFICATION AND THEN EVERY DAY THEREAFTER = SANCTIFICATION, UNTIL WE FINALLY REACH GLORY!). (1 Cor 1:18)

Again Paul writes

But a natural (UNSAVED, UNREGENERATE) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, **for they are foolishness to him** (THINGS LIKE CHRIST BECOMING A CURSE!); and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (1 Cor 2:14+)

The Guiltless One died for the guilty.

The Just One died for the unjust.

The Sinless One died for the sinner.

**Lehman Strauss** adds that the lost world falsely reasons that "A loving Father could not curse His sinless son whom He loved, and that Son still remain the object of the Father's love. The curse of the broken law rested upon all, and Christ, Who alone rendered perfect obedience to the law, assumed the place of penalty for all. This is the great Biblical truth of the vicarious sufferings and death of the Son of God who had paid the price for sins. Christ the perfect Sacrifice offered Himself to bestow a perfect salvation. The Guiltless One died for the guilty; the Just One died for the unjust; the Sinless One died for the sinner." ([Devotional Studies on Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians](#))

### **Spurgeon on becoming a curse -**

Christ was no **curse** in Himself. In His person He was spotlessly innocent, and nothing of sin could belong personally to Him. In Him was no sin. "God made him to be sin for us," the apostle adds elsewhere, "who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21+). There must never be supposed to be any degree of blameworthiness or censure in the person or character of Christ as He stands as an individual. He is in that respect without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—the immaculate Lamb of God's Passover. Nor was Christ made a curse of necessity. His own intrinsic holiness kept Him from sin, and that same holiness kept Him from the curse. He was made sin for us not on His own account, not with any view to Himself, but wholly because He loved us and chose to put Himself in the place we ought to have occupied.

What a mystery is this!

The Blessed One made a curse

that we accursed ones might inherit a blessing!

-- James Smith

### **Wuest on becoming a curse -**

The curse here is that which the legalistic passages of the Mosaic law pronounced upon those who did not perfectly obey its demands. The law pronounced a blessing and a curse. But the blessing proved barren, for the law made no allowance for human sin and frailty (ED: STATED ANOTHER WAY, THE LAW PROVIDED TO POWER TO OBEY). The **curse**, which involved the wrath of a righteous God, brought condemnation upon the offender. From this hopeless state of condemnation in which the sinner was not only helpless to redeem himself, but helpless to satisfy the just demands of the law and thus find acceptance with God, Christ redeemed us by satisfying the just demands of the law which we broke, paying the penalty in our stead, leaving a holy God free to bestow mercy on the basis of justice satisfied. A vivid picture of it all is given us in the three expressions, **under the curse** (Gal 3:10), **made a curse for us** (Gal 3:13), and **redeemed us out from under the curse** (Gal 3:13). Sinners were under the curse. Christ came above us, thus between us and the curse. He took the blow of the Damascus blade that hung over us, and took us out from under the curse,

having become a curse for **us**. The word **above** is the root meaning of [huper](#), the preposition of substitution, used already in this epistle by Paul to speak of the substitutionary character of our Lord's death (Gal 1:4+ = "Who gave Himself **f o r** [[huper](#)] our sins" and Gal 2:20+ "Gave Himself up **f o r** [[huper](#)] me.")....The word **becoming** is from *genomenos* ([Lemma](#) = [ginomai](#)) which means "to become." It is a participle of means, expressing the method by which Christ redeemed us from the curse. In the words "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree," Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 21:23. They are introduced by Paul to support his statement to the effect that Christ became a curse. **The Deuteronomy passage has reference to the dead body of a criminal who had been put to death by stoning, and which was hung upon a tree. There is no reference here to Roman crucifixion, which was unknown at the time of Moses** (ED: This passage does not mean that a man is cursed because he is executed upon a tree, but rather that a man who is executed upon a tree is there because he is cursed, having been judged as a lawbreaker.)....The law satisfied its demands upon the Lord Jesus, and thus thrust Him out of the pale of its legal jurisdiction. Believers, being identified with Him in His death in which He paid our penalty, are likewise cast out with Him, and are therefore no longer under curse. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Curse** (accursed) ([2671](#))([katara](#) from [katá](#) = down, against [intensifies meaning of following verb] + [ara](#) = a curse, Araoriginally = wish," "petition," but came to be used for curse from the time of Homer's, in the NT found only in Ro 3:14+) means a malediction (literally to speak evil), imprecation (uttering evil) on these men. **Katara** can be used in the sense of a legal action, of a curse by God because of sin (Gal 3.10+). **Katara** can describe human utterance which desires evil on someone (imprecation) (Jas 3.10+). Finally **katara** can represent the object of a curse, in other words the thing accursed as it does here in Gal 3.13.

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the curse of the law?](#)
- [Why is there a curse associated with hanging on a tree?](#)
- [What does it mean that Christians are not under the law?](#)

### FOR US = SUBSTITUTION

**For us** ([huper](#) hemon) could be paraphrased "on behalf of" or "in our place" and speaks of [substitution](#) or substitutionary atonement. ([What is the substitutionary atonement?](#)) Simply stated, Jesus Christ took our condemnation, doom, death, and punishment upon Himself and bore them all for us. Jesus Christ took our place as the lawbreaker and guilty party before God, and He bore the punishment of the lawbreaker for us. Jesus Christ substituted Himself, His perfect life, for man's sinful life. He substituted His obedience to God for man's disobedience. He bore man's sin and punishment so that man might stand righteous and perfect before God.

**Martin Luther** - Paul does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself. The accent is on the two words, **for us.**' Christ is personally innocent. Personally, He did not deserve to be hanged for any crime of His own doing. But because Christ took the place of others who were sinners, He was hanged like any other transgressor.....Whatever sins I, you, all of us have committed or shall commit, they are Christ's sins as if He had committed them Himself. Our sins have to be Christ's sins or we shall perish forever.

**Vance Havner** - Back of all the mystery of the atonement, the at-one-ment of God and man through Calvary, lies the simple fact that Christ died for us, and there is hope for us only at the foot of the cross. I used to hear the old preachers pray, "Hide us behind the cross" and wondered what they meant. I have just spoken of Adam trying to hide behind the trees in the garden. There is only one tree that can hide us from Him and that is the tree of the cross.

**MacArthur** - Christ's death, because it was a death of substitution for sin, satisfied God's justice and exhausted His wrath toward His elect, so that Christ actually purchased believers from slavery to sin and from the sentence of eternal death (Gal 4:5; Titus 2:14; 1Pe 1:18; cf. Ro 3:24; 1Co 1:30; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; Heb 9:12).

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.

**Spurgeon** on the profound little phrase **for us** - Here is substitution. What else can the words mean? Christ hung on a tree **for us**, bearing our curse, in our room and place and stead. We were all under the curse of the law, but Christ voluntarily took our place and was made a curse for us, so that the blessing might be ours. He fulfilled the law's demands by His perfect obedience, and He suffered the law's utmost penalty by His death upon the cross. Now all those who believe in Him are forever justified because of what He did for them. We have heard some preach a gospel something after this order: that, though God is angry with sinners, yet, out of His great mercy, for the sake of something that Christ has done, He does not punish them, but remits the penalty. This is not

God's gospel, for it is neither just to God nor safe for man. We believe that God never remitted the penalty. He did not forgive the sin without punishing it, but He exacted the full penalty without the abatement of a solitary jot or tittle. Jesus Christ, our Savior, drank the veritable cup of our redemption to its very dregs. He suffered beneath the crushing wheels of divine vengeance the same pains and sufferings that we ought to have endured. He bore our sins that He might bear them away by the fact of bearing them Himself. This is the central doctrine of the Gospel.

**For it is written:** This is a common NT way (61x) of introducing Old Testament quotes (cf. Ro 1:17; 2:24; 3:4; Mt 4:4, 6, 7, 10).

**F. Whitfield** - "**It is written**" should be in the heart and on the lips of every Christian. "**It is written**" should decide every controversy, settle every doubt, and overcome every difficulty.

**THOUGHT** - **It is written** occurs 76 times in the **NAS**. When we were children and our parents told us to do something and we questioned "Why?", the answer was usually "Because I said so!". Why are we commanded to be holy? Because God said so! A popular saying is "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." This sounds good but isn't accurate because God's Word is true, regardless of whether we believe it or not. A more accurate "saying" would be "**God said it, that settles it!**" **It is written** should put a stop to every complaint or excuse.

**Written** (1125) (**grapho**) is in the **perfect tense** indicates the permanence of this writing (cf Lk 21:33+, Mk 13:31). The Word was written down by Spirit inspired men (2 Pe 1:21+) at some point of time in the past and STANDS written for "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isaiah 40:8)! And so we can **stand firm** on the **written Word!**

Jesus willingly, out of love for us, went to that cross, which was to Him a tree of death, in order that He might make it for you and me a **tree of life!** (Rev 2:7<sup>±</sup>, Rev 22:2<sup>±</sup>, Rev 22:14<sup>±</sup>, Rev 22:19<sup>±</sup>)

**CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE:** In the NAS passages in ALL CAPS are direct quotes from the OT. Paul does not use the more common NT word for "cross" which is **stauros**, but instead uses **xulon** which would be more familiar to the Jews who knew the Septuagint, for the same word for "cross" ("tree") was used in Septuagint (Lxx) translation of the passage quoted by Paul from Deuteronomy,.

If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a **tree** (Lxx = **xulon**) his corpse shall not hang all night on the **tree** (Lxx = **xulon**), but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is **accursed** of God), (Lxx = "every one that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God" the verb in the Septuagint is **kataraoimai** - see below) so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.(Deut. 21:22,23)

**Curse** (2672) **kataraoimai** from **katara** = a curse from **kata** = down + **ara** = a prayer, a curse) literally is to curse down and so to call a curse down upon someone. The idea is to imprecate (= to invoke) evil on someone saying that a supernatural power will cause harm to someone or something. To pray or wish evil or ruin toward someone or some thing. To call down curses upon someone. To doom or give judgment against. To utter a prayer or invocation for harm or injury to come upon one. To utter a wish of evil against one; to imprecate evil upon; to call for mischief or injury to fall upon; to execrate. A solemn appeal to a supernatural power to inflict harm on someone or something. In the passive voice the idea is to be doomed or accursed (Mt 25:41 = the forever fate of all Christ rejecters!). The antithesis of eulogeo!

**Tree** (3586) (**xulon** from **xuo** = to scrape) is literally wood and refers to anything made of wood, including a tree or other wooden article or substance. In Acts 5:30+, Acts 10:39+, Acts 13:29+, 1Pe 2:24+ and Gal 3:13 **xulon** refers to the old rugged Cross.

**John MacArthur** - In ancient Judaism a criminal who was executed, usually by stoning, was then tied to a post, a type of tree, where his body would hang until sunset as a visible representation of rejection by God. It was not that a person became cursed by being hanged on a tree but that he was hanged on a tree because he was cursed. **Jesus did not become a curse because He was crucified but was crucified because he was cursed in taking the full sin of the world upon Himself.** "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1Pe 2:24<sup>±</sup>; cf. Acts 5:30+). **That truth was extremely hard for most Jews to accept, because they could not imagine the Messiah's being cursed by God and having to hang on a tree.** 1 Co 12:23 suggests that "Jesus is accursed" was a common, demon-inspired saying among unbelieving Jews of that day. To them, Jesus' crucifixion was final and absolute proof that He was not the promised Messiah. But for those who trust in Him, the two words **for us** become the two most beautiful words in all of Scripture. Because God sent His Son to bear the penalty for man's sin, every person who puts his trust in the crucified Savior has had the curse borne for him. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**L E Maxwell** - **Born Crucified** - THE ROMAN ORATOR, Cicero, summarized the attitude of the ancient world to the cross when he said: "Not only let the cross be absent from the person of Roman citizens, but its very name from their thoughts, eyes and ears."

Two thousand years ago we find no halo of glory, no beautiful associations of history, no nobility, and no thought of heroic sacrifice attached to the cross. How cluttered up is the cross at the present time! Even the unbelieving world now says: "The Cross stands for all that is noblest in manhood". But it was not so in the beginning. It is not so today. As soon as the Cross ceases to be to us, first of all, the place of utmost shame and contempt, we make the Cross of Christ of none effect. In Christ's day the disciples must often have beheld the procession of criminals, murderers, and rebels carrying their crosses on their way to an ignominious departure--a death of such infamy and shame and execration that we have no word that is significant of the deep and universal detestation that belonged to the cross in early times. Add to all this the scriptural anathema and capstone: "He that is hanged is accursed of God," and we begin to understand the offense (literally, the scandal) of the Cross. ([Born Crucified - 81 page booklet](#))

**Harrison** comments on the great antithesis in Galatians 3:13 (compared to Gal 3:10) -- It is intended to remind us of the scene in Israel's history when, upon entering the land, they were to divide into two groups—an antiphonal chorus, as it were—the one on Mount Ebal, the other on Mount Gerizim. The group on Mount Ebal were to take the law with them, and from this mount was to go forth "with a loud voice" the warning of "Cursed be he," "Cursed be he," "Cursed be he" who disobeys its demands. Then across the valley came the echoing chorus of "Blessed shalt thou be" for heeding the voice of the Lord. Read Deuteronomy 27 and 28. Israel's history has been a prolonged experience of the curse, with but brief interludes of the blessing. ([Galatians 3:13-14 Blessing versus Cursing](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Was Jesus crucified on a cross, pole, or stake?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the cross?](#)
- [Why is there a curse associated with hanging on a tree?](#)
- [What is the curse of the law?](#)

One of my favorite **Keith Green** songs is **There is a Redeemer** - [listen and worship our Glorious Redeemer, the Lamb of God..](#)

There is a Redeemer  
Jesus, God's own Son  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Holy One

Jesus my Redeemer  
Name above all names  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Oh, for sinners slain

Thank you, oh my Father  
For giving us Your Son  
And leaving Your Spirit  
'Til the work on Earth is done

When I stand in Glory  
I will see His face  
And there I'll serve my King forever  
In that Holy Place

Thank you, oh my Father  
For giving us Your Son  
And leaving Your Spirit  
'Til the work on Earth is done

There is a Redeemer  
Jesus, God's own Son  
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah  
Holy One

Thank you, oh my Father  
For giving us Your Son  
And leaving Your Spirit  
'Til the work on Earth is done

And leaving Your Spirit  
'Til the work on Earth is done

## BRIEF EXCURSUS REDEEMED/REDEMPTION

There are three Greek words translated by the words **redeemed**.

(1) [Agorazo \(click for in depth word study\)](#) Means to buy in the slave market (the market-place or agora). **Agorazo** emphasizes the market imagery of purchasing goods. In such an exchange the goods are set free from the seller (the previous owner), to be possessed by the purchaser. Christ gave Himself for us, purchasing us from slavery to our old master Sin (personified). Christ purchased us with His blood (Rev 5:9). As a result of Christ's purchase, every believer becomes the property of Jesus. Paul adds "having been freed from sin, you became slaves ([doulos](#)) of righteousness," and ultimately slaves of the Righteous One, Christ Jesus. is His bond-servant. The word [doulos](#) in Romans 6:18, refers to one born in slavery.

For you have been **bought** with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:20<sup>+</sup>),

And they \*sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and **purchased** for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. (Rev 5:9<sup>+</sup>)

'Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my heart, my life, my all!  
-- Isaac Watts

(2) [Lutroo \(Click for in depth word study\)](#) - Refers to releasing someone held captive, such as a prisoner or a slave, upon receipt of a ransom payment. Lutroo was a technical term used for money paid to buy back a POW (prisoner of war). Note again the purchase was not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. This is the verb used in the Septuagint to describe the role of the [Kinsman-Redeemer \(Goel\)](#) (Lev 25:49+).

Knowing that you were not **redeemed** with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19<sup>+</sup>)

**Ray Pritchard** - There is not enough gold in Fort Knox to forgive even one sin. Down here on earth money talks. Down here on earth if you want to be accepted, you need money. Up in heaven, blood talks. If you want to be accepted in heaven, you need the blood of Jesus Christ.

Who (JESUS CHRIST) gave Himself for (IN OUR PLACE) us to **redeem** us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:14<sup>+</sup>)

(3) [Exagorazo \(see above\)](#), to buy a slave out of the market-place. The bondsman of the Lord Jesus is bought not only to be His bondsman, but he is bought out of the slave market, never to be put up for sale in any slave market. He becomes the bondsman of the Lord Jesus for time and for eternity. The bondsman of the Lord Jesus is set free from his former slavery to sin, to realize in his life that for which God created him, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

(4) [Lutron/lytron \(click for in depth word study\)](#) (from [luo](#) = to loose) is a neuter noun which literally refers to the ransom price which is necessary to free a slave, loosing them from their bonds and setting them at liberty. It is the price paid for release of a slave from slavery, a prisoner from captivity (such as a prisoner of war) or forfeited piece of land or other possession. The suffix "-**tron**" highlights the instrument or means of the releasing, that is, the ransom or the actual payment itself. Remember that the basic idea of **ransom** is the payment which sets something or someone free from some kind of bondage, slavery, captivity, or obligation. Lutron is used only twice in the NT:

Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many."

Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many."

(5) [Apolutrosis \(click in depth word study\)](#) (from **apo** = marker of dissociation or separation + **lutroo** = to redeem <> from **lutron/lytron** = ransom <> from **luo** = loosen what is bound, loose any person tied or fastened) is the payment of a price to **ransom** (**lutron**), to **release** (of someone from the power of someone else), to **buy back** or to **deliver** one from a situation from in which one is powerless to liberate themselves or for which the penalty was so costly that they could never hope to pay the ransom price. In other words, the idea of **redemption** is deliverance or release by payment of a ransom. (Luke 21:28; Ro 3:24; Ro 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; Eph 4:30; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:15; 11:35)

Luke 21:28+ "But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your **redemption** is drawing near."

Romans 3:24+ being justified as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus;

1 Corinthians 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and **redemption**,

Ephesians 1:7+ In Him we have **redemption** through His blood (HIS BLOOD PAID RANSOM PRICE), the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

Ephesians 1:14+ (HOLY SPIRIT) Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the **redemption** of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 4:30+ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of **redemption**. (FUTURE REDEMPTION = GLORIFICATION)

Colossians 1:14+ in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins. (REDEMPTION = FORGIVENESS!)

Hebrews 9:15+ For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the **redemption** of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 11:35+ Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their **release**, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;

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### A CURSE CURED BY A CURSE.

There is an old legend that during a plague an angel showed to Charlemagne the root of the carline thistle as a cure for the plague. Thistles are a fruit of the curse. We do not much believe the legend that the root of that which represents a curse should cure the curse of a plague, but we do know and believe that the Christ who was "made a curse for us" is an infallible remedy for the curse of sin (Gal. 3:13).

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"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13), having "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26), not that we may have license to live as selfishly and sinfully as we please, but that we might be free to "walk in the Spirit" and "live unto God" (Gal. 5:16; 2:19). This "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" is a priceless gift from God, to be defended—not compromised or abused. (Henry Morris)

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REDEEMED TO BE POSSESSED. Galatians 3:13, 14.

1. Condemnation. "Curse of the law."
2. Redemption. "Christ hath redeemed us." Purchased.
3. Substitution. "Made a curse for us." By His Father's appointment and by His own choice (Isa. 53).
4. Possession. "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit." It is His purpose that His purchased possession should be possessed by the presence of the Spirit of power. (James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose)

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### R C SPROUL - The Bearer of the Curse [Galatians 3:13]

In our day a curse is regarded as superstitious, but in biblical categories it has a different meaning. The curse in the Old Testament refers to the negative judgment of God—the opposite of blessing. When God gave the covenant to Israel he listed the curses and blessings, the punishments and rewards, to be dispensed to the faithful or unfaithful (Deuteronomy 28).

In the Bible blessedness means to be able to come near to the presence of God. The closer you come to a face-to-face relationship with God, the more blessed you are; and the farther you are from God, the more cursed you are. Thus, the curse of God was likened to being removed from his presence altogether, to be utterly cut off from him.

John's Gospel opens with the statement, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." The word translated with implied "face to face." Originally, the Son of God was face to face with God.

When we read of the passion of Jesus two things stand out. First, Jesus was judged by Gentiles. He was sent out of the covenant community of Israel into the realm of those who were strangers to the covenant. Second, according to the law, a man who was hanged on a tree was cursed (Deut. 21:23).

When Jesus bore the punishment for our sins he experienced God's curse and rejection. God's benevolent face was turned away from Jesus, and in its place he encountered, face to face, the malevolence of God. In spiritual torment he cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Why? So that he might die that we might live.

Coram Deo At the cross we see the truest picture of the horror of our sin. Thank God that Jesus was willing to undergo the curse on your behalf. As you ponder both the physical pain and the spiritual anguish which Jesus, the eternally beloved Son and innocent One, experienced, use a hymnal to read or sing several of the stirring hymns about the crucifixion.

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### Redeemed from the Curse

Rabbi Ginsburg proudly named his newborn son Solomon and dreamed the boy might one day follow him as a leader of the Jews of Poland. But he was unprepared for the boy's teenage years. At age 14, Solomon rebelled against the pharisaical strictness of his home, particularly angered over the girl his father had arranged for him to marry. Leaving home, Solomon, 15, wandered around Europe, finally ending up in London where a friend spoke to him about Jesus from Isaiah 53. After months of anguished study and floor-pacing, Solomon embraced the Lord Jesus as both Messiah and Savior.

Family reaction was violent. The uncle with whom he stayed in London drove him away with **curse**s, broomsticks, and hot water. He was disinherited. A group of Jews attacked him and beat him until he appeared dead. When he regained consciousness, he found himself in a garbage box, his bones broken and his clothes soaked with blood.

Then one day he was summoned before a family council. When he showed up, his relatives tried earnestly to dissuade him from following Christ, but starting at Isaiah 53, Solomon spoke to them of Jesus. One of the Jews began reading the bitter words of excommunication: "**Cursed** shall you be by day, **cursed** by night; cursed when standing and **cursed** when lying down ... " and so on.

Solomon, cut to the core, quietly cried to the Lord. Suddenly it seemed he was gazing upon Christ, arms outstretched on the cross. Above his bleeding head, Solomon saw the words: "**Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.**"

The youth's heart was suddenly filled with strange joy, and as he left the house he said, "I was so happy I did not know what I was doing. I walked right into the arms of a big policeman, who asked me if I was drunk. I replied, 'No, sir, but I am very happy.' "

[Solomon Ginsburg](#) never looked back, and he went on to become one of the most productive evangelists of his era. (Robert Morgan - From This Verse)

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### GOD IS OUR REDEEMER

Job 19:25 But I know my living Redeemer, and He will stand on the dust at last.

Job was placed under severe testing when the circumstances of his life were radically changed for the worse. Perhaps the most difficult element of it was the accusation of his friends, who were quick to give their diagnosis of the situation.

In his response to one of them, Job made a great declaration—"I know my living Redeemer"—echoing his conviction that one day he would see God. This one who was his redeemer would also become his vindicator.

The idea of a "redeemer" is a concept which the Jew would clearly understand. Leviticus 25 taught that the land belonged to the Lord and was given in stewardship to man. For this reason, it could not be permanently sold (Lev 25:23). If a man became destitute and had to sell his land, his nearest relative could come and redeem what his brother had sold (Lev 25:25).

Later, the psalmist wrote: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:14). The image of the rock indicates refuge, and the word "Redeemer" indicates that God was his champion.

The most moving picture of a redeemer in the Old Testament, however, is the story of Hosea and Gomer. Hosea was a prophet who was married to a harlot. One day, Hosea saw Gomer being sold on the slave market. But with unprecedented love and grace, he bought his wife's freedom. He became her redeemer.

The story doesn't stop here, though. All the images of a redeemer point to Christ, who "has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). "God sent His Son ... to redeem those under the law" (Gal. 4:4-5). "He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a special people, eager to do good works" (Titus 2:14). Do you know

your Redeemer? And are you eager to please him? (Ken Hemphill - God Is)

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**H A Ironside** - To redeem is to buy back. Because of his sins the Jew was sold under the curse of the law. The same applies in principle to Gentiles, who now have the knowledge of the law. But Christ died not only to free believing Jews from the curse, but that the blessing of Abraham, justification by faith, might come to the Gentiles also. All who believe are delivered from the law's condemnation, Christ having taken our place in judgment and borne what our sins deserved in His own body on the tree. He became a curse for us. He was made sin for us. In the fullest possible sense He answered for us before God. Now we go free.

He bore on the tree  
The sentence for me,  
And now both the Surety  
And sinner are free;  
And this I shall find,  
For such is His mind,  
He'll not be in glory  
And leave me behind.

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### **I Am Redeemed by God "Christ redeemed us" (GALATIANS 3:13).**

In March of 1932, the entire world grieved with the Charles Lindbergh family when their 20-month-old son was kidnapped. Little Charles, Jr. was abducted from his home and held for \$50,000 ransom. Aviator Lindbergh had become an international hero after making the first transatlantic flight in 1927. However, his fame did not protect his child from danger. **Neither did it protect him from the desperate desire to pay the ransom. Yet even with the full ransom paid, the Lindberghs found themselves victimized, powerless to change the evil travesty. Their baby was cruelly killed by the kidnapper.**

The world's first abduction was carried out in a garden setting. Eden was the perfect haven provided by God for the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. With cunning cleverness, **the adversary-kidnapper, Satan**, tempted and lured the innocent pair into sin and thereby made hostages of all who were to follow. Alienated from home and sentenced to separation from God and to death, the only hope for the human race was **"to be released on receipt of the ransom"**

Unlike the Lindberghs, who could not save their child, the heavenly Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem you—His child—by paying the full ransom with His life. His death purchased your life! The price? His shed blood.

The two New Testament Greek verbs translated redeemed mean "to release on receipt of a ransom" or "to buy out." Bible scholar Lawrence Richards explains that **redeemed** is set **"against the background of helplessness...human beings captured, held captive by the power forces they cannot overcome. Only by the intervention of a third party can bondage be broken and the person freed."**

Who, at one time or another, has not been victimized—who has never felt powerless? In particular, victims of physical and emotional abuse internalize the impact of feeling powerless. The adversary-kidnapper would want to lure you with his lie, "You are a powerless prisoner, a helpless hostage." But child of God, you are not powerless! The hostage-taker has no control over you. God has already redeemed you. Christ has already paid your ransom in full.

As Jesus proclaimed, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). As you see yourself through God's eyes, you realize you've been redeemed in the most valuable ransom exchange in the history of the world—the Perfect Lamb bought your freedom. (June Hunt - Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes - 31 Day Devotional)

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### **A COMMON MISTAKE -- Galatians 3:13**

An elderly woman told me that she loves Jesus, prays regularly, reads the Bible daily, and confesses her sins every evening. But she's afraid to die. She's not sure God will accept her. She also said that she was so eager to earn God's favor that she gave a large sum of money to her church without her husband's knowledge. She knew this was wrong, but she said, "I did it for my salvation."

This woman failed to understand Paul's words, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). She still believes that she must gain God's approval by her good works.

This is a common mistake among professing Christians. The apostle Paul had to correct some believers in Galatia who had the

same idea. They talked about the need to keep many of the regulations of the Old Testament law system. Paul declared that Jesus Christ, by dying on the cross, redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

Do you believe this? Have you received Christ as your Savior? If so, rest on His finished work on the cross for you, and rejoice and give thanks. Don't make the common mistake of thinking that you can earn His favor. -- Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It's not works, it's not prayer,  
It's not tears that save the soul;  
God is now His grace displaying --  
Jesus died to make us whole.  
-- Anon.

Salvation is an unearned blessing given to an unworthy sinner.

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### **The Cross and Redemption** "In Whom we have redemption through His Blood" (Eph. 1:7).

There are certain things which Christians need always to keep in mind. There are churches which place crosses above their steeples, there are individuals who wear crosses on a chain around their necks; but, how few know the redemptive meaning of the Cross. "Redemption" is a great word. It suggests that we have been bought back, taken out, saved from under bondage unto sin, and that we are restored to Him from Whom we went astray.

**1. We are redeemed from the Law**(see Gal. 3:10-13). Why should Christians seek to live under Law, when the Cross has placed them under grace? The flesh cannot keep the Law. Christ kept it and in His death redeemed us from its curse.

**2. We are redeemed from our vain conversation, received by tradition from the elders**(see 1 Peter 1:18). This verse shows that the Cross stands not only between us and the Law, but it also stands between us and man-made religious formalisms. Why should we become entangled again with a yoke of bondage? Judaism, with its rites and its ceremonies, is not for the Church. Judaism, with its many traditions, is not for sons. The precious Blood of Jesus Christ has redeemed us from such things.

**3. We are redeemed from the power of darkness**(see Col. 1:13). The Cross has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The Cross has delivered us from the power and authority of darkness, and has translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. The Apostle Paul said that he had been called of God to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. The age in which we live is an age of darkness; it is "this present evil age;" satan is its god. The believer has been redeemed from such an age. He is walking in the light. His pathway is one which shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Darkness speaks of sin and of every evil device. Christians are called out from these devices. They are children of the light.

**4. We are redeemed from our sins**(see Eph. 1:7). Jesus Christ loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood. It is in Him that we "have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins." It is true that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is also true that believers have been justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The question, therefore that presents itself to the believer is an important one. If we have been saved from our sins, shall we continue in sin? If we have died on the Cross unto sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Let no man yield his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. We were once the servants of unrighteousness, we are now the servants of righteousness, unto holiness, The Cross is God's loud call to the believer to live a victorious life. If the believer sins, he has an advocate with the Father; if the believer sins and confesses his sin, God is faithful and just to forgive him and cleanse him, but this is no excuse for the believer to keep on sinning".

John said, "Little children, I write unto you that you sin not." God has given us the Holy Spirit, and the life of prayer, and the indwelling Word, and the armor of righteousness for the express purpose of making it possible for us to live in victory over sin. Christ died to redeem us — that is to buy us back from the old life and to establish us in the

**5. We are redeemed from every kindred every tongue, every tribe, and every nation**(see Rev. 5:9). This Scripture does not mean that every kindred, every tongue, and every tribe will be redeemed; but it does mean that those who are redeemed, were redeemed out from them. Peter preached: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Between every believer and the world hangs the Cross of Calvary. God has bought us back from the world. (Robert Neighbour)

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### **Galatians 3:13 Don Fortner - Grace for Today**

'Christ hath redeemed us' - Galatians 3:13

With those four words Paul states the whole doctrine of redemption as it is revealed in the New Testament. Christ alone is our Redeemer. Christ bore our sins. Christ endured the wrath of God, Christ satisfied the claims of justice against us, as our Substitute. The work of redemption was fully accomplished. 'Christ hath redeemed us.' Nothing is left to be done by us. Christ has done all. The blood of Christ poured out in death for the atonement of sin accomplished an effectual redemption. 'Christ hath redeemed us.' Our Lord did not provide for redemption or make redemption a possibility for all men, leaving it into the hands of man's free will to comply with his work and make it effectual. Redemption was performed by Christ alone. Redemption was accomplished at Calvary. And that redemption accomplished at Calvary was an effectual atonement for sin. The apostle Paul also makes it plain that the benefits of Christ's atonement are designed for and limited to God's elect. 'Christ hath redeemed us.' God plainly says, regarding the death of his Son, 'For the transgression of my people was he stricken' (Isa. 53:8). The Bible nowhere states, nor does it anywhere imply, that the Lord, Jesus Christ shed his blood and died to redeem all men from the curse of the law. I do not believe that doctrine which says that Judas was redeemed by Christ. It is not possible that our Lord died as a Substitute in Judas' place, hearing the curse of the law for him. Any who embrace such a doctrine must also embrace one of three absurd and blasphemous conclusions: (1) Either Judas is in heaven, which is to deny the Word of God; or (2) Christ failed to redeem the ones for whom he died and failed in his work of redemption as the sinner's Substitute; or (3) the justice of God has fallen to the ground, for if God punishes both the sinner and the sinner's Substitute for the same offense he would mock his own justice. This is the doctrine of Scripture: 'Christ hath redeemed us!'—All God's elect, all who believe.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - An uncle took his young nephew to swim in the ocean when the boy was suddenly attacked by a shark – biting him so hard it completely severed his leg. With great courage the uncle grabbed a baseball bat, jumped into the water with the shark, and clubbed it until the shark released his nephew's detached leg! The uncle then picked up his nephew and his severed leg and raced to the hospital. Doctors successfully reattached the leg and his nephew was able to walk again. This provides a picture of redemption: winning back what was "lost"! Infinitely greater is our redemption by Christ so we can regain what we have forfeited by our sins! Christ won this back at Calvary by the price of His own blood. Eph 1:7."

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U.S. television personality Phil Donahue explains his chief objection to Christianity: "How could an all-knowing, all-loving God allow His Son to be murdered on a cross in order to redeem my sins? If God the Father is so 'all loving,' why didn't He come down and go to Calvary?"

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In Africa a fire ravaged a hut, burning quickly and intensely, killing all in a family—except one. A stranger ran into the burning house and snatched a small boy from the flames, carried him to safety, and disappeared in the darkness. The next day the tribe met to decide what should be done with the lad. Perhaps superstitiously, they assumed he must be a special child since he survived the fire. A man known for his wisdom insisted that he adopt the boy; another known for his wealth thought he was the best qualified. As the discussion ensued a young, unknown man walked into the middle of the circle and insisted that he had prior claim to the child. Then he showed them his hands, freshly burned in the fire of the past night. He was the rescuer and therefore insisted that the child was rightfully his. So our scarred Savior claims us. Bonhoeffer was right: only a suffering God can help. Only a suffering God can redeem.

The other gods were strong; but Thou was weak  
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;  
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak  
And not a god has wounds but Thou alone.

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### **The Curse of the Law - Ian Paisley - A Text A Day Keeps the Devil Away**

- "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Galatians 3:13

The nature of the law is holy but we are sold under sin. As a result we are under its curse.

### **The Education—"the Curse of the Law"**

This curse is universal, we are all under it. It is total, every part of us is cursed. It is final. The sentence has been judicially passed. The law is our schoolmaster.

### **The Exclamation—"Christ Hath Redeemed Us From the Curse of the Law"**

This redemption is instantaneous, inclusive, and irreversible.

### **The Explanation—"Being Made a Curse for Us"**

There has been no abatement of that curse in dilution, and no mitigation. In all its eternal fury it fell upon the Lord Jesus as the Surety and Substitute of His people. Sin was punished on Christ and I the sinner am pardoned and free.

### **The Explanation—"for It Is Written Cursed Is Everyone That Hangeth On a Tree"**

This is God's written authority.

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**Puritan Daily Readings** - He has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13); that is, from the sentence of the Law-giver, denounced in His law against the transgressors of it; so that now "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1) because they are "dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4). By the body of Christ as slain and raised again; for this handwriting of ordinances, which was contrary to us, is taken out of the way by God, being nailed to His cross. He has abolished the obligation of the moral law, as to any condemning power, it being the custom to cancel bonds anciently by piercing the writing with a nail. The ceremonial law was abolished in every regard since the substance of it was come, and that which it tended to was accomplished; and so one understands, "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly" (Col. 2:15) of the ceremonies of the law, called principalities and powers in regard of the divine authority whereby they were instituted. These He spoiled, as the word signifies, unclothing or un-stripping, He unveiled them, and showed them to be misty figures that were accomplished in His own person. The flower falls when the fruit comes to appear; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, grace to obey the precepts, and truth to take away the types.

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**ILLUSTRATION OF REDEMPTION - The Iron Collar** - A missionary in West Africa was trying to convey the meaning of the word redeem in the Bambara language. So he asked his African assistant to express it in his native tongue. "We say," the assistant replied, "that God took our heads out." "But how does that explain redemption?" the perplexed missionary asked.

The man told him that many years ago some of his ancestors had been captured by slave-traders, chained together, and driven to the seacoast. Each of the prisoners had a heavy iron collar around his neck. As the slaves passed through a village, a chief might notice a friend of his among the captives and offer to pay the slave-traders in gold, ivory, silver, or brass (contrast 1 Pe 1:18, 19+).

**The prisoner would be redeemed by the payment.** His head then would be taken out of his iron collar.

What an unusual and graphic illustration of the word **redeem**! Ephesians 1:7+ states, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Jesus died on the cross to purchase our freedom from the bondage of sin (Ro 6:6+, Ro 6:16-18+).

Have you put your trust in Jesus as your Redeemer? Let Him take your head out of the enslaving collar of sin and set you free. — Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Redeemed--how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy--  
His child, and forever I am. --Crosby

Christ was lifted up on the cross that we might be lifted out of our sin.

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### **A Common Mistake**

Read: Galatians 3:1-14 | Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. —Galatians 3:13

An elderly woman told me that she loves Jesus, prays regularly, reads the Bible daily, and confesses her sins every evening. But she's afraid to die. She's not sure God will accept her. She also said that she was so eager to earn God's favor that she gave a large sum of money to her church without her husband's knowledge. She knew this was wrong, but she said, "I did it for my salvation."

This woman has failed to understand Paul's words, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). She still believes that she must gain God's approval by her good works.

This is a common mistake among professing Christians. The apostle Paul had to correct some believers in Galatia who had the same idea. They talked about the need to keep many of the regulations of the Old Testament law system. Paul declared that Jesus Christ, by dying on the cross, redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).

Do you believe this? Have you received Christ as your Savior? If so, rest on His finished work on the cross for you, and rejoice and

give thanks. Don't make the common mistake of thinking that you can earn His favor. - Herbert VanderLugt ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

It's not works, it's not prayer,  
It's not tears that save the soul;  
God is now His grace displaying—  
Jesus died to make us whole. —Anon.

Salvation is an unearned blessing given to an unworthy sinner.

**Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Greek - hina eis ta ethne e eulogia tou Abraam genetai (3SAMS) en Christo Iesou hina ten epaggelion tou pneumatou labomen (1PAAS) dia tes pisteos

Amplified: To the end that through [their receiving] Christ Jesus, the blessing [promised] to Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, so that we through faith might [all] receive [the realization of] the promise of the [Holy] Spirit.

Phillips God's purpose is therefore plain: that the blessing promised to Abraham might reach the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and the Spirit might become available to us all by faith.

Wuest in order that to the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Jesus Christ, to the end that the promise of the Spirit we [Jew and Gentile] might receive through faith. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit by faith.

GNT Galatians 3:14 να ες τ θνη ελογα το βραμ γνηται ν Χριστ ησο , να τν παγγελαν το πνεματος λβωμεν δι τς πιστεως.

NLT Galatians 3:14 Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith.

KJV Galatians 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

ESV Galatians 3:14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

ASV Galatians 3:14 that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

CSB Galatians 3:14 The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith.

NIV Galatians 3:14 He 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

NRS Galatians 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

YLT Galatians 3:14 that to the nations the blessing of Abraham may come in Christ Jesus, that the promise of the Spirit we may receive through the faith.

NAB Galatians 3:14 that the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

NJB Galatians 3:14 so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the gentiles in Christ Jesus, and so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

GWN Galatians 3:14 Christ paid the price so that the blessing promised to Abraham would come to all the people of the world through Jesus Christ and we would receive the promised Spirit through faith.

BBE Galatians 3:14 So that on the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; in order that we through faith might have the Spirit which God had undertaken to give.

- **in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham** Ga 3:6-9,29 Ge 12:2,3 Isa 41:8 51:2,3 Ro 4:3-17
- **in Christ Jesus:** Ga 3:16 Ge 22:18 Isa 49:6 52:10 Lu 2:10,11 Ac 2:39 3:25,26 4:12 Ro 10:9-15 1Ti 2:4-6
- **so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit:** Ga 3:2,5 4:6 Isa 32:15 44:3,4 59:19-21 Jer 31:33 32:40 Eze 11:19 Eze 36:26,27 39:29 Joe 2:28,29 Zec 12:10 Lu 11:13 24:49 Joh 7:39 Ac 1:4,5 2:33,38 5:32 10:45-47 11:15,16 Ro 8:9-16,26 Ro 8:27 1Co 12:13 2Co 1:22 Eph 1:13,14 2:18,22 3:16 4:30 1Pe 1:22 Jude 1:19,20
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Blessed or Cursed?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:6-14 Salvation Is by Faith Alone](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-13 The Hopelessness of Sin](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Redeemed from the Curse of Law](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:10-14: The Curse; and the Curse for Us](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:10-14 Christ: A Curse for Us](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## THE PURPOSE OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE CURSE

**Grant Osborne** makes an interesting observation that "Here Paul explains two purposes of Christ's redeeming work, with the first acting as a summary of Galatians 3:10–14 and the second summarizing Galatians 3:1–5." ([Galatians: Verse by Verse](#))

**In order that...so that ([hina...hina](#))** - Paul uses two [terms of purpose](#). These phrases should always arrest our attention, causing us to pause and ponder "What is the purpose? (et al questions)." Note that both purposes relate not to the last clause of Gal 3:13 but the first clause "**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us**"

**In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles-** Paul explains the first purpose of Christ becoming a curse for us. While he does not specifically say that the **blessing** is justification by faith (salvation, eternal life) apart from works (circumcision, etc), that is clearly what Paul is saying. Paul had already alluded to the **blessing of Abraham** as being justification by faith in Galatians 3:8-9<sup>±</sup>. Clearly this **blessing** is also related to the **promise of the Spirit** because unless one is justified by faith he or she would not receive the **promise of the Spirit**.

**MINI-EXCURSUS - DOES PAUL TEACH THAT THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM INCLUDES "THE LAND"?** It should be noted that in the context of Galatians 3:8 this **blessing of Abraham** is clearly a spiritual blessing and Paul says is related to justification by faith. In other words, the blessing of Abraham in Paul's contextual argument does not make any reference to the promise of land. In fact if you observe the original promise from God to Abraham (Abram) in Genesis 12:1 there is no promise regarding God giving him the land but simple God's charge for him to go "To the **land** which I will show you." It is not until Genesis 12:7 that God makes a specific land promise. Notice also that the promise of the land was given to Jacob and his descendants in Genesis 28:13. The question arises "Who are Jacob's descendants?" If one reads and interprets this text literally (without spiritualizing or allegorizing) Jacob had 12 sons and they comprised the literal nation of Israel. In sum, this brief "excursus" is simply to show that **the blessing of Abraham** was a spiritual blessing and that the Church was not given the promise of the literal land originally promised to Abraham, but that the land was given to the nation of Israel (Isaac and Jacob's descendants).

**Gotquestions** adds - Many other passages of Scripture support the fact that **Israel** will possess the Promised Land forever. For example, God spoke to Isaac in Genesis 26:3, saying, "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham." The Lord also spoke to Jacob in Genesis 28:13–14 with similar words: "There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.'" See also Psalm 132:14; Isaiah 14:1; and Zechariah 2:3–5, 10–13. ([Did God give Israel the Promised Land for all time](#)) One point of clarification - Gentile believers, don't worry, for you will share in the benefits of the [future millennium kingdom](#)!

I would add a [literal reading](#) (emphasize **literal!**) of Amos 9:15 (See Commentary) strongly supports the

premise that the Church **does not** inherit the **land promise** to Abraham. Amos records the non-lying God Himself making a promise to Israel - "I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the LORD your God."

Even the frequently amillennial comments of the **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** says on this passage "As the Jews, after their return from Babylon, were driven from their land by the Romans, **this can only refer to their future conversion and restoration.**" (Amen and amen!)

Even the often amillennial **ESV Study Bible** seems to support this promised **blessing** of land is given to national Israel - "This final **blessing** of the people is predicated upon their recognition of their Davidic Messiah, something that is yet to occur." (ED: BUT THIS FUTURE "RECOGNITION" OF THEIR MESSIAH IS CLEARLY PROPHESED IN Zechariah 12:10-14+!)

Note the phrase **in Christ Jesus** - It means that the blessing comes to Gentiles (and Jews) who are identified with Christ, who are in (the new) covenant with Him by grace through faith.

The **blessing of Abraham** refers to Ge 12:3+ "And in you **ALL** the families of the earth (**Jews and Gentiles**) **shall be blessed.**" How are all the families of the earth going to be **blessed** in Abraham? He lived and died and was buried. The nations that came from his loins are not the promised **blessing** to the families of the earth either. The **blessing** of Genesis 12:3 is the SALVATION that would come through THE SEED, the MESSIAH (Ge 22:17, 18, cp Gal 3:16±).

**Spurgeon** on the **blessing of Abraham** - Christ was made a curse for us that the blessing might come upon us. He took our curse that we might take the blessing from His own dear hands and might possess it evermore.

**Gentiles** (nations) (1484)(**ethnos** gives us our word "ethnic") in general refers to a multitude (especially persons) associated with one another, living together, united in kinship, culture or traditions and summed up by the words nation, Gentiles (especially when ethnos is plural), people (much like "people groups" in our modern missionary vernacular).

**A T Robertson** - So in Christ we all (Gentile and Jew) obtain the promise of blessing made to Abraham, through faith.

**Wuest** - There are two purpose clauses in this verse, each introduced by the words **in order that...so that** (both = **hina**). These are coordinate, depending upon the statement in Gal 3:13 to the effect that Christ became a curse for us in order that the blessing of Abraham, justification by faith, and also the Holy Spirit, might be given to both Jew and Gentile (Joel 2:28+). The law which was the barrier that separated Jew and Gentile, is done away in Christ (Eph 2:13-15±). By its removal, the Gentiles are put on a common level with the Jew, and thus united, both Jew and Gentile are recipients of the Holy Spirit through faith. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

## THE GIFT OF THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT

**So that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith** - The second purpose clause introduces **the promise**. So that we receive the PROMISED SPIRIT not by KEEPING the LAW but by BELIEVING in the One Who kept the Law perfectly. All who believe in Jesus receive the Spirit immediately when they are born again (Ro 8:9±, cf 1 Cor 12:13, "Holy Spirit of promise" - Eph 1:13±).

It is interesting that Abraham (and all OT believers) did not **receive the promise of the Spirit** as a permanent possession, but only after the Spirit came on believers at Pentecost.

**W E Vine** goes on to point out that "There is no Old Testament record of any **promise** to Abraham of the gift of the Spirit, nor do the words of the apostle necessarily imply that there was. In the message to Abraham the comprehensive word "**blessing**" is used; later revelation of the purposes of God specified the gift of the Holy Spirit as included in this, cp. Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 36:27; Joel 2:28, e.g. Two things are to be kept in mind in connection with these prophetic utterances: *a*, read in the light of the New Testament it is plain that the personal Holy Spirit was intended, and not merely a holy influence from God; *b*, that while these prophecies still await their (ED: COMPLETE) fulfillment (ED: IN OTHER WORDS THE SPIRIT WILL BE GIVEN TO REPENTANT, BELIEVING ISRAEL IN THE FUTURE AS PROMISED IN Zechariah 12:10-14+), yet He Who is promised in them to renewed Israel (ED: WHEN THE BELIEVING **REMNANT** OF ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED [SEE Ro 11:26-27±] IN THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE Jer 30:7+) has been given to the Christian in accordance with the words of the Lord Jesus. ([Collected Writings](#))

Notice the pronoun **we**, which might lead some to interpret Paul as saying "**we** Jews" but clearly it includes the Gentile believers because of Paul's earlier question to the Gentile believers asking "**did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law or by hearing with faith?**" (Gal 3:2±) So **the promise of the Spirit** was for Jews and Gentiles who placed their **faith** in Christ.

**Vincent** on **we would receive** - The second **so that** is parallel with the first (**in order that**). The deliverance from the curse results

not only in extending to the Gentiles the blessing promised to Abraham, but in the impartation of the Spirit to both Jews and Gentiles through faith. The blessing (eulogia) is not God's gift of justification as the opposite of the curse; for in Gal 3:10, 11, justification is not represented as the opposite of the curse, but as that by which the curse is removed and the blessing realised. The content of the curse is death, Gal 3:13. The opposite of the curse is life. The subject of **the promise** is the life which comes through the Spirit. See John 7:39; Acts 2:17, 38, 39; Acts 10:45, 47; Acts 15:7, 8; Ro 5:5; Ro 8:2, 4, 6, 11; Eph. 1:13.

God's covenant promise to Abraham was first that Abraham would be blessed, and then that he would be a blessing to "all the families of the earth." This distribution of blessing has always been God's intention (Gal 3:8). The Jewish nation often (usually) misunderstood God's missionary purpose for them, mistaking His *favor* for *favoritism*. Israel sought to "**hoard**" instead of "**herald**" the blessing of God on Abraham. By using the phrase **might come to the Gentiles** Paul emphasizes that God intends that ALL the families of the earth, Jew and Gentile, might experience the blessing promised to Abraham.

**Receive** (2983) ([lambano](#)) means to take or grasp. It can indicate both benevolent and hostile actions, and have as object either people or things; e.g. take a wife, collect taxes, accept a verdict, take a road, and figuratively take courage.

**Jesus** Himself described **the promise of the Spirit** in some of His last words to His disciples...

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait **for what the Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5+)

**Jesus** earlier had given the disciples a similar promise...

And behold, I am sending forth **the promise of My Father upon you** (REFERRING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT); but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power (cf Acts 1:8+) from on high." (Lk 24:49+, cf Jn 14:26)

**Promise** (1860) ([epaggelia/epangelia](#) from **epí** = intensifies meaning of + **aggéllō** = to tell, declare) literally means to "tell at or upon." **Epaggelia** originally referred to an announcement or declaration (e.g., a favorable message as in Acts 23:21). However **epaggelia** came to mean a declaration to do something or give something. This in came to be associated with the implication of obligation to carry out that which was declared to be done or given. Thus we come to the meaning of a promise. In Scripture, **epaggelia** refers primarily to God's pronouncements that provide assurance of what He intends to do. As **Lightfoot** says in fact that **epaggelia** was used only of the promises of God, and described "a gift graciously bestowed, not a pledge obtained by negotiation."

**Epaggelia** - Used 50v in the NT and 7x in Galatians 3 - Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:16; Gal. 3:17; Gal. 3:18; Gal. 3:21; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:29. Also used in Gal 4:23 and Gal 4:27.

**W E Vine** has a good discussion of **epaggelia** as it relates to Galatians 3 - **Epaggelia** is primarily a law term, denoting a summons (*epi*, upon, *aggellō*, to proclaim, announce), also meant an undertaking to do or give something, a promise. Except in Acts 23:21 it is used only of the **promises of God**. It frequently stands for the thing promised, and so signifies a gift graciously bestowed, not a pledge secured by negotiation. Thus, in Gal. 3:14, "the **promise** of the Spirit" denotes 'the promised Spirit:' (cp. Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33, Eph. 1:13) And in Heb. 9:15, "the **promise** of the eternal inheritance" is 'the promised eternal inheritance.'...In Gal. 3:16, the plural "**promises**" is used because the one promise to Abraham was variously repeated (Ge 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:18; 17:1-14; 22:15-18), and because it contained the germ of all subsequent promises; Ro. 9:4; Heb. 6:12; 7:6; 8:6; 11:17. **Galatians 3 is occupied with showing that the promise was conditional upon faith and not upon the fulfilment of the Law. The Law was later than, and inferior to, the promise, and did not annul it**, Gal. 3:21; cp. Gal 4:23, 28. Again, in Eph. 2:12, "the covenants of the **promise**" does not indicate different covenants, but a covenant often renewed, all centring in Christ as the promised Messiah-Redeemer, and comprising the blessings to be bestowed through Him. ([Collected Writings](#))

## THE KEY PHRASE: THROUGH FAITH

The **blessing of Abraham** and **the promise of the Spirit** were not the result of works but were in response to personal faith in Christ. Of course the first clause **the blessing of Abraham** indicates that they also received that **blessing** (justification) **through faith**.

And don't miss the divine paradox that Christ bearing a **curse** brings both Jews and Gentiles a **blessing**!

**C H Spurgeon**, ever the quotable [wordsmith](#), says it beautifully - Since our Lord Jesus Christ has taken away the curse due to sin, a great rock has been lifted out from the river-bed of God's mercy, and the living stream comes rippling, rolling, swelling on in crystal

tides, sweeping before it all human sin and sorrow, and making glad the thirsty who stoop down to drink thereat (cf John 4:10, 15+, John 7:37+, Jn 7:38+, Jn 7:39+). O my brethren, the blessings of God's grace are full and free this morning; they are as full as your necessities. **Great sinners**, there is **great mercy** for you.

**Blessing** (2129)(**eulogia** from **eú** = good, well + **lógos** = word; English = eulogy = a commendatory formal statement) is literally a good word, good speaking, fine speech or praise. Eulogia is the act of speaking favorably (cp Rev 5:12, 13, 7:12) and as in this passage refers to a favor or benefit bestowed by God (cf He 12:17, He 6:7, Ep 1:3, Ro 15:29). The verb **eulogeo** was used in Gal 3:9 emphasizing that "those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer." And here Paul says **the promise of the Spirit is through faith**.

**James Montgomery Boice on through faith** - These last two clauses, stating the purpose for which Christ redeemed men from the curse, are coordinate. That is, they express the same reality from two perspectives. Both return to the point from which Paul's argument started—namely, that the blessing of Abraham, seen today in the reception of the Holy Spirit, is received through faith and through faith only. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Gromacki on through faith** adds that "It is that entrance which makes possible the life of sanctification **through faith**." The Spirit does not come into a person's life after he has been sanctified through his own effort." ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon on through faith** - Dear friends, are you living by faith upon the Son of God? Are you trusting in God? Are you believing His promises? Some think that this is a very little thing, but God does not think so. Faith is a better index of character than anything else. The man who trusts his God and believes His promises is honoring God far more than is the man who supposes that by any of his own doings he can merit divine approval and favor....I never had a better idea of believing in Jesus than I once had from a poor countryman. Speaking about faith, he said, "The old enemy has been troubling me very much lately, but I told him that he must not say anything to me about my sins. He must go to my Master, for I had transferred the whole concern to Him, bad debts and all." That is believing in Jesus. Believing is giving up all we have to Christ and taking all that Christ has to ourselves.

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis**) is trust or belief and describes the conviction of the truth in Scripture usually speaking of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things. Be aware that one can say they believe in Jesus, but what they really mean is they believe the facts about Jesus. That is, they believe intellectually, but that is not saving faith! For example, in Jn 8:30 we read "many came to believe in Him." This sounds like they were true followers of Jesus. But if you keep reading in context, Jesus plainly declares to them "because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me." And in fact their "works" proved they did not have saving faith for "they picked up stones to throw at Him." (Jn 8:59) Even Charles Ryrie commenting in John 8:31 says it was "Likely only a profession because of what they said in John 8:33." (Better evidence is Jesus' evaluation of their hearts in Jn 8:42-44) In summary, true **faith** that saves one's soul includes at least three main elements (intellectual assent is assumed and is followed by) (1) firm persuasion or firm conviction, (2) a surrender to that truth and (3) a conduct emanating from that surrender. In short, **faith** shows itself genuine by a changed life. ([Click here](#) for **W E Vine's** similar definition of **faith**)

**Through faith** - Literally "through the faith." This important phrase occurs 16x in 16v in the NAS

Ro 3:22; Rom. 3:25; Rom. 3:30; Rom. 3:31; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:8; Eph. 3:12; Eph. 3:17; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:12; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 6:12; Heb. 11:4; 1 Pet. 1:5

## **THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

**The Spirit was prophetically promised to Israel in the OT in the New Covenant:**

Ezekiel 36:26-27+ Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 **"I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes (How? The Spirit in us will give us the desire and the power to keep God's law - see this vitally important truth taught by Paul in Php 2:13NLT+), and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

**Comment:** Note that this passage shows God's provision ("My Spirit") and man's responsibility ("to observe"). It is not as is sometimes falsely taught "Let go and let God." It is more accurately stated "Let God and let's go!"

Isaiah 32:15; Until the **Spirit** is poured out upon us from on high, And the wilderness becomes a fertile field, And the fertile field is considered as a forest.

Isaiah 44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; **I will pour out My Spirit** on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;

Isaiah 59:19-21 So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west And His glory from the rising of the sun, For He will come like a rushing stream Which the wind of the LORD drives. 20“A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD. 21“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD: “**My Spirit** which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,” says the LORD, “from now and forever.”

### Jesus also foretold of the promise of the Spirit

John 7:39+ But this (Jn 7:37, 38) He spoke of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Luke 11:13+ “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Luke 24:49+) “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

The giving of **the promise of the Spirit** was partially fulfilled to Israel at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4,18+) but will be completely fulfilled at the end of [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#) when God pours out His Spirit of grace (salvation is always by God's grace) and supplication

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, **the Spirit of grace and of supplication**, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10+)

Paul also alludes to the final and complete fulfillment of this promise of the Holy Spirit (New Covenant) in Romans 11 writing

and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” 27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” (Romans 11:26, 27+)

**Warren Wiersbe** has an interesting note on **Genesis 12** that relates to **Galatians 3:14** - Notice the contrast between Genesis 11:1–9 and Gen 12:1–3+. At Babel, men said, “Let us!” but to Abraham, God said, “I will.” At Babel, men wanted to make a name for themselves; but it was God Who made Abraham’s name great. At Babel, the workers tried to unite men, only to divide them; but through Abraham, a whole world has been blessed, and all believers are united in Jesus Christ. Of course, **Pentecost** (Acts 2:1-47+) is the “reversal” of Babel; but Pentecost could not have occurred apart from God’s covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:14). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** on the **promise of the Spirit** - Wherever the Spirit of God dwells, the covenant is fulfilled. You have in the Spirit the foretaste of the promised rest (See [Rest in the Bible](#)); you have the initial stages of the promised perfection; you have the dawn of the promised glory. The Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance till the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

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### **F B Meyer -Our Daily Homily**) That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. **Galatians 3:14**

“The promise of the Spirit” is the invariable term for the special Pentecostal gift; and this is to be equally received by faith as the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. To me this text once came as a perfect revelation. It was the clue to unravel perplexity, the point around which truth held long in solution suddenly crystallised. Before this verse spoke to my heart it had been my constant endeavor to feel the Spirit’s presence as the sign of my having received; but now it became clear that one might receive by simple faith God’s very richest communications, even though the emotion tarried long. The stages have been thus specified:—

**There is such a blessing.** — Yes; there can be no doubt of this; for it pleased the Father that the fulness of the Holy Spirit should dwell in Jesus, that He might communicate Him to each member of his Church.

**It is for me.** — At Pentecost Peter said, This promise is for as many as the Lord our God shall call.

**I have not received.** — It is very important to realize what your standing is. Paul’s first inquiry of the Ephesians was to ascertain this.

**I would give anything if it might be mine** — Because of the life, and love, and power it would bring into your life, and the immense increase of power over others, there is no sacrifice you should be unwilling to make.

**I do now in humble faith receive.** — There may be no coronet of flame, nor rush of wind, nor flash of joy; but if we have put ourselves in the right attitude towards God, and opened our hearts to receive — He who taught us to hunger and thirst must have bestowed.

**Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.**

Greek - Adelphoi kata anthropon lego (1SPA)I homos anthropou kekuromenen (RPPFSA) diatheken oudeis athetei e' epidiatassetai (3SPPI)

Amplified: To speak in terms of human relations, brethren, [if] even a man makes a last will and testament (a merely human covenant), no one sets it aside or makes it void or adds to it when once it has been drawn up and signed (ratified, confirmed).

Phillips Let me give you an everyday illustration, my brothers. Once a contract has been properly drawn up and signed, it is honoured by both parties, and can neither be disregarded nor modified by a third party.

Wuest Brethren, what I have to say is in accordance with common human practice. Even though it be a man's covenant, when it has finally been ratified, no man annuls it nor adds stipulations to it. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:15 Brothers and sisters, I offer an example from everyday life: When a covenant has been ratified, even though it is only a human contract, no one can set it aside or add anything to it.

GNT Galatians 3:15 δελφο , κατ νθρωπον λγω· μωζ νθρ που κεκυρωμ νην διαθ κην ο δε ζ θετε πιδιατ σσεται.

NLT Galatians 3:15 Dear brothers and sisters, here's an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in this case.

KJV Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

ESV Galatians 3:15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

ASV Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto.

CSB Galatians 3:15 Brothers, I'm using a human illustration. No one sets aside or makes additions to even a human covenant that has been ratified.

NIV Galatians 3:15 Brothers, 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

NRS Galatians 3:15 Brothers and sisters, I give an example from daily life: once a person's will has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it.

YLT Galatians 3:15 Brethren, as a man I say it, even of man a confirmed covenant no one doth make void or doth add to,

NAB Galatians 3:15 Brothers, in human terms I say that no one can annul or amend even a human will once ratified.

NJB Galatians 3:15 To put it in human terms, my brothers: even when a will is only a human one, once it has been ratified nobody can cancel it or add more provisions to it.

GWN Galatians 3:15 Brothers and sisters, let me use an example from everyday life. No one can cancel a person's will or add conditions to it once that will is put into effect.

BBE Galatians 3:15 Brothers, as men would say, even a man's agreement, when it has been made certain, may not be put on one side, or have additions made to it.

- **Brethren, I speak in terms of human relation.:** Ro 6:19 1Co 15:32
- **even though it is only a man's covenant:** Heb 9:17
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## ILLUSTRATION: BINDING NATURE OF A WILL

Paul had just spoken of the **blessing of Abraham** and the **promise** (Gal 3:14). Now he will discuss how the earlier covenant promises to Abraham related to the later covenant of the Law given to Moses. Paul is addressing the probable argument of the Judaizers that since the Law came later, it took precedence and that at the very least the Mosaic Law had to be added to Abrahamic faith. They may have even gone to the extreme of claiming that the Mosaic Covenant annulled and therefore replaced the Abrahamic Covenant! They would reason something like "Why else would God give another covenant (Law)?" Paul now proceeds to address the legalists, showing that the Law which came later than the Covenant cannot change it.

**John MacArthur** explains that "The heart of his answer is to show that the covenant with Abraham was an unconditional covenant of promise relying solely on God's faithfulness, whereas the covenant with Moses was a conditional covenant of law relying on man's faithfulness. To Abraham, God said, "I will." Through Moses He said, "Thou shalt." The promise set forth a religion dependent on God. The law set forth a religion dependent on man. The promise centers on God's plan, God's grace, God's initiative, God's sovereignty, God's blessings. The law centers on man's duty, man's work, man's responsibility, man's behavior, man's obedience. The promise, being grounded in grace, requires only sincere faith. The law being grounded in works, demands perfect obedience."

**Wuest** adds that "Paul now presents an argument to show that the covenant God made with Abraham was still in force, basing it upon the priority of the covenant and its irrevocable character. He asserts that it is common knowledge that when men make contract, and that contract is once agreed upon, it cannot be modified or changed except by the mutual consent of both parties to the contract. Paul applies this to God's covenant with Abraham, contending that the Law cannot modify it since it was given centuries later." ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Brethren** - Paul begins by drawing in the Galatian believers referring to them as his **brethren** in Christ. This is certainly a change from his calling them **foolish** in Galatians 3:1, but it also serves to show he is moving on to a new argument!

**Brethren** (80)([adelphos](#) from **a** = denotes unity + **delphus** = a womb) means brother or near kinsman. "Adelphós generally denotes a fellowship of life based on identity of origin, e.g., members of the same family (Mt. 1:2; Lk 3:1, 19; 6:14) and in this context is used figuratively to describe fellow members of the Christian community, spiritual brothers and sisters.

All of Paul's uses of **adelphos** in Galatians - Gal. 1:2; Gal. 1:11; Gal. 1:19; Gal. 3:15; Gal. 4:12; Gal. 4:28; Gal. 4:31; Gal. 5:11; Gal. 5:13; Gal. 6:1; Gal. 6:18

**I speak in terms of human relations** - Humanly speaking, i.e., using human logic and an illustration from everyday life.

Some writers feel Paul was referring to a [last will and testament](#) which was something known to all men.

**Grant Osborne** does not necessarily agree with a **last will and testament** - Some have surmised that Paul is referring to a last will and testament rather than to a treaty, but wills were no more irrevocable in the ancient world than they are now, so it is more likely that he does indeed have a covenant in view. In short, Paul begins this paragraph with the example of the binding nature of covenants. ([Galatians: Verse by Verse](#))

**Gromacki** tends to agree noting that "Within courts of law a covenant agreed to and signed by both parties cannot be changed later by the will of only one participant. The sealed word of both men is binding upon both parties. These men must respect the legal requirements of such a contract ("a man's covenant") Quite often a person may orally agree to a contract, shake hands on it, and later back out on it. Once the contract has been ratified or "confirmed" in writing, with both signatures affixed, it becomes obligatory to both people to maintain their respective part of the bargain. At no time in the future can one party unilaterally impose upon the covenant any new restrictions. He cannot "disannul" (athetei)<sup>10</sup> the contract. He cannot render it to be null and void. He cannot get out from under his obligations simply because he wants to. Also he cannot "add" any new restriction to the responsibilities of the other party. What was written originally must stand. If contracts could be broken easily, the worlds of business and politics would be full of chaos.

**Even though it is only a man's covenant** - NLT says "Just as no one can set aside or amend an irrevocable agreement, so it is in

this case." NIV has "Brothers, 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."

**Covenant** (1242) ([diatheke](#) from [diatithemi](#) = set out in order, dispose in a certain order <> from **dia** = two + **tithemi** = to place pictures that which is placed between two) A covenant is something placed between two and thus was an arrangement between two parties. It literally conveys the idea of a testament, as in one's last will and testament. Paul is using diatheke in this context as it was used in secular Greek to refer to a person's **last will and testament**, which had to be properly drawn up to make sure the inheritance was passed on as desired.

**See also Hebrew word for covenant = [berit/berith/beriyth](#)** - which describes a compact made **by passing between pieces of flesh**. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (For summary of covenants see - [Covenant in the Bible](#)).

**Wuest** adds that **covenant** "refers to the act of one of two individuals placing between them something to which he **obligates himself**. It is an engagement on the part of one in the sense that he enters into an agreement with another to do thus and so....(In this context) It refers to an agreement in which God enters into covenant relations with Abraham, and in which He promises to justify him on the basis of his faith in the atonement which He Himself would some day offer (REFERRING TO THE CRUCIFIXION). That covenant or agreement was made by God. God also gave the LAW centuries later, and the God Who made a covenant with Abraham **would not invalidate that covenant by adding another specification to it**, namely, obedience to LAW coupled with faith as the two prerequisites to salvation. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

## **THE LAW DID NOT ANNUL THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

**Wuest** comments that "The doctrine of the Judaizers at first glance appeared only to add some harmless new conditions to the covenant of grace. But the character of these new conditions virtually **annulled** it. Works added to faith would annul the entire covenant since any dependence upon works means that it is necessary to abandon faith. That means that any sinner who claims to be saved on the basis of works plus faith is still a lost sinner. One cannot carry water on two shoulders. Neither can one depend upon self effort to save one, and at the same time put faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation. Here is the terrible tragedy of those systems which teach that works are needed for salvation in addition to faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. They are sending millions to the [Lake of Fire](#) by their heretical teaching." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it** - Paul uses the truths that all men knew regarding covenants that men made with other men. And here Paul makes the crucial statement that no one adds conditions to legally validated human covenants! The point Paul makes is that even sinful men hold their covenants to be binding and unchangeable once they are **ratified**.

**Ratified** is in the [perfect tense](#) indicating that the covenant had been ratified in the past and that it was still in effect, still valid, still binding. **Wuest** adds that "just as in human relations, an agreement solemnly ratified cannot be changed unless by mutual consent of the parties involved, so in this divine relationship."

**Ratified** (2964) ([kuroo](#)) was used of legal action meaning to confirm, validate, make legally binding or ratify (as used here in Gal 3:15). It meant to confirm solemnly or publicly." The only other NT use in 2 Cor 2:8 which BDAG says means "to come to a decision in a cognitive process" and so to conclude, come to a group decision in developing policy. In 2 Cor 2:8 Paul was asking the Corinthians to "**reaffirm**" their love toward their errant Christian brother by readmitting him to their fellowship, deciding in favor of love because punishment to the offender had resulted in genuine repentance.

**Gilbrant** - **Kuroō** appears twice in the canonical portions of the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), both times in the sense of confirming possession. More specifically, kuroō in Genesis 23:20 is used in relation to the legal negotiation whereby burial property was "deeded" to Abraham by the Hittites. Abraham obtained "possession" of it by purchasing it for 400 shekels of silver. Similarly, Leviticus 25:30 deals with the possibility of redeeming a house in a walled town. If the house was not redeemed within 1 year it became the "permanent" property of the purchaser. Thus, in both verses kuroō is associated with legal exchanges which are valid and binding (cf. also Daniel 6:10 [Septuagint only]; 4 Maccabees 7:9). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

Now Paul presents two distinct methods of invalidating a covenant, first to set it aside or annul it and second to add new conditions which are not in keeping with the original purpose of the covenant.

**Sets aside** ([annul](#))(114)([atheteo](#) from **áthetos** = not placed - **a** = without + **thetós** = placed) means to do away with what has been laid down, to set aside and thus to regard as nothing, to declare invalid, to not recognize, to annul (make ineffective, inoperative or nonexistent), to spurn or to despise. In the papyri **atheteo** was used of loans which were repaid and cancelled and for the rejection of certain officials who were described as inefficient and incapable of doing their duty. **Atheteo** was also used of grain rejected by the inspector as unfit for food. Paul uses this same verb in Gal 2:21+ "I do not **nullify** (*atheteo*) the grace of God."

The Greek verb **epidiatassomai** translated **adds conditions** is used only here and was a secular legal technical term which meant to make an addition to a will. It is like our word **codicil** which is a legal instrument made to modify an earlier will with supplementary instructions.

**Jack Arnold** - The point for this context is clear. If a man makes covenants and promises and keeps them, how much more will God be faithful to His covenant with Abraham, for God's promises are immutable (unchanging). ([Sermon](#))

## **REVIEW OF GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM**

**God "cut a covenant" with Abraham** in Genesis 15 ([see commentary on Genesis 15](#))

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great." 2 Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness (ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH). 7 And He said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." 8 He said, "O Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?" 9 So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10 Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. (TO CONFIRM THE SOLEMN NATURE OF A COVENANT TWO MEN WOULD WALK BETWEEN THE PIECES OF DEAD ANIMAL WITH THE IDEA BEING MAY THIS BE MY FATE IF I BREAK THIS COVENANT) 11 The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away. 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 "But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16"Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." 17 It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. (THE SMOKING OVEN AND FLAMING TORCH SYMBOLIZED GOD ALONE WALKING THROUGH AND THE PIECES OF THE SLAIN ANIMALS). 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram (NOTE ABRAM DID NOT MAKE A COVENANT WITH GOD! IN FACT THE COVENANT WAS RATIFIED WHILE ABRAM WAS ASLEEP! THIS WAS A COVENANT OF GRACE, GOD GIVING PROMISES TO ABRAM, NOT ABRAM MAKING PROMISES TO GOD!) saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

In the ancient world when two men cut a covenant together it was **Solemn and Binding** as symbolized by both parties walking between the slain animal (a "[A Walk Into Death](#)") as a way of testifying that if either would break the covenant they would become as the slain animal! A man's covenant was that serious and that binding, so Paul begins his defense of the integrity of the Abrahamic Covenant by reminding his readers of the solemn, binding unchangeable nature of a man's last will and testament. Paul's point is that God's covenant with Abraham was unilateral and unconditional and its integrity depended on God!

**THOUGHT** - As an aside, if you are one who wrestles with **ETERNAL SECURITY**, then meditate on God's covenant (especially the Abrahamic and the New). God initiated the covenant and He obligates Himself to keep it! You cannot be much more secure than that beloved. When you were saved by grace through faith in Christ, God's Spirit took you forever out of our old position "in Adam" and transferred you permanently to your new position "in Christ," in the new covenant with Him, in oneness with Him, in union with Him, in identity with

Him, in communion with Him. Beloved that supernatural, divine bond of covenant can **NEVER** be broken, dissolved, or altered. You are eternally secure **IN CHRIST**. Your **eternal security** is not dependent on your faithfulness (we all have "our days" where we are not as faithful as we know we should be!) but on the faithfulness of the [unchanging, omnipotent, non-lying God!](#) See links below for more on the incredible study of God's Covenants.

#### Related Resources:

- [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#)
- [Covenant: Why Study It?](#)
- [Covenant: Introduction](#)
- [Lesson 1 Covenant: Summary Table](#)
- [Lesson 2 Covenant: The Exchange of Robes](#)
- [Lesson 3 Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts](#)
- [Lesson 4 Covenant: Solemn and Binding](#)
- [Lesson 5 Covenant: A Walk Into Death](#)
- [Lesson 6 Covenant: The Oneness of Covenant](#)
- [Covenant: Oneness Notes](#)
- [Lesson 7 Covenant: Withholding Nothing from God](#)
- [Lesson 8 Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)
- [Lesson 9 Covenant: New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)
- [Lesson 10 Covenant: Why the New is Better](#)
- [Lesson 11 Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)

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#### Galatians 3:15-18 TODAY IN THE WORD

God in his grace gave [the inheritance] to Abraham through a promise. - Galatians 3:18

Whenever a lawyer builds a defense case, he prepares arguments and counterarguments. He needs to be able to take different vantage points, to anticipate questions and formulate answers even before those questions are asked. And that's what Paul has been doing throughout his letter, preparing a very thorough defense of his apostleship and of the gospel. The argument goes in two directions. Paul's ultimate aim is to dissuade the Galatians from believing they must be circumcised. His arguments are rooted in the Old Testament because it is from the Old Testament that the false teachers have twisted their faulty logic. There has been a fundamental misunderstanding of the promises made to Abraham and the purpose of the law. The Gentile converts in Galatia, now doubting their identity as Abraham's children and heirs of the divine promises, wanted to become circumcised to guarantee their status as members of God's family.

**The first direction of this argument** is from an example in everyday life. Paul asks them to consider human covenants, or contracts. Can they be dissolved or annulled? When two parties mutually agree, when the covenant is confirmed by shaking hands or signing a piece of paper, it cannot be reversed without compromising the integrity of one of the parties.

Now consider the covenant that God made with Abraham. God cannot compromise His character. What He has promised, He will do. His contract with Abraham is irreversible. Moreover, what He's promised to Abraham will come through his "seed" or offspring (cf. Gen. 12:7). Galatians clarifies that the seed to which God refers in Genesis is not in fact the children of Abraham (who are many) but Christ (who is One). Christ becomes the true heir of all the divine promises made to Abraham.

**The second direction argues from the timeline.** The promises were made to Abraham more than four centuries before the law was ever given to Moses. Could the law really supersede the promises if the promises were given first?

APPLY THE WORD - Our trust that God is faithful to His promises is critical to our faith. Write down the promises you find in the pages of Scriptures as you read, and prayerfully reflect on those promises. Ask God to help you believe in His faithfulness. If you're afraid, remember that He's promised to be with you. If you're uncertain, remember that He's promised wisdom. If you're broken over sin in your life, remember He's promised forgiveness.

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#### Galatians 3:15-18 TODAY IN THE WORD

One stormy and extremely cold Sunday morning, a minister was on his way to church. On the road he met one of his neighbors, who, shivering miserably, said to him, ""It's very chilly, sir.""

""Oh,"" replied the minister. ""God is as good as His word.""

The other, not comprehending, asked what he meant. The minister answered: ""God promised about three thousand years ago, and

He still makes it good today, that 'as long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat...will never cease.'"

The minister's reply was meant as a joke, but his point is true: God always keeps His covenants and promises.

In today's reading Paul observes that when a human covenant is ratified, no one sets it aside or amends it, neither the author nor a second party (v. 15). Of course the implication is that if that is true with people, it is even more true with God. A second covenant, the law, could not set aside the promise made to Abraham (v. 17).

The Abrahamic covenant could only be fulfilled by Christ (v. 16). Only in the infinite Son of God could all the families of the earth be blessed. But Christ is viewed in this chapter as also being the head of a new family; all who receive Him by faith become sons of Abraham in a spiritual sense (Gal. 3:28-29).

A most startling and amazing truth becomes clear. The age of law was merely a parenthesis between the age of promise and the age of grace (v. 18). All of the legalistic teaching the church has endured for nearly two thousand years is entirely incompatible with the teachings of grace and the spirit of promise.

APPLY THE WORD - Two days ago, we suggested that you review the biblical narrative of Abraham and Sarah. If you did so, you probably found yourself held spellbound by a story filled with impossible promises, difficult journeys, angelic visitors, and obedient faith.

**Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.**

Greek - to de Abraam errethesan (3PAPI) ai epaggeliaz kai to spermati autou ou legei (3SPAI) kai tois spermasin os epi pollon all os e enos Kai to spermati sou os estin (3SPAI) Christos

Amplified: Now the promises (covenants, agreements) were decreed and made to Abraham and his Seed (his Offspring, his Heir). He [God] does not say, And to seeds (descendants, heirs), as if referring to many persons, but, And to your Seed (your Descendant, your Heir), obviously referring to one individual, Who is [none other than] Christ (the Messiah).

Phillips Now a promise was made to Abraham and to his seed. (Note in passing that the scripture says not "and to seeds" but uses the singular 'and to your seed', meaning Christ.)

Wuest Now to Abraham were made the promises, and to his seed. He does not say, And to the seeds, as in respect to many (seeds), but in respect to one (seed), and to your seed who is Christ. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture does not say, "and to the descendants," referring to many, but "and to your descendant," referring to one, who is Christ.

GNT Galatians 3:16 τ ὁ βραμ ῖ ρηθησαν ἀ παγγελια κα τ σπ ρματι α το . ο λγει, Κα το ς σπ ρμασιν, ς π πολλ ν λ λ ς φ ν ς, Κα τ σπ ρματ σου, ς σπιν Χριστ ς.

NLT Galatians 3:16 God gave the promises to Abraham and his child. And notice that the Scripture doesn't say "to his children, " as if it meant many descendants. Rather, it says "to his child"-- and that, of course, means Christ.

KJV Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

ESV Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

ASV Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

CSB Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ.

NIV Galatians 3:16 The 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," meaning one person, who is Christ.

NKJ Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

NRS Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, "And to offsprings," as of many; but it says, "And to your offspring," that is, to one person, who is Christ.

YLT Galatians 3:16 and to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed; He doth not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' which is Christ;

NAB Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say, "And to descendants," as referring to many, but as referring to one, "And to your descendant," who is Christ.

NJB Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were addressed to Abraham and to his progeny. The words were not and to his progenies in the plural, but in the singular; and to your progeny, which means Christ.

GWN Galatians 3:16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his descendant. Scripture doesn't say, "descendants," referring to many, but "your descendant," referring to one. That descendant is Christ.

BBE Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham were the undertakings given, and to his seed. He says not, And to seeds, as of a great number; but as of one, he says, And to your seed, which is Christ.

- **the promises were spoken to Abraham:** Ga 3:8 Ge 12:3,7 13:15,16 15:5 17:7,8 21:12 22:17,18 26:3,4 28:13 Ge 28:14 49:10
- **which is Christ:** Ga 3:27-29 Ro 12:5 1Co 12:12,27 Eph 4:15,16 5:29,30,32 Col 2:19 Col 3:11
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc (including those below)

## THE SEED IS CHRIST

**John MacArthur** explains that now "Paul argues from the lesser figure of Gal 3:15 to the greater figure of Gal 3:16, that the covenant of promise was superior to the covenant of law because it was Christ-centered."

**Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed** - When God made a covenant with Abraham ([note](#)), He promised him a **SEED**, the MESSIAH (see Ge 22:18 below) and said that through **THAT SEED** all the nations of the world would be blessed. So the promise that God made to Abraham was actually the PROMISE OF SALVATION (justification) which would be made available to both Jews and Gentiles. And just as Abraham entered that covenant by faith, so too all who are descendants of Abraham would likewise enter that covenant by faith. The Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant that God initiated and carried out. Man's part was to receive and enter the covenant by faith. Today, although the New Covenant supersedes the Abrahamic Covenant, they are related in the sense that both are cut by God, both are unconditional and both are entered into by faith.

**Wuest** adds that "The promises were made to **Abraham** and to his **Seed, Christ**. But when Christ is seen as seed of Abraham here, all those saved by Him are included. The word **seed** when used in the singular number in the Old Testament means progeny. Thus to Abraham personally and to all those who by faith in Christ are brought into salvation, were the promises made. The fact that the promises were made to Abraham and to all believers all down the ages who follow Abraham in his act of faith, indicates that **the faith way of salvation existed before the law was given, continued through the time the law was in force, and still is in effect after the abrogation of the law at the Cross**. Thus the entrance of the law did not affect the covenant at all. [Galatians Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** on the **promises** - Because they were made both to Abraham and his descendants, they did not become void when Abraham died, or when the law came. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**The promises** (1860) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#)

**He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ** - He would refer to God the Author of Scripture but could refer to the human agent Moses (moved by the Spirit - 2 Pe 1:21). First the negative - **seeds** is NOT plural as if he were describing many descendants. Then the positive - **One...seed, your seed...Christ** or Messiah. So what is Paul saying? **Seed** in both the Hebrew text ([02233 - Zera](#)) (Ge 22:17,18) and the Greek ([Septuagint](#)) translation ([sperma](#)) is SINGULAR not PLURAL. Paul's theological argument concerning the Abrahamic covenant makes a strong affirmation of the [verbal plenary inspiration](#) of the Scriptures, basing his argument not just on one word, but **one letter, "seed"** instead of "**seeds**." Thus the promised "**Seed**" was not the nation Israel, but the one Person Who alone could fulfill the great promises made to Abraham, namely, **Christ**, the Messiah.

**Spurgeon on does not say** - Quoting from the Old Testament, we may believe in the [absolute plenary inspiration](#) of that sacred book, because the apostle founds an argument upon the **singular** of a noun ("seed" = [zera](#)) having been used rather than the **plural**. Notice how important a single letter of the Scriptures may be. A vital doctrine may depend upon the use of a singular or plural noun. Therefore, let us jealously guard the smallest jot or tittle of the inspired word of God.

**Related Resource:**

- [What is verbal plenary inspiration?](#)

**But rather to one, and to your seed that is Christ:** Paul is referring to passages like Genesis 22:18 where Abraham's **seed** is singular in both the Hebrew and the Greek.

"In your **seed** (Hebrew [zera](#) and Greek sperma are singular) all the nations (JEWS AND GENTILES) of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

**Comment** - Note that the Hebrew word [zera](#) and the Greek word **sperma** are used repeatedly in Genesis to describe the **descendants** or offspring of Abraham (see Ge 13:15, Ge 13:16, Ge 15:5, Ge 17:7-9, Ge 22:17-28, etc - this is not a complete list) While English translations like the NASB, NET and NLT translate the word as **descendants**, both words are **singular** in the original Hebrew and Greek ([Septuagint](#)) texts. Other versions (ESV, HCSB, NIV, NRSV) translate the word as offspring rather than descendants.

Peter also alluded to the Abrahamic Covenant and the singular "**seed**" declaring to all the Jews who had gathered around (Acts 3:9-11+) after the lame man had been miraculously healed (Acts 3:2-7,8+)...

"It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'AND IN YOUR **SEED** ([sperma](#) singular) ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.' (Acts 3:25+)

**Bruce Barton** has an excellent summary commenting that "This verse would probably make more sense in the flow of the text if it appeared in parentheses. But the point is important. *The promises* that Abraham received from God *were spoken to Abraham and to his seed*. Now, if the promises were meant for Abraham and his many descendants alone (to all his *seeds*), then it might appear that the promises had already been fulfilled, and that the law had come as a new phase in God's dealing with his people. But the promises had been given to the "**Seed**"—that is, Abraham's most famous descendant, who came many years after both Abraham and the law. The law has an important function, but salvation by grace through faith was God's promise from the beginning of time until the judgment day. While language experts argue that "**seed**" can also be a plural ("The farmer plants seed" certainly refers to more than one seed), Paul correctly applied the singular form of the word in this instance. The Jews had always believed that God's promises would be fulfilled in a **single person, the Messiah**. God's promise remained intact even though Abraham himself only had one descendant through Sarah. Further, the promises were not fulfilled prior to the giving of the law, nor by the giving of the law. **Instead, they were fulfilled when Christ came as Abraham's "Seed."** Christ alone fulfilled the messianic aspects of God's covenant and showed that God's promises are in effect for all time. Many claimed to be rightful heirs to God's promises to Abraham by their being his offspring, but Paul pointed out the only true, rightful heir was Jesus. The covenant that God shared with Abraham had been reaffirmed many times, but only Christ fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant as the unique Seed. The Jews certainly enjoyed many privileges and responsibilities as part of the Abrahamic covenant, but blessing the nations was the Messiah's role. The promises to Abraham go just to Christ. (They don't reside in the Jewish people.) In and through Christ they go to individual believers. Christ is our hope of blessing." (Life Application Bible Commentary – Galatians)

**Seeds...seed** ([04690](#))(**sperma**) refers to seed sown as containing the germ of new fruit, originally used of plants as seed but in this context **sperma** is figurative and refers to descendants or descendant (singular). It should be noted that while **seed** in the singular can be used in a [collective sense](#) (speaking of every member of a group). For example in Genesis 12:7 **seed** is singular but in the context is [collective](#). Paul knew that seed in the singular could be used in a collective sense because he actually uses sperma that way in Gal 3:29., "**you are Abraham's descendants**" where **descendants** (sperma) is singular but in context clearly speaks of the entire group who have believed as Abraham believed. However in Genesis 22:18 (and Ge 3:15+) **seed** is singular and in context refers to Jesus Christ.

**Brian Bell on collective** - A collective noun is a noun that refers to a group of people or things considered as a single unit. For instance: we talk about the furniture in our home (sing). Or an audience (sing). [a crowd, clergy, a jury, etc.]

**People's NT:** "Many have thought that Paul made a grammatical mistake (ED: REFERRING TO "SEED" IN SINGULAR AS INDICATING CHRIST). Even **Luther** says: "*My dear brother Paul, this argument won't stick*" The criticism is that sperma, the Greek word rendered "seed," is a collective noun and may include all Abraham's descendants. Paul elsewhere shows that he knew just the

meaning of **sperma** (Ro 4:18; Ro 9:7), but the question here is not one of grammar, but of spiritual meaning. Paul does not mean that **sperma** (seed) excludes plurality, but that it implies unity. Note the word "children" or "descendants" is used. This would embrace the children of Ishmael, of Esau, and of Keturah. But there is a seed to whom the promise is given; a seed that embraces many, but is one. That seed is Christ the head, and all in Christ. The whole spiritual seed of Abraham concentrates in Christ. The promise is to Christ and all in Christ. Paul understood Greek as well as his critics, and also knew what he meant.

**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to rub or anoint, consecrate to an office) means one who has been anointed, symbolizing appointment to a task. The majority of the NT uses refer to Jesus. See also discussion of Messiah - [messias](#).

**Spurgeon on and to your seed** - This is sound reasoning. God made a covenant with Abraham and said that in him and in his seed all nations should be blessed. All believers are in Christ, who is here called Abraham's seed, and therefore they must be blessed. Whatever the law may say or may not say, it was not given until 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham and therefore cannot affect it in any way.

**John MacArthur** explains that the way of salvation in the OT (before Christ came) was the same as in the New Testament -

"In an even earlier promise, a clearly singular use of **seed** also refers to **Christ**. ([the protoevangelium](#)). To the serpent in the Garden of Eden, God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your **seed** and her **seed**; He [singular, referring to "her seed"] shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15+). The one and only heir of every promise of God is Christ. Every promise given in the covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ. Therefore the only way a person can participate in the promised blessings to Abraham is to be a fellow heir with Christ through faith in Him. Whether before or after Christ came to earth, salvation has always been provided only through the perfect offering of Christ on the cross. Believers who lived before the cross and never knew any specifics about Jesus were nevertheless forgiven and made right with God by faith in anticipation of Christ's sacrifice (**Ed**: We don't know how much they knew but they did have [Messianic Prophecies](#) that would have given them some insights into the work of Christ which is clearly revealed in the NT.), whereas believers who live after the cross are saved in looking back to it. (**ED**: cf Ro 3:25+ "*because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.*" See similar truth in Hebrews 9:15+) When Christ shed His blood, it covered sins on both sides of the cross. The Old Covenant goes to the cross; the New Covenant comes from it. On the one hand faith pointed forward, whereas on the other it points back. There has never been nor can there ever be salvation apart from the finished work of Christ. The covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in the covenant of Jesus Christ, and therefore the covenant of law, whatever its character and purpose, did not abrogate or modify those two covenants, which really merged into one.

#### Related resources:

- [Abrahamic versus Mosaic Covenants](#);
- [Covenant: New Covenant in the Old Testament](#);
- [Covenant: Why the New is Better](#);
- [Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)

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**Paul Henebury** notes that in Galatians 3 Paul is "speaking about justification by faith (e.g. Gal. 3:2, 5, 9 etc.). He cites Ge 15:6 in Gal 3:6. Then, in Gal 3:8 he quotes Ge 22:18. Genesis 22:18 does not contain all the promises housed within the Abraham Covenant; only that which deals with the nations. Now, what does Paul do with it? **Does he teach the other promises of land, king, priesthood, fecundity etc. for Israel are past? Not at all. He's not dealing with those things so he doesn't speak of them.** Galatians 3:16 causes a lot of trouble. What are the "**promises**" he refers to in that passage? Well, the promises to the Gentiles he has been speaking about! How are they realized? Through the "**Seed**" (singular) of Gen. 22:18 (which he has just quoted) who is Christ. Thus, Gentile believers are of like faith with Abraham and are considered his spiritual sons or seed (Gal. 3:26, 29). All this is quite true and to be expected from what the OT teaches. **But it does not mean Abraham's physical seed (Israel) do not have covenant promises awaiting them too! They do. But they must believe** (e.g. Deut. 30:6; Isa. 45:17, 19, 25; Isa 46:12-13, etc.). ([The Church and the Abrahamic Covenant](#))

**Galatians 3:17 What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.**

triakonta ete gegonos (RAPMSN) nomos ouk akuroi eis to katargesai (AAN) ten epaggelian

Amplified: This is my argument: The Law, which began 430 years after the covenant [concerning the coming Messiah], does not and cannot annul the covenant previously established (ratified) by God, so as to abolish the promise and make it void.

Phillips I say then that the Law, which came into existence four hundred and thirty years later, cannot render null and void the original "contract" which God had made, and thus rob the promise of its value.

Wuest This now is what I mean. A covenant previously established by God,<sup>18</sup> the law, which came after four hundred and thirty years, does not render void, with the result that the promise becomes inoperative. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:17 What I am saying is this: The law that came four hundred thirty years later does not cancel a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to invalidate the promise.

GNT Galatians 3:17 το το δ λγω· διαθ κην προκεκυρωμ νην π το θεο μετ τετρακ σια κα τρι κοντα τη γεγον ς νμος ο κ κυρο ε ς τ καταργ σαι τ ν παγγελ αν.

NLT Galatians 3:17 This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. God would be breaking his promise.

KJV Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

ESV Galatians 3:17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

ASV Galatians 3:17 Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect.

CSB Galatians 3:17 And I say this: The law, which came 430 years later, does not revoke a covenant that was previously ratified by God and cancel the promise.

NIV Galatians 3:17 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

NRS Galatians 3:17 My point is this: the law, which came four hundred thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.

YLT Galatians 3:17 and this I say, A covenant confirmed before by God to Christ, the law, that came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not set aside, to make void the promise,

NAB Galatians 3:17 This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to cancel the promise.

NJB Galatians 3:17 What I am saying is this: once a will had been long ago ratified by God, the Law, coming four hundred and thirty years later, could not abolish it and so nullify its promise.

GWN Galatians 3:17 This is what I mean: The laws given to Moses 430 years after God had already put his promise to Abraham into effect didn't cancel the promise to Abraham.

BBE Galatians 3:17 Now this I say: The law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not put an end to the agreement made before by God, so as to make the undertaking without effect.

- **What I am saying is this:** Ga 5:16 1Co 1:12 7:29 10:19 2Co 9:6 Eph 4:17 Col 2:4
- **the covenant:** Ge 15:18 17:7,8,19 Lu 1:68-79 Joh 1:17 8:56-58 Ro 3:25 2Co 1:20 Heb 11:13,17-19,39,40 1Pe 1:11,12,20
- **which came four hundred and thirty years later:** Ge 15:13 Ex 12:40,41 Ac 7:6
- **does not invalidate :** Ga 3:15 Job 40:8 Isa 14:27 28:18 Heb 7:18
- **does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God:** Ga 3:21 Nu 23:19 Ro 4:13,14 Heb 6:13-18
- **so as to nullify the promise:** Ga 5:4 Nu 30:8 Ps 33:10 Ro 3:3 1Co 1:17
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton

- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## MOSAIC LAW DID NOT TAKE PLACE OF ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

**What I am saying is this** - Paul now expands on the thought he has just expressed in Gal 3:16. There he spoke of a man's covenant, but now he applies the truth to God's covenant with Abraham.

**Wuest** points out that "God was saving men on the basis of **faith without works** since the time of Adam, or 2,500 years before the **Law** was given. The law was in force from Moses to Christ, or for a period of 1500 years. At the Cross it was abrogated (cf Heb 8:13+). The Judaizers not only attempted to retain the Mosaic institutions for the Jews, but tried to impose them upon the Gentiles, to whom that law was never given. This was what Paul was fighting. Paul's argument therefore is as follows. If a covenant once in force cannot be changed or rendered void by any subsequent action, God's covenant with Abraham cannot be changed or rendered void by the subsequent law. If this principle holds good in a human covenant, much more is it true when God makes the covenant, since God is more certainly true to His promise than man. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**POSB** - How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law. The covenant of faith preceded the covenant of law. The law of God did not even appear upon the scene until four hundred and thirty years later. Note two significant things. When the law was given, the promise to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled; therefore, the law could not void or change the covenant of faith with Abraham. The promises of God to Abraham and his descendant, Jesus Christ, still stood. As Lehman Strauss points out: "The covenant of faith finds its roots in eternity past." "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Since Jesus Christ, Who is eternal, existed before Abraham, the covenant of faith was given to Christ even before it was given to Abraham." The covenant made with Abraham told man how he was to follow God and receive the promises of God, that is, by faith. Therefore, when the law was given, it must have been given for a different purpose entirely. It could not have been given to show men how to follow God, for that truth was already established in the covenant of faith given to Abraham. The point is clear: no man is justified by the law, that is, by self-effort and works, trying to become good and righteous through obeying the law. That was not the purpose of the law. A person is justified by faith and by faith alone.

**The Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later** - **The Law** represents the Mosaic Law, the Old Covenant, which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. The figure **430 years** most likely refers to Exodus 12:40. **Later** means after God cut the unconditional covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15+ (see [above](#)).

**Wuest** comments on the significance of the **430 years** - The statement of the length of time that elapsed between the giving of the covenant to Abraham and the giving of the law to Moses, implies that the law was something new and different which could not therefore be an element forming part of the promise. The longer the covenant was in force as the alone method upon which God operated in the saving of sinners, the more impressive is Paul's statement. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Max Anders** - Abraham was saved by faith 430 years before the law was given to Moses. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.

### More explanations of the 430 years -

**430 years later** - The 430 years from the Abrahamic promise until the giving of the law to Moses and the 430 years of Israel's extended stay in Egypt parallel each other, provided that the reference to "the covenant" here in Ga 3:17 refers to the final ratification of this covenant, as confirmed to Jacob just as he and his family were leaving Canaan for Egypt (Ge 46:1-4). This seems quite reasonable in the current context of Paul's argument; The 430 years may be the total number of years spent in bondage in Egypt, thus approximately equivalent to the 400 years of Ge 15:13+ and Acts 7:6+. Or it may be that the years of bondage were 400 and the 430-year figure, used in Ex 12:40 and here in Ga 3:17, refers to the time between the last confirmation of the Abrahamic covenant and the giving of the Mosaic Law. (Acts 13:19+, where 450 years is the approximate time from the beginning of Egyptian bondage until after the conquest of Palestine, including the 40 years of wilderness wandering.)

**MacArthur** on the 430 years - From Israel's sojourn in Egypt (Ex 12:40) to the giving of the law at Sinai (1445 bc) The law actually came 645 years after the initial promise to Abraham (ca. 2090 b.c.; cf. Ge 12:4 21:5 25:26; 47:9), but the promise was repeated to Isaac (Ge 26:24) and later to Jacob (1928 bc Ge 28:15). The last known reaffirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant to Jacob occurred in Ge 46:2-4 (1875 bc) just before he went to Egypt—430 yrs before the Mosaic law was given. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Thomas Constable** ([Galatians 3](#)) has a nice diagram to help understand 430, 400 and 450 years...

**Does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God** - The Law did not cancel out the Abrahamic Covenant. How did God ratify it? He symbolically walked between the pieces of the slain animals in Ge 15:17-18+ (Study the first column in the chart [Walk Into Death](#)). Paul has just said that in human covenants men do not add conditions to their covenants. By the same token the coming of the Law neither invalidates nor adds anything to the Abrahamic Covenant. You are not now saved by believing plus keeping the Law. In short, the Judaizers were wrong, for God's promise of justification by faith was still in effect and the law did not set that covenant aside or annul it.

**James Montgomery Boice** - If God had been blessing Abraham and his posterity through the way of promise for 430 years and if he was to do the same for all men through Christ and his posterity, how could the giving of the law annul this promise? It could not, as even the human analogy of covenants and wills shows. Therefore, the law cannot add to, nor subtract from, God's first and only way of salvation. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon on a covenant previously ratified by God**, - Is that not a splendid argument? The covenant was made with Abraham that God would bless him and his seed. Well, 430 years after, the law was given on Sinai, but that could not affect a covenant made 430 years before. The argument goes to prove that the covenant of grace is not affected by any law of rites and ceremonies—no, not even by the moral law itself. The covenant made with Abraham and his seed must stand. The seed signifies those who believe; therefore, the covenant stands fast with Abraham and all other believers.

**Phil Newton** contrasts the covenant of Abraham **ratified by God** and covenant of the Law - The uniqueness of this covenant with Abraham, as opposed to the covenant of Mt. Sinai (i.e., the covenant of the Law), is found in the details of its arrangement. In the covenant of Law ratified at Mt Sinai, God obligated Himself to bless the children of Israel upon their total obedience to His Law. He also obligated Himself, in the same covenant, to curse the children of Israel upon their disobedience to His Law. This was a covenant of "mutual obligations." The Israelites were obligated to obey the Law in its entirety, including all of its ceremonial and civil aspects (Deuteronomy 5:33; cf Jer 11:7-8). The Lord was obligated to bless or curse Israel, depending on how well they did in their part of the bargain. Obviously, Israel failed in their part of the covenant! The covenant with Abraham, on the other hand, was "one-sided." The Lord God obligated Himself to bless Abraham and all who come to faith in the Lord, unconditionally. ([Sermon](#))

**De Haan** - Paul illustrates in this verse the fact that ONCE under the grace of God, the Law has no more dominion. He takes first the covenant of grace to Abraham and then the Law of God through Moses 430 years later. The fact that Israel failed under the Law does not annul God's covenant of grace made before with Abraham.

**Invalidate** (208)(**akuroo** from **a** = without + **kuroo** = to confirm) means to cancel, make invalid, deprive of power. Used in Gal 3:17 and once in Mt 15:6 where Jesus told the Pharisees they had "**invalidated** the word of God for the sake of your tradition" and once in Mk 7:13 with a similar meaning as the use in Matthew.

**Previously ratified** (only NT use)(4300)(**prokuroo** from **pro** = before + **kuros** = validity, confirmation) means to establish or confirm beforehand, to cause to be in force earlier or in advance, to validate in advance. **Perfect tense** speaks of past completed action and ongoing effect or even better permanence. The ratification will remain valid throughout eternity! You are secure in Christ Jesus!

**MacArthur** gives a great summary - The Abrahamic Covenant was unilateral (God made the promise to Himself), eternal (it provided for everlasting blessing), irrevocable (it will never cease), unconditional (in that it depended on God, not man), but its complete fulfillment awaits the salvation of Israel and the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Covenant** (1242) see previous discussion of [diatheke](#)

**So as to nullify the promise** - so as to (with a view to) abolish the promise and make it void. **Wuest** has "with the result that the promise becomes inoperative." In other words, God's intention of giving the Law was not to [abrogate](#) the promise given to Abraham some 430 years before. That was never the purpose of the Law.

**Nullify** (void, cancel) (2673)(**katargeo** from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = to be idle or inactive from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **ergon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. The idea is to make the power or force of something ineffective and so to render powerless.

**The promise** (1860) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#)

**H A Ironside** - God was not playing fast and loose with Abraham when He gave him this unconditional covenant of grace. He did not say, "If you do thus and so, and if you do not do certain things, all the world will be blessed through your seed." But He said, unconditionally, "In thee and in thy **Seed** shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It is not a question at all of human effort; it is not a

question of something we earn. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Oliver Greene** - GOD's promises in the Abrahamic Covenant were promises based upon pure grace; there were no conditions attached to them. The fulfillment of the promises did not depend upon anything Abraham did or did not do, nor upon anything his seed did or promised to do. On the other hand, the Law of Moses made ALL of its promises conditional - that is, if Israel practiced obedience, then GOD granted the promise. GOD uses the word "IF" for the first time in Exodus 19:5, in preparation for the giving of the Law. GOD said, "IF ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...." The people answered JEHOVAH by saying, "ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO" (Exodus 19:8). But if you will read the history of Israel, you will find that instead of doing everything JEHOVAH commanded, they did just the opposite! Time after time Jehovah GOD chastened Israel severely. This was entirely different from the covenant GOD made with Abraham. Abraham made no promise to GOD - either for himself or for his seed after him. All the promises were made by GOD, and carried with them no conditions whatsoever! Study carefully the Abrahamic Covenant and you will see that what I have just said is one hundred percent correct. ([The Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants - Galatians 3:15-29](#))

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**THE PROMISE KEEPER** - God kept his promise to Abraham; he has not revoked it, though thousands of years have passed. He saved Abraham through his faith, and he blessed the world through Abraham by sending the Messiah as one of Abraham's descendants. Circumstances may change, but God remains constant and does not break his promises. He has promised to forgive our sins through Jesus Christ, and we can be sure that he will do so (FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN!). (Life Application Bible Commentary – Galatians)

**Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.**

Greek - ei gar ek nomou e kleronomia ouketi ex epaggelias to de Abraam di epaggelias kecharistai (3SRPI) o theos

Amplified: For if the inheritance [of the promise depends on observing] the Law [as these false teachers would like you to believe], it no longer [depends] on the promise; however, God gave it to Abraham [as a free gift solely] by virtue of His promise.

Phillips For if the receiving of the promised blessing were now made to depend on the Law, that would amount to a cancellation of the original "contract" which God made with Abraham as a promise.

Wuest For if the inheritance is from law (as a method of divine dealing), no longer is it from promise (as a method of divine dealing). But to Abraham through the intermediate instrumentality of promise God has in grace freely bestowed it. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise, but God graciously gave it to Abraham through the promise.

GNT Galatians 3:18 ε γ ρ κ ν μου κληρονομια, ο κ τι ξ παγγελιας τ δ βρα μ δι παγγελιας κεχρισται θες.

NLT Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise. But God graciously gave it to Abraham as a promise.

KJV Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

ESV Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

ASV Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise.

CSB Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is from the law, it is no longer from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.

NIV Galatians 3:18 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham

by promise.

NRS Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.

YLT Galatians 3:18 for if by law be the inheritance, it is no more by promise, but to Abraham through promise did God grant it.

NAB Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance comes from the law, it is no longer from a promise; but God bestowed it on Abraham through a promise.

NJB Galatians 3:18 You see, if the inheritance comes by the Law, it no longer comes through a promise; but it was by a promise that God made his gift to Abraham.

GWN Galatians 3:18 If we have to gain the inheritance by following those laws, then it no longer comes to us because of the promise. However, God freely gave the inheritance to Abraham through a promise.

BBE Galatians 3:18 Because if the heritage is by the law, it is no longer dependent on the word of God; but God gave it to Abraham by his word

- **For if the inheritance is based on law , it is no longer based on a promise** Ga 3:10,12,26,29 2:21 Ro 4:13-16 Ro 8:17
- **but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise** Ga 3:16 Ps 105:6-12,42 Mic 7:18-20 Lu 1:54,55,72,73 Heb 6:12-15
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
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**For - Anderson** says "The word **"FOR"** at the beginning of verse 18 indicates that in Paul's argument he is now giving a REASON for the previous statement in verse 17. If the inheritance is based on law, it would be the payment of a debt and not the faithful fulfillment of a promise." ([Notes](#))

**Vine** adds that with this **for** "the apostle now proceeds to justify his use of such strong words as "disannul" and "abrogate" in this connection."

**Lenski** explains the **for** - "**For**" makes still clearer the fact that the law, which came into being hundreds of years later than the testament, does not alter its confirmation, does not put its promise out of effect.

**If the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise** It is as if Paul is saying "you can't have it both ways," a "law way" and a "promise way!" If you cling to one you will exclude the other. **Amplified** has "For if the inheritance [of the promise depends on observing] the Law [as these false teachers would like you to believe], it no longer [depends] on the promise." **NLT** = "For if the inheritance could be received by keeping the law, then it would not be the result of accepting God's promise." Note the word **inheritance** which is something one is given, not something one works for. The point is that there is no room for compromise between **law** (works) and **promise** (grace), for the two are mutually exclusive, always antagonistic!

**Homer Kent** - The **promise** was repeated to Isaac and Jacob, and no conditions were imposed. Because the patriarchs believed God's **promise**, with no strings attached, they had been declared righteous. For anyone to insist that now one must place himself under the law in order to inherit the provisions of the **promise** to Abraham was to place that inheritance on an entirely different basis. It would be "**no longer based on a promise**."

**Jack Arnold** - Paul makes it clear that if salvation is in any way of law-works then it nullifies the **promise** made to Abraham. Law, when added to promise, destroys salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Salvation must rest either on promise or on law, for it is impossible to mix the two. ([Sermon](#))

**Vine** explains "Once allow that the ground of the inheritance is law and the obedience that law demands, then that inheritance cannot be obtained by anyone merely on the ground that it was promised as a gift."

**Wuest** explains that "Paul's argument in this verse is, that if the **Law** affects the **promise** at all, it renders it null and void. It cannot be added to it without destroying it. Salvation must rest either upon the **promise** or upon the **law**. The Judaizers claimed that it rested upon the promise and the law. But Paul has shown that the **law** did not abrogate the **promise**,(Gal 3:17) and thus it had no effect upon it. Thus, if as the Judaizers say, the **inheritance** is on the basis of **law** obedience, then it is not on the basis of **promise**. But, Paul adds, God gave it to Abraham on the basis of **promise**. That settled the matter." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Swindoll** - The **inheritance** of the blessing was based on **promise**—an unconditional **promise** from God to Abraham that established an irrevocable, eternal relationship. The Judaizers, however, were alleging that the **inheritance** was now based on Law! This represented a complete misunderstanding of the function of the Law of Moses in God's plan and purpose.

Paul made a similar declaration in Romans 4:13-14<sup>+</sup>

**"For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law (NOT THROUGH ABRAHAM KEEPING THE LAW), but through the righteousness (RECEIVED FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF) of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise (Ro 4:13) is nullified."**

**MacArthur** explains "If only those who perfectly keep the law—an impossibility—receive the promise, **faith** has no value. Making a promise contingent on an impossible condition nullifies the promise."  
([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Guzik** explains that "If the **inheritance** offered to Abraham was on the basis of **law**, it might not be permanent – because it would depend, at least in part, on Abraham's keeping of the **law**. But since the **inheritance** was offered on the basis of **promise**, God's promise, it stands sure."

**Don Anderson** adds this note on **inheritance** - The DOWN PAYMENT OF "THE INHERITANCE" is the promised coming of the indwelling Holy Spirit when we receive Christ as Savior (Eph 1:14<sup>+</sup> where pledge = down payment). And then the FULL INHERITANCE will come at the time of our physical death when we will go to be with the Lord. It is then we will experience the blessing of all which the Lord has provided for us. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (DESCRIBES OUR INHERITANCE) "but even as it has been written: "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, so many things as God prepared for those who are loving Him. "THE INHERITANCE" comes through the RELATIONSHIP and not from PERFORMANCE. What Paul is saying is that this "INHERITANCE" has not come from the law but through the "PROMISE." And that "PROMISE" centers in the Person of JESUS CHRIST. ([Notes](#))

**C. S. Lovett** points out that "The promise was not made to Abraham alone, but to one other Person, his Heir. If the word "heirs" had been used, then national Israel would have been intended. But the promise was to a sole Heir, Christ. This means that the promise cannot be separated from Jesus in any way. As the solitary Heir, He becomes the universal Heir, inheriting the promise for His people. It follows then, for anyone to participate in the promise, he must be "in Christ." How does one get there? He is baptized (placed—immersed) there by the promised Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This was not possible until the diffusion of Christ at Pentecost. After that, any Jew or Gentile could receive the Lord via the Spirit and be born into the family of God. Christ, the Head of the spiritual family inherited God's promise to share it with all who are in Him, who are "joint-heirs" (Ro 8:17)." ([Lovett's Lights on Galatians](#))

**Inheritance** (2817)(**kleronomia** from **kleros** = lot + **némo** = give or distribute) is literally that which is distributed by lot and so refers to a portion which one receives by lot in a general distribution and then, in a more general sense means to possess oneself of, to receive as one's own, to obtain. In other words it can refer to a property already received as well as one that is expected. Although **kleronomia** is an inheritance which one receives by lot, in the NT the idea of chance associated with the lot is not found.

**POSB** on **inheritance** - The **inheritance** given to Abraham is that of righteousness (JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH), of being accepted by God and given the privilege of living forever with Him in the new heavens and earth. The **inheritance** was not given to Abraham by law, that is, Abraham could not earn, win, or merit it; but as Scripture declares: "God gave it [the inheritance] to Abraham by **promise**." The same **promise** is given to believers, that is, to all those who walk in the faith of Abraham: the **promise** of being counted righteous and acceptable to God, and of being given the privilege of living forever in the new heavens and earth. (See John 14:1-2, Galatians 3:29<sup>+</sup>, Titus 3:7<sup>+</sup>, 2 Peter 3:10-13<sup>+</sup>).

It would seem reasonable to see the inheritance as beginning with the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are justified by faith and supernaturally, eternally placed into Christ Jesus Who is Heir of everything and with Whom all believers are joint heirs throughout eternity! This is amazing grace indeed! As Paul says in Romans 8:16-17<sup>+</sup> "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if (SINCE WE ARE) children, **heirs** also, **heirs** of God and **fellow heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

Peter described the believer's eternal **inheritance** - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4 to obtain an inheritance** which is **imperishable** and **undefiled** and **will not fade away**, **reserved in heaven for you**, **5** who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5<sup>+</sup>)

**THOUGHT** (H A Ironside) - Perhaps, reader, you have been struggling for years to fit yourself for God's presence, you have been trying hard to work out a righteousness of your own, "*trying* to be a Christian." Let

me beg of you, stop *trying*, give it up! You cannot become a Christian by *trying* any more than you could become the Prince of Wales by *trying*. You are what you are by birth. You are what you are as a sinner by natural birth, and you become a child of God through second birth, through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 3:3-8). The blessing of Abraham is yours when you receive it by faith.

**John Gill on inheritance** - By the inheritance is meant, either the eternal inheritance, everlasting life and happiness in heaven, which is the gift of God through Christ, and not attained to and enforced by the works of the law; or particularly the blessing of justification, promised in the covenant to Abraham, and his spiritual seed; even to the Gentiles, and inherited by them; which is not obtained through obedience to the law of works, nor does it belong to those who seek for it by the deeds of the law, for these are not heirs of it; see Ro 4:14. For was this the case,

**Spurgeon on from the promise** - All through the book of Genesis, it is promise, promise, promise. Isaac was an heir of the promise, and Jacob was an heir of the promise. In fact, Isaac was born by promise and Ishmael, the elder brother, did not inherit the blessing because he was born after the flesh. Those who believe in Christ are heirs according to the promise. Now a promise takes us out of the region of law. God gave it to Abraham by promise. It was a free gift; He did not bestow it upon the condition of merit on Abraham's part. Isaac was born not according to the power of the flesh, but according to promise, and the whole covenant is according to free grace and divine promise. So then we know it is by promise, and God must keep His promise, and we must believe it. It must be true. And if we do believe it, we shall prove it to be true, and it will be fulfilled in every jot and tittle to every believing soul.

**Cole** writes that "Judaizers might quote Moses; Paul will quote Abraham. Let them quote law; he will quote promise. If they appeal to the centuries of tradition and the proud history of the law of Moses, he will appeal to the grander 'covenant with Abraham', older by centuries still."

## AMAZING GRACE TO ABRAHAM

**But God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise**- How was Abraham declared righteous before God? By works? Paul says of course not, it was **by means of** God's gracious **promise**. **Amplified** = "God gave it to Abraham [as a free gift solely] by virtue of His promise." God saved Abraham through a promise, not law!

**THOUGHT** ([Phil Newton](#)) - Do you find this confusing? There are many people who have missed this truth and are yet in their sins and at enmity with God. Many of them lead commendable lives. They participate in the services and labors of their local churches. They have a high degree of morality. They may even engage in detailed studies of the Bible, especially in recognizing its facts and historical concepts. But they are devoid of eternal life! They believe that they will inherit the blessings of justification because of all that they are doing "for God." Paul is saying, 'Look back at Abraham. We hold him up as a great example of how to live before God. But how did Abraham enter into righteousness before God? Was it because of all that he did in terms of God's commands? No, "God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise," as Moses wrote, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.'" It was faith in the promise of God, not a reliance upon his own works, that brought Abraham into a right relationship to God. And it is faith in God's promises in the gospel of Jesus Christ that God requires of you. Yes, after faith, as in the case with Abraham, there is a life of works honoring God. But only after faith.

**The promise** (1860) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#). The first use of **epaggelia** in NT refers to the promise of the Holy Spirit. (Lk 24:49+), but the **promise** in this context is God's immutable unchangeable covenant with Abraham (salvation, declaration of righteousness, justification by faith) which is the predecessor of the New Covenant and which is associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant.

**Lenski** - Facts are invincible. He sets down the cold fact: **'but to Abraham God has graciously granted it by means of promise'** i. e., by means of promise alone without law or works of law of any kind. He uses the [perfect tense](#) "has granted it," so that after it was thus granted it stands. Here is the staggering fact that stands forth as plain as day. Paul lets it confront the Judaizers and the Galatians who are inclined to follow them. Abraham had the inheritance of the confirmed testament by faith in the testamentary promise alone without any law or works of law, and these Judaizers are now telling the Galatians that they can have it only by obeying the Mosaic law that was given hundreds of years later. This is not even modification, it is utter cancellation of God's testament.

**Granted** (5483)([charizomai](#) from [charis](#) = grace, undeserved merit or favor) has the basic meaning of to give, to grant as a favor or to give gratuitously, generously, graciously and in kindness. It means to bestow as a gift out of grace. **Granted** is in the [perfect](#)

[tense](#) indicating God gave it to Abraham as a **free gift** at a specific time in the past (the moment he believed) and that the "grant" was still in effect, still valid and **permanent** (which underscores the truth of [eternal security](#) - it is permanent!)

**John Trapp** - freely gave it. What is more free than a gift? And what better freehold than the divine promise?

**Wuest** on **grant** (charizomai) -

This is a specialized word. It denotes not merely a gift, but a gift which is given out of the spontaneous generosity of the giver's heart, with no strings tied to it. The Greek word grace (charis) has the same root and the same meaning. Thus the word refers, not to an undertaking based upon terms of mutual agreement, but upon the free act of one who gives something, expecting no pay for it. This at once shows the difference between law and grace. If salvation were by obedience to the law, that would mean that it would be based upon a mutual agreement between God and the sinner whereby God would obligate Himself to give salvation to any sinner who would earn it by obedience to the law. But the very genius of the word **charizomai** militates against the teaching of the Judaizers, namely, that salvation is by works. There is a Greek word huposchesis which is used of an offer based upon the terms of a mutual agreement. But it is not used here. Furthermore, the verb **gave** is in the [perfect tense](#) here, which speaks of a past completed act having present results. The past act of God giving the inheritance on the basis of a promise, has present results, present to the writer. God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise 2000 B.C. The results of this act were still in existence in the century when Paul wrote. The law was given 1500 B.C., and the promise still held good after the law came and had been set aside. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) )

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**William Barclay** sums up this passage in a most descriptive way.

"Again and again Paul comes back to the same point. The whole problem of human life is to get into a right relationship with God. So long as we are afraid of God, so long as God is a grim stranger, there can be no peace in life. How can we achieve this right relationship? Shall we try to achieve it by a meticulous and even self-torturing obedience to the law, by performing endless deeds, by observing every smallest regulation the law lays down? If we take that way we are forever in default, for man's imperfection can never fully satisfy the perfection of God; we are forever frustrated, forever climbing up a hill in which the peak never comes in sight, forever under condemnation; but if we simply abandon this hopeless struggle and bring ourselves and our sin to God, then the grace of God opens its arms to us and we are at peace with a God who is no longer judge but father. Paul's whole argument is that that is what happened to Abraham; it was on that basis that God's covenant with Abraham was made. And nothing that came in later can change that covenant any more than anything can alter a will that has already been ratified and signed." (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians. "The Daily Study Bible." Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1954, p.30.)

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TODAY IN THE WORD God in his grace gave [the inheritance] to Abraham through a promise. - Galatians 3:18

Whenever a lawyer builds a defense case, he prepares arguments and counterarguments. He needs to be able to take different vantage points, to anticipate questions and formulate answers even before those questions are asked. And that's what Paul has been doing throughout his letter, preparing a very thorough defense of his apostleship and of the gospel.

The argument goes in two directions. Paul's ultimate aim is to dissuade the Galatians from believing they must be circumcised. His arguments are rooted in the Old Testament because it is from the Old Testament that the false teachers have twisted their faulty logic. There has been a fundamental misunderstanding of the promises made to Abraham and the purpose of the law. The Gentile converts in Galatia, now doubting their identity as Abraham's children and heirs of the divine promises, wanted to become circumcised to guarantee their status as members of God's family.

The first direction of this argument is from an example in everyday life. Paul asks them to consider human covenants, or contracts. Can they be dissolved or annulled? When two parties mutually agree, when the covenant is confirmed by shaking hands or signing a piece of paper, it cannot be reversed without compromising the integrity of one of the parties.

Now consider the covenant that God made with Abraham. God cannot compromise His character. What He has promised, He will do. His contract with Abraham is irreversible. Moreover, what He's promised to Abraham will come through his "seed" or offspring (cf. Gen. 12:7). Galatians clarifies that the seed to which God refers in Genesis is not in fact the children of Abraham (who are many) but Christ (who is One). Christ becomes the true heir of all the divine promises made to Abraham.

The second direction argues from the timeline. The promises were made to Abraham more than four centuries before the law was ever given to Moses. Could the law really supersede the promises if the promises were given first?

APPLY THE WORD

Our trust that God is faithful to His promises is critical to our faith. Write down the promises you find in the pages of Scriptures as you read, and prayerfully reflect on those promises. Ask God to help you believe in His faithfulness. If you're afraid, remember that He's promised to be with you. If you're uncertain, remember that He's promised wisdom. If you're broken over sin in your life, remember He's promised forgiveness.

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#### TODAY IN THE WORD Galatians 3:15-18

One stormy and extremely cold Sunday morning, a minister was on his way to church. On the road he met one of his neighbors, who, shivering miserably, said to him, "It's very chilly, sir." "Oh," replied the minister. "God is as good as His word." The other, not comprehending, asked what he meant. The minister answered: "God promised about three thousand years ago, and He still makes it good today, that 'as long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat...will never cease.'"

The minister's reply was meant as a joke, but his point is true: God always keeps His covenants and promises.

In today's reading Paul observes that when a human covenant is ratified, no one sets it aside or amends it, neither the author nor a second party (v. 15). Of course the implication is that if that is true with people, it is even more true with God. A second covenant, the law, could not set aside the promise made to Abraham (v. 17).

The Abrahamic covenant could only be fulfilled by Christ (v. 16). Only in the infinite Son of God could all the families of the earth be blessed. But Christ is viewed in this chapter as also being the head of a new family; all who receive Him by faith become sons of Abraham in a spiritual sense (Gal. 3:28-29).

A most startling and amazing truth becomes clear. The age of law was merely a parenthesis between the age of promise and the age of grace (v. 18). All of the legalistic teaching the church has endured for nearly two thousand years is entirely incompatible with the teachings of grace and the spirit of promise.

#### APPLY THE WORD

Two days ago, we suggested that you review the biblical narrative of Abraham and Sarah. If you did so, you probably found yourself held spellbound by a story filled with impossible promises, difficult journeys, angelic visitors, and obedient faith.

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#### Law and promise

- I. The law was restricted and conditional--"added because of transgression": the promise was absolute and unconditional.
  - II. The law was temporary and provisional--"until the seed should come": the promise was permanent and eternal.
  - III. The law was communicated indirectly--"by angels": the promise was directly given by God (Heb 2:2-3).
  - IV. The law was received from God through "a mediator": the promise was received by Abraham in person. (P. J. Gloag, D. D.)
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#### The inheritance of the promises

- I. The promises of God to the believer AN INEXHAUSTIBLE MINE OF WEALTH. Happy is it for him if he knows how to enrich himself with their hidden treasures.
  - II. They are AN ARMORY containing all manner of offensive and defensive weapons. Blessed is he who has learned to enter the sacred arsenal, to put on the breastplate and the helmet, and to lay his hand to the spear and the sword.
  - III. They are A SURGERY in which the believer will find all manner of restoratives and blessed elixirs; nor lacks there an ointment for every wound, a cordial for every faintness, a remedy for every disease. Blessed is he who is well skilled in heavenly pharmacy, and knoweth how to lay hold on the healing virtues of the promises of God. (C. H. Spurgeon.)
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**Life gift** - On these streets, I have seen the poor hanging on the steps of the rich, and refusing to be ordered away; to move pity, laying bare their sores; and holding out their skinny hands to implore men's charity. But whoever saw the rich following the poor, with a hand filled with gold; pressing money on their acceptance; stopping them; entreating, beseeching, imploring them to take it? Yet thus, to the amazement both of angels and devils, God does with you, in offering His Son; and through Him, the gift of eternal life. (Dr. Guthrie.)

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**Salvation all of grace** - Mr. McLaren and Mr. Gustart were ministers of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh. When Mr. McLaren was dying, Mr. Gustart paid him a visit, and put the question to him, "What are you doing, brother?" His answer was, "Doing! I'll tell you what I am doing, brother. I am gathering together all my prayers, all my sermons, all my good deeds, all my evil deeds; and I am

going to throw them all overboard, and swim to glory on the plank of free grace.” (E. Foster.)

**Galatians 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of (for the sake of defining) transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.**

Greek - Τι ουν ο νομος τον παραβασιν προσηθη (3SAPI) χρις ου ελθε (3SAAS) το σπέρμα ο εγγελλται διαταγεις (APPMSN) δι αγγελων εν χειρι μεσιτου

Amplified: What then was the purpose of the Law? It was added [later on, after the promise, to disclose and expose to men their guilt] because of transgressions and [to make men more conscious of the sinfulness] of sin; and it was intended to be in effect until the Seed (the Descendant, the Heir) should come, to and concerning Whom the promise had been made. And it [the Law] was arranged and ordained and appointed through the instrumentality of angels [and was given] by the hand (in the person) of a go-between [Moses, an intermediary person between God and man].

Amplified (2015) Why, then, the Law [what was its purpose]? It was added [after the promise to Abraham, to reveal to people their guilt] because of transgressions [that is, to make people conscious of the sinfulness of sin], and [the Law] was ordained through angels *and* delivered to Israel by the hand of a mediator [Moses, the mediator between God and Israel, to be in effect] until the Seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Phillips Where then lies the point of the Law? It was an addition made to underline the existence and extent of sin until the arrival of the "seed" to whom the promise referred. The Law was inaugurated in the presence of angels and by the hand of a human intermediary.

Wuest What is then the significance of the law? For the sake of transgressions it was added, until there should come the Seed to whom the promise was made, having been promulgated by angels through the instrumentality of the hand of a mediator. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:19 Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions, until the arrival of the descendant to whom the promise had been made. It was administered through angels by an intermediary.

GNT Galatians 3:19 Το νόμος; τὴν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, ἕως ἃς ἐλθῆ τὸ σπέρμα πγγελλται, διαταγέσθι γγλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσ του.

NLT Galatians 3:19 Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised. God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people.

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

ESV Galatians 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

ASV Galatians 3:19 What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator.

CSB Galatians 3:19 Why then was the law given? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. The law was put into effect through angels by means of a mediator.

NIV Galatians 3:19 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:19 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

NRS Galatians 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator.

YLT Galatians 3:19 Why, then, the law? on account of the transgressions it was added, till the seed might come to which the promise hath been made, having been set in order through messengers in the hand of a

mediator --

NAB Galatians 3:19 Why, then, the law? It was added for transgressions, until the descendant came to whom the promise had been made; it was promulgated by angels at the hand of a mediator.

NJB Galatians 3:19 Then what is the purpose of the Law? It was added to deal with crimes until the 'progeny' to whom the promise had been made should come; and it was promulgated through angels, by the agency of an intermediary.

GWN Galatians 3:19 What, then, is the purpose of the laws given to Moses? They were added to identify what wrongdoing is. Moses' laws did this until the descendant to whom the promise was given came. "to Abraham came." "> It was put into effect through angels, using a mediator.

BBE Galatians 3:19 What then is the law? It was an addition made because of sin, till the coming of the seed to whom the undertaking had been given; and it was ordered through angels by the hand of a go-between.

- **Why the Law then?** - Ro 3:1,2 7:7-13
- **It was added because of** (for the sake of defining) **transgressions:** Ga 3:21-24 De 4:8,9 Ps 147:19,20 Lu 16:31 Joh 5:45-47 15:22 Ro 2:13 Ro 3:19,20 4:15 5:20,21 7:7-13 1Ti 1:8,9
- **until the seed would come:** Ga 3:16,25 Gal 4:1-4
- **by angels:** De 33:2 Ac 7:53 Heb 2:2,5
- **by the agency of a mediator:** Ex 20:19-22 24:1-12 34:27-35 Lev 15:32 De 5:5,22-33 De 9:13-20,25-29 18:15-19 Ps 106:23 Jn 1:17 Ac 7:38
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:19-29 Christian Freedom: The Logic of Law \(38 minutes\) - Mp3](#) - Warren Wiersbe
- [Galatians 3:19: The Uses of the Law](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc



Law Shows Our Sin

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW?

**Why the Law then?** - Paul knew they would ask, so he preempts their question with his own question. In other words Paul is simply asking "*What then was the purpose of the Law?*" (Amplified) If salvation was through faith even for Abraham, why did God bring in the Law 430 years later? What was the purpose of the Law? He is going to proceed to show that the law was not given to save the sinner, but to condemn the sinner, so that he might realize his need for the grace of God.

As **Oliver Greene** says "The Law cannot save, the Law cannot sanctify, the Law cannot redeem. The Law cannot make man better. All the Law could do was to show man how exceeding sinful he was, and how hopeless he stood before GOD without the grace of GOD. Paul preached to the Galatians that the Law could neither justify, sanctify, nor satisfy the sinner." ([The Abrahamic and the Mosaic Covenants - Galatians 3:15-29](#))

**Bruce Barton** - Paul made four distinct observations about the law:

1. The law could not give the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:1-5).
2. The law could not give righteousness (Gal 3:6-9).
3. The law could not justify; it could only condemn (Gal 3:10-12).
4. The law could not change the fact that righteousness always comes by faith in God's promises (Gal 3:15-18). (Life Application

**John Trapp** on **because of transgressions** - Which are discovered by the law. **Sight of misery** must go before **sense of mercy**. *Lex, lux*, the law is a light (saith Solomon), which lays all open, as 1Co 14:25, and threateneth destruction to transgressors.

**It was added because of** (for the sake of defining) **transgressions** - Paul answers his own question about "What is the purpose of the Law?" Note that the word **added** clearly implies that something preceded the Law. To what was the Law **added**? In context, the Law was **added** to the Promise of God (given to Abraham). The **Amplified Version** (combining classic and revised versions) says the LAW "was **added** [later on, after the promise to Abraham, to disclose and expose to men their guilt, to reveal to people their guilt - {THUS THE HAND MIRROR ABOVE}] because of transgressions and of sin [that is, to make people conscious of the sinfulness of sin]." So **the Law** came in a sense to enable sinners to see they were in fact committing sins. **The Law** was like a mirror sinful men could hold up and see themselves for what they really were in the eyes of the Holy God -- **rank** sinners! But the **Law** could not "wash" them clean!

**Added** (4369)(**prostithemi**) means adding to something that is already present. Vine explains the meaning in this context - "the use of the same English word here and in Galatians 3:15 does not involve any contradiction, for the Greek word there used conveys the idea of supplementing an agreement already made. Here the word is *prostithēmi* = "placed beside," the meaning of which may be seen in its use in such passages as Acts 2:41+; Acts 13:36+ (= "was laid among his fathers"); the apostle does not use it elsewhere in his Epistles. Hence the meaning here is not that something had been added to the **promise** by way of completing it, as in Galatians 3:15, but **that something had been given as well as the promise**, cp. "the law came in beside (*pareiserchomai*)," Romans 5:20ASV±." (Collected Writings of W. E. Vine)

**Greene** - If the Law was **added**, just when did the Law have its beginning? The answer is found in John 1:17: "FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN BY MOSES, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Could anything be more plainly stated? Could anything be more understandable? The Law - ALL of the Law - was given to a specific people at a specific time. The Law was given to Israel, delivered by Moses exactly as he received it from Almighty GOD on Mount Sinai....The bad news of the Law was **added** to the good news of GOD's grace. In other words, it was placed alongside GOD's grace to show the sinner how exceeding sinful sin is. The Law did not take the place of the grace of GOD - and it was not given to be mixed with grace. It was not intended to supplement the grace of GOD. It was added (or, as the Greek states, it was "placed alongside" GOD's grace). Therefore the Law was added (or placed alongside the Gospel of grace) to reveal to the sinner his true character, and his great need of the grace of GOD. (Ibid)"

**Because of** (5484)(**charin** is the accusative of **charis** = grace, favor) is used as a preposition with the genitive (as in Gal 3:19), usually coming after the word it governs ("added" in Gal 3:19) and conveys the meaning for the sake of, on behalf of, for the pleasure of, on account of, by reason of ("reason" in 1 Jn 3:12). **W E Vine** says that **charin** has "two distinct meanings, (1) "on account of," pointing to the ground on which something is done, as in Ephesians 3:1, 14, see also Luke 7:47; 1 John 3:12; in these cases it is retrospective, it points back. But (2) it may also be prospective, pointing forward, as in 1 Ti 5:14; Titus 1:5, 11; Jude 1:16, and here in Gal 3:19; in these passages the purpose with which something is done is intended. 1 Ti 5:14 is probably the closest parallel to the present passage, "give none occasion to the adversary for reviling," i.e., "do nothing to provoke the adversary to speak evil of the Lord." Accordingly the words may be paraphrased "**the law was added in order to provoke transgressions**" (Collected Writings of W. E. Vine)

**Homer Kent** - The translation "**because of**" renders a Greek word (**charin**) which may denote either cause or purpose. If the former is the intention, Paul's meaning was that the law was given because man's sinfulness was so great. The law was to act as a restraint on him. It is more consistent with Paul's thought elsewhere, however, to regard **charin** as indicating purpose here, so that the meaning is: law came in order that sin might take on the character of actual transgression of clearly indicated standards. Unless there is a revealed law, sin is sinful but it is not transgression (Ro 4:15). This understanding fits well with Paul's emphasis in this passage, for he was engaged in showing that the law did not make men righteous but served to condemn them (Gal 3:22).

**Charin** - 8x - Lk. 7:47; Gal. 3:19; Eph. 3:1; Eph. 3:14; Tit. 1:5; Tit. 1:11; 1 Jn. 3:12; Jude 1:16. In the Septuagint - 2 Chr 7:21, Da 2:13.

A sight of misery must go before a sense of mercy.

*Lex, lux*, "the law is a light"

and shows us our need of a mediator.

--John Trapp

In the passage below James explains that unsaved men's basic problem is that each one thinks that they are intrinsically "a good person" (How many times have you heard people say this and you just want to say to them "But I know you! I know some of the vile

things you have said and done! You are so deceived to call yourself a "good person"! James says in essence the LAW is for everyone who thinks "I am a good person." (which describes all of us before we came to faith in Christ!)....

If anyone is a hearer of the word (THE LAW) and not a doer (OBEYS THE LAW ONLY WHICH IS ONLY POSSIBLE BY DEPENDING ON THE INDWELLING SPIRIT), he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a [mirror](#) (WHICH CLEARLY SHOWS HE IS A "BAD" PERSON WHEN COMPARED TO THE GOOD GOD!); 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, **he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was** (HE FORGETS THAT HE IS NOT A "GOOD PERSON" BUT IS A WRETCHED SINNER BEFORE THE HOLY GOD). 25 But one who looks intently at THE PERFECT LAW, the law of liberty (OF FREEDOM BECAUSE THE LAW LEADS US TO SEE OUR TRUE NATURE AND OUR GREAT NEED FOR A SAVIOR), and abides by it (POSSIBLE ONLY FOR BELIEVERS WHO ARE ENABLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT), not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer (HE OBEYS THE LAW BECAUSE HE HAS THE SUPERNATURAL POWER FROM THE SPIRIT TO OBEY), this man will be blessed in what he does (SPIRIT ENABLED OBEDIENCE ALWAYS BRINGS SPIRITUAL BLESSING!). (James 1:23-25NAS<sub>+</sub>)

**Read it again in a different version** - If anyone only listens to the word ["and is not a doer"] without obeying it, he is like a man who looks very carefully at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he immediately forgets ["what sort of person he was"] what he looked like. 25 But he who looks carefully into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and faithfully abides by it, not having become a [careless] listener who forgets but ["a doer of work"] an active doer [who obeys], he will be blessed and favored by God in what he does [in his life of obedience]. (James 1:23-25 Amplified 2015)

And so James would say **the purpose of the LAW** is to function like a [MIRROR](#) OF OUR SOUL, a mirror which a man or woman looks at and clearly sees their reflection (their soul, who they really are inside, how unholy they are compared to a Holy God). That reflection does not show a good, kind, sinless person who loves God, but a selfish, self-centered, sinner who hates God and has been in continual rebellion against him from the day of his or her birth (cp Ps 51:5<sub>+</sub>! That is the picture that the "[MIRROR](#)" OF THE LAW gives of EVERY PERSON ever born, the exception of course being our sinless Savior, Messiah Jesus.

And so the **LAW** was added to the promise given to Abraham to show sin to be exceedingly sinful, that is, to make sin come alive to sinners! In a parallel passage in Romans Paul gives a similar explanation regarding the purpose of the LAW

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, if it had not been for the Law, I would not have recognized sin (**Ed:** Or understood what it really was in God's eyes). For I would not have known [for example] about coveting [what belongs to another, and would have had no sense of guilt {**Ed:** I would have had no consciousness that I was guilty and deserving of death before the Holy God}] if the Law had not [repeatedly] said, "You shall not covet (**Ed:** See [English definition of covet](#))." 8 But sin (**Ed:** ["The Sin" principle](#) inherited from Adam - Ro 5:12-[note](#)), finding an opportunity (**Ed:** A "[beachhead](#)" so to speak - [See Greek definiton](#)) through the commandment [to express itself] produced in me every kind of coveting and selfish desire. For **without the Law sin is dead** [the recognition of sin is inactive]. 9 I was once alive without **[knowledge of] the Law**; but when the **commandment came [and I understood its meaning]**, sin became alive and I died [**since the Law sentenced me to death**].10 And the **very commandment** which was intended to bring life, actually proved to bring death for me. 11 For sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, beguiled and completely deceived me, and [Lit *through it killed me.*] using it as a weapon killed me [separating me from God]. 12 So then, **the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** (Ro 7:7-12<sub>+</sub> Amplified 2015). (Note: My additions are identified with "**Ed:**")

So dearly beloved, may the Spirit of God grant us grace to "nail this truth down," to understand beyond a shadow of a doubt that one of the main purposes of God's Law is to show sinners that they are in fact sinners! By way of application, if you understand this truth, you can also see how foolish and futile it is to try to please God or merit His favor by attempting to keep the LAW in your own fleshly power rather than relying wholly on the Holy Spirit and His dispensing of grace (cp Gal 3:3<sub>+</sub>). Law and grace are polar opposites, just as are works and faith. The writer of Hebrews is quite clear that "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6<sub>+</sub>) So let us clearly understand Paul's simple purpose of the Law in this passage - to show us that we are lawless. When we grasp this truth of who we were in Adam, we begin to grasp the "amazing" in God's amazing grace. And it makes us want to worship Him! Hallelujah!

**John Stott** wrote "**The function of the law was not to bestow salvation, however, but to convince men of their need of it.** To quote Andrew Jukes, 'Satan would have us to prove ourselves holy by the law, which God gave to prove us sinners.'....He elaborates this in his Epistle to the Romans: 'through the law comes knowledge of sin' (Ro 3:20<sub>+</sub>); 'where there is no law there is no transgression' (Ro 4:15<sub>+</sub>); and 'if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin' (Ro 7:7<sub>+</sub>). **So the law's main work was to expose sin.** It is the law which turns 'sin' into 'transgression', showing it up for what it is, a breach of the holy law of God. 'It was

added to make wrongdoing a legal offence' (Gal 3:19, NEB). It was intended to make plain the sinfulness of sin as a revolt against the will and authority of God. And it was added till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made (verse 19). Thus, the law looked on to Christ, Abraham's seed, as the Person through Whom transgression would be forgiven. ([The Message of Galatians](#))(Bold added)

**Spurgeon on Why then the law** - The apostle, by a highly ingenious and powerful argument, had proved that the law was never intended by God for the justification and salvation of man. Some might argue that since the law cannot justify, it is useless. The apostle might have replied to his opponent with a sneer. He must have said to him, "Is a thing utterly useless because it is not intended for every purpose in the world? Will you say that, because iron cannot be eaten, therefore iron is not useful? And because gold cannot be food, will you cast it away and call it worthless? You foolishly suppose God's **LAW** is good for nothing and can be of no value." On the contrary, it serves a very definite purpose, as Paul goes on to show. **The LAW was given to discover and lay bare our sin to us. Under the hand of the Holy Spirit, it makes us see the evil of sin (Jn 16:7-9)**. We might not have perceived sin to be sin if it had not been for the command of God not to commit it. But when the commandment comes, then we recognize sin and the evil of it. (Spurgeon quotes John Trapp now stating that) "A sight of misery must go before a sense of mercy. Lex, lux, "the law is a light," and shows us our need of a Mediator." (Bold added)

**Spurgeon** adds "The law had its uses, blessed uses. The law should be used for its own purposes, and then it is admirable, it is divine. Take it out of its own proper use, make it a master instead of being a servant, and it is something like fire, which in your grate will comfort you, but if it masters you, it burns your house and destroys you."

**John Calvin** - "The [role] of the law is to show us the disease in such a way that it shows us no hope of cure; whereas the [role] of the gospel is to bring a remedy to those who are past hope."

**W H Griffith-Thomas** comments that the "LAW came in as a sort of parenthesis, not as the original, or final purpose of God. It came in alongside of sin, between that and grace; to convince of sin and at the same time as a consequence, that transgressions might be multiplied (Gal. 3:19). Yet God, Who is the Author of law, is not responsible for the increase of sin. The law does not compel, but only impels to sin; it does not create, it only calls it forth (See Ro 7:5+)...Sin lies dormant in the heart until LAW comes, and then SIN is seen in actual transgression. The LAW by prescribing what is required gives rise to great occasions of offense on the part of sinful man." (Romans - A Devotional Commentary)

**MacArthur:** The New English Bible, which very often has good translations (not always, but often), says this, **To make wrongdoing a legal offense.** The law was given to make wrongdoing a legal offense. Was there sin before the law was given? Of course; there has always been sin. But "The law was not to show man that he was a sinner, he knew that. The law was to show man that he was not just a sinner, but he was willfully breaking the standards of Almighty God and that sin was rebellion against the holiness of God." See the difference? He knew he was a sinner. What would tell him that? **Conscience. What he needed to know was that such sinning was in absolute violation of the very law of Almighty God.** In other words, he needed to see himself, not just as a bad guy, but as someone who was standing before the bar of a holy God as guilty for his sin and doomed to judgment. That's why the law was given - because of the transgression. It let man know that he was crossing over, transgressing. He was violating God's laws; he was disobedient to the standards. **The law was given, then, to bring about in my heart and the hearts of all men, an awakened sense of guilt before God as judge.** If you'll look at the law, you will see this. The prohibitions, for example, of the Ten Commandments reveal their own purpose. They were given by God in order that men might know that these things violated God, and that men might know that God was a Judge, and if they violated God, they would sit under judgment. God gave the Ten Commandments in order to repress the worship of false gods, to repress idolatry, blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, murder, theft, adultery, false witnessing, covetousness. God gave the Ten Commandments to suppress those things. How? By showing men that when they did those things, they were putting themselves under the judgment of a holy God. Romans 3:20+. "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." The law came to reveal to man that he lived in violation of God's standards. Romans 5:20+. "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." In other words, that sin might become all the more sinful to men when they saw that it was in violation of an absolutely holy God Who was Judge. ([God's Promise: Why the Law?](#))

**Hendriksen:** "If the law given at Sinai was unable to impart righteousness, then what possible good could it do? Of what use was it? ... it was given to man in addition to the promise (TO ABRAHAM) in order to bring about within his heart and mind an awakened sense of guilt. A vague awareness of the fact that all is not right with him will not drive him to the Savior. Only when he realizes that his sins are transgressions of the law of that God Who is also his Judge and whose holiness cannot brook such digressions, such constant stepping aside from the appointed path, will he, when this knowledge is applied to his heart by the Holy Spirit, cry out for deliverance." ([Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon](#))

**Constable** notes that "There have been **four primary interpretations of what "because of transgressions"** means. **First**, some

take it to mean "to restrain transgressions." This seems legitimate since all law has a restraining effect. **Second**, some understand the phrase to mean "to reveal transgressions." This seems valid in view of other statements that Paul made (cf. Rom 3:20; 4:15; 5:13). **Third**, it may mean "to provoke transgressions." This, too, seems legitimate. A "Do not touch. Wet paint!" sign on a bench tempts people to touch the bench to see if the paint really is wet. **Fourth**, some have understood that Paul meant "to awaken a conviction of transgressions." This seems less likely in this context since Paul showed more concern with the objective facts of salvation history than he did with the subjective development of faith in the individual." ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**David Guzik** adds that part of the reason the law was given was to restrain the transgression of men through clearly revealing God's holy standard. God had to give us His standard so we would not destroy ourselves before the Messiah came. But the law is also added because of transgressions in another way; the law also excites man's innate rebellion through revealing a standard, showing us more clearly our need for salvation in Jesus (Romans 7:5-8+).

**ILLUSTRATIONS** OF PROVOKING EFFECT OF THE LAW - In Galveston, Texas, a hotel on the shore of the Gulf of Mexico put this notice in each room - "No Fishing From the Balcony" Yet every day, hotel guests threw in their lines to the waters below. Then the management decided to take down the signs--and the fishing stopped! The Law shows sin and stimulates sin!

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Did the Prohibition Act stop drinking? No, in many ways it made drinking more attractive to people. Once God draws a boundary for us, we are immediately enticed to cross that boundary - which is no fault of God or His boundary, but of our sinful hearts.

**Transgressions** (3847) ([parabasis](#) from **para** = beyond, aside + **baino** = step) means to step on one side and thus is primarily a going aside, a stepping across a line, an overstepping or stepping over and always implies a [breach](#) of law and especially of the Law of Moses. It refers to the act of a person stepping beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory. The point is that the **law** draws the line that should not be crossed or "stepped over". Where there is no law, people do not deliberately disobey God but they still disobey in ignorance. **Vine** adds "it is always used of a [breach](#) of law, Romans 4:15, and particularly of the Mosaic Law, Ro 2:23; Heb 2:2; Heb 9:15, but also of the prohibition in Eden, Ro 5:14; 1 Ti 2:14."

To repeat a statement made by **Stott** above "It is the law which turns 'sin' into **transgression**', showing it up for what it is, a [breach](#) of the holy law of God."

**Having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator:** - **Agency of** is literally "in hand" idiomatically "by the hand of" or "by the agency of." (e.g., Septuagint of Lev 26:46 = "by the hand of" or "agency of" Moses) The Law "was ordained (ED: commanded, administered) through angels *and* delivered to Israel by the hand of a **mediator** [Moses, the mediator between God and Israel, to be in effect]" (Amplified) Moses describes himself as a **mediator** in Deuteronomy declaring

"The LORD spoke to you (ISRAEL) face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, while **I was standing between** the LORD and you (ISRAEL) at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. (Deuteronomy 5:4-5)

Some commentaries say it was **not Moses** who was the **Mediator** but that the angels were the "go between" for Moses when he received the Law from God. The **NET Note** agrees in part writing "Many modern translations (NASB, NIV, NRSV) render this word, *mesites*; here and in Gal 3:20) as "**mediator**," but this conveys a wrong impression in contemporary English. If this is referring to Moses, he certainly did not "mediate" between God and Israel but was an intermediary on God's behalf. Moses was not a mediator, for example, who worked for compromise between opposing parties. He instead was God's representative to his people who enabled them to have a relationship, but entirely on God's terms."

So in some way God's angels were involved in the giving of the Law. Since several Old Testament passages alluded to the angelic role in giving the Law, this passage would speak especially to those who had a Jewish background (and were more likely to be trying to perfect their flesh by keeping the Law rather than by faith and the Spirit - Gal 3:2-3+).

Acts 7:53+ you who received **the law as ordained by angels**, and yet did not keep it.

This was not a new idea made up by Paul; it was already a Jewish belief. Although it is not mentioned in Exodus, Jews believed that the Ten Commandments had been given to Moses by angels.

Hebrews 2:2+ For if **the word spoken through angels proved unalterable**, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

**Gene Getz** - Informed Jews knew that thousands upon thousands of angels accompanied the Lord in revealing the old covenant at Mount Sinai (Dt 33:2; Ps 68:17; cp. Gal 3:19). To complicate the theological situation, Jewish scribes added substantially to what the Holy Spirit had revealed about angels in the Old

Testament. Consequently, the author of Hebrews addressed an audience that had an Old Testament perspective distorted by false teaching. In response, the author skillfully wove together seven Old Testament references to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is far superior to angels—in fact, He is God's Son and angels worship Him. Though many Jews struggled with this truth, in light of the complete New Testament revelation we know the great reality that Jesus Christ is the eternal God (Heb 1:8; Jn 1:5-14). (Life Essentials)

Psalms 68:17 The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness.

**Herbert Lockyer** - Great numbers of angels attended the divine Majesty on Mount Sinai in the giving forth of His law (Deuteronomy 32:2; Psalm 68:17). (All the Angels of the Bible)

Dt 33:2 He said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of **ten thousand holy ones** ([Septuagint - Lxx](#) translates "holy ones" as "[aggelos](#)" in the plural = **angels**); At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.

**MacArthur on holy ones** - Probably a reference to the angels who assisted God when the law was mediated to Moses at Mt. Sinai (see Ac 7:53+; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2+). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Henry Morris** - The "holy ones" with God at Mount Sinai were holy angels, all intensely interested in the developing plan of God, especially at this critical point in redemptive history. Note 1 Peter 1:12; Exodus 19:19; Psalm 68:17. (Defender's Study Bible)

**Henry Morris** has an interesting comment: "The account of the giving of the law through Moses on Mt Sinai (Ex 19:9-25) makes no mention of angels, although it does record the prolonged sounding of a trumpet. Apparently a mighty host of angels was present. [Dt 33:2] mentions "ten thousands of saints" as "the LORD came from Sinai" (Ps 68:17 Acts 7:53+)."

**John Trapp on ordained through angels** - Therefore it is not to be disrespected, though we cannot attain eternal life by it.

**Ordained** (1299)([diatasso](#) from **dia** = through + **tasso** = order) means literally to arrange thoroughly, to give besides, to hand over, to arrange in its proper order, to issue orderly and detailed instructions as to what must be done. To institute, prescribe, to appoint, to set in order (Titus 1:5+), ordain (1 Cor 7:17 regarding marital conditions); to give directions (Acts 7:44-God directed Moses to make the Tabernacle according to pattern), to command (with the implication of setting in order) as did Emperor Claudius' "commanding" that Jews must leave Rome (Acts 18:2, cp Lk 3:13). Moulton and Milligan add that diatasso was a technical term used in connection with wills, as well as a general word for commanding.

**Angels** (32)([aggelos/angelos](#) [*gg* in Greek is pronounced *ng*] possibly from **ago** = to bring) literally means a messenger (one who bears a message - Lk 1:11+, Lk 2:9+, etc or does an errand). Most of the NT uses refer to heavenly angels (messengers) who are supernatural, transcendent beings with power to carry out various tasks. All uses of **aggelos** that refer to angels are masculine gender (the feminine form of *aggelos* does not occur.)

**Mediator** (3316)([mesites](#) from **mésos** = middle, in midst) is one who stands in the middle between two people and brings them together. It is basically a neutral and trusted person in middle (**mesos**), a so called "middle Man" (arbitrator). It is one who works to remove disagreement and thus serves as a go-between or reconciler. All NT uses except the Galatians passages refer to Christ Jesus as the Mediator we need - Gal. 3:19; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 9:15; Heb. 12:24

**Oliver Greene** on God's dealing with sinful men in grace - Not even Israel knew anything about Law until GOD dictated the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. From Adam to Moses - a period of more than two thousand years - there were no Ten Commandments. "For until the Law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no Law" (Romans 5:13+). Man knew nothing of the written Law of GOD until GOD gave that Law to Moses on the Mount; but before the Law came, the grace of GOD was displayed for more than two thousand years. Adam lived under the grace of GOD for certainly GOD showed unmerited favor toward Adam in the Garden of Eden. Noah lived in a generation of wicked men but he found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Ge 6:8KJV, cf Hebrews 11:7+). Abraham lived under the grace of GOD for he believed GOD, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. GOD dealt in grace two thousand years before the Law of Moses, and GOD dealt in grace during the time of the Law of Moses. He is still dealing in grace. (Ibid)

**Until** = an [expression of time](#) = **UNTIL** means happening or done up to a particular point in time, and then stopping. Stated another way the conjunction UNTIL indicates that a change would take place, the coming of the Seed which is Christ. Don't misunderstand. The Law is not revoked when Jesus came. Recall what He said in his famous sermon - "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish but to fulfill!**" (Mt 5:17+) When Christ came and died, the Veil of the Temple was torn, which marked a dramatic change in the way one approached God. It was no longer though the Law and the human high priests, but

now it was through Christ our Great High Priest.

Therefore, brethren (FELLOW BELIEVERS), since we have confidence (BOLDNESS) to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by **a new and living way** which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a Great Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.(Hebrews 10:19-23+)

**The Seed would come to Whom the promise had been made** - The **Seed** refers to the Messiah, Jesus as explained in Galatians 3:16 for "the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed." When Jesus came, He fulfilled the Law (Mt 5:17+, Ro 10:4+). Why go back up under the Law? The Law was intended to be in effect **UNTIL** the **Seed** (the Descendant, the Heir) should come and concerning Whom the **promise** had been made.

At Mt Sinai, the **LAW** was given through two intermediaries, the angels and Moses. The people stood afar off. **Grace** says, "Come nigh," **Law** says, "Stand off." The object of showing how the **LAW** was given, was to indicate the inferior and subordinate position of the **LAW** in comparison to the superior position held by **grace**. The promise was given directly to Abraham, but the **LAW** through two intermediaries, angels and Moses. Paul shows that the **LAW** does not, as the Judaizers claim, have as direct and positive relation to the divine plan of salvation as does the **PROMISE**. He also shows that it is only of transitory significance, whereas the **PROMISE** has an eternal value and meaning.

### **Paul Apple - The Law was Necessary but clearly Inferior to the Promises**

**1. (Gal 3:19a) The Law was Necessary** Because of Sin "It was added because of transgressions" Again, the emphasis on the law having been "added" after the Promises.

**2. (Gal 3:19b-20) The Law was Clearly Inferior to God's Promises -**

**a. Proven by the nature of mediation** - "having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator" mediated through angels and Moses rather than directly given by God as the promises were to Abraham

**b. Proven by the intended duration** -- Only Temporary "until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made"

**c. Proven by the need for a mediator** - "Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one." (Gal 3:20) ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Seed** ([04690](#)) see note above on [sperma](#)

**The promise** ([1860](#)) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#)

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**OUTLAWS** - Christ has set us free, but as we attempt to live by faith, we are still in danger of falling into certain traps. Wanting the security of being able to earn our salvation, we add human traditions, standards, and rules to our faith. We slip back into performing a certain way, serving, or doing good works as if we need to impress God or earn his approval. And wanting to feel good, we let ourselves be directed by our ever-changing emotions. The security trap makes us prisoners just as surely as the law had held us in its grip. The emotional trap can result in our becoming "outlaws," deciding for ourselves what is right and wrong. Either way, we rob ourselves of the true joy and security we share with all who have accepted God's promise of salvation by faith alone. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Galatians)

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**Scofield - The answer to this question "Why the Law then?"** (This list includes the reasons Paul mentions in the following verses)

(1) The law was added because of transgressions, i.e. to give to sin the character of transgression = to make sins known and to restrain them.

(a) Men had been sinning before Moses but, in the absence of law, their sins were not put to their account (Ro 5:13); the law gave to sin the character of transgression, i.e. of personal guilt.

(b) Furthermore, since men not only continued to sin after the law was given, but were provoked to transgress by the very law which forbade it (Ro 7:8), the law conclusively proved the inveterate sinfulness of man's nature (Ro 7:11-13).

(2) The law, therefore, "declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin" (cp. Ro 3:19,20,23).

(3) The law was an <ad interim> dealing, "until the Seed . . . had come" (Gal 3:19).

(4) The law shut sinful man up to faith as the only avenue of escape (Gal 3:23).

(5) The law was to the Jews what the child discipliner (paidagogos) was in a Greek household, a custodian of children in their minority, and it had this character to or "until" Christ (Gal 3:23-25; 4:1-2).

(6) Christ having come, the believer is no longer under the child-discipliner (i.e. the law, v25), but has become a disciple (i.e. learner) of Christ Himself (Mt 11:29; Lu 10:39; Jn 17:6-8; Titus 2:11-13).

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## **GALATIANS 3:19-29 THE MIRROR, FLASHLIGHT AND PLUMBLINE**

- Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24).

The law has never saved anyone, and it never will. God did not give it to redeem us from sin but to show us our need of salvation. That's why the apostle Paul called it "our tutor." In an unforgettable sermon, evangelist Fred Brown used three images to describe the purpose of the law.

First, he likened it to the small mirror dentists use. With the mirror they can detect cavities. But they can't drill with it or use it to pull teeth. The mirror reveals the decayed area or other abnormality, but it can't fix the problem. Brown then drew another analogy. He said that the law is also like a flashlight. If the lights go out at night, you use it to guide you down the darkened basement stairs to the electrical box. When you point it toward the fuses, it helps you see the one that is burned out. But after you've removed the bad fuse, you don't insert the flashlight in its place. You put in a new fuse to restore the electricity. In his third image, Brown likened the law to a plumbline. Builders check their work by using a weighted string. If this plumbline reveals that the work is not true to the vertical, the plumbline cannot correct it. The builder must get out a hammer and saw.

Like the mirror, flashlight, and plumbline, the law points out the problem—sin, but it doesn't provide a solution. The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the law. Only He can save. —D. C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**The law shows us a need that only grace can fill.**

**Haddon Robinson** uses the same illustration of the 3 symbols and then adds this comment:

The apostle Paul said, "We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8). The law of God reveals the problem of sin, but it doesn't provide a solution. The answer is found in Jesus Christ. He bore our guilt on the cross and now offers us new life. When we put our faith in Him as our personal Savior, He forgives us and enables us to live by His strength in ways that please Him. What the law can't do, Christ can. Have you asked Him to be your Savior?

For Further Study

1. What does Galatians 3 say about our relationship to the law? (Gal 3:11-14,24-25).
2. What can we learn about the law in Romans 8:1-4?

**God's law pinpoints our problem**

**God's grace provides the solution.**

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## **Galatians 3:19-22 TODAY IN THE WORD**

In 1838 the British government sent word to Jamaica that slavery was at an end and that therefore those who were slaves were now free. On that night of emancipation, a mahogany coffin was made. Former slaves filled the coffin with whips, branding irons, coarse clothing, handcuffs, and other tools and symbols used during their years of bondage.

The coffin lid was bolted shut and at midnight the coffin was lowered into a grave, dug especially for the occasion. Then the thousands gathered celebrated their new freedom by singing the doxology!

Once released, people who have known slavery would never willingly surrender their freedom. Instead, they move forward joyfully to a new way of life. This is the very point Paul is trying to make to the Galatians. ""You have been set free from the law's condemnation,"" he tells them, ""so start acting like it!""

If the law is not in force for the believer now that Christ has come, what good was it? What function did it serve? The answer is that the law was given until the Seed should come and that it was therefore only preparatory, ending with the coming of Christ (v. 19).

If law is inferior to promise, is there opposition between these two divine arrangements? Paul says, ""Perish the thought."" The law is all right as far as it goes, but it really could not compete with the promise because it could not give life.

The function of the law was to convict transgressors. The picture in verse 22 is variously painted by translators as ""shut up like a fish enclosed in a net,"" ""enclosed entirely by barriers,"" and ""shut up on every side as in a prison."" Everything pertaining to men--thoughts, words, and deeds--is all locked up and thus doomed under sin.

**APPLY THE WORD** We've nearly reached the halfway point of our study of Galatians. We hope you are enjoying and learning from this meaty book!

We suggest today that you sit back and reorient yourself to the ""big picture"" of Paul's epistle. (If you're working today on the tax forms that are due tomorrow, you could do one of these activities as a break!)

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**Don Fortner on Galatians 3:19**- The law of God is holy and just and good. But it becomes a very great evil when it is perverted and used for something other than its divine purpose. Now Paul tells us what the design and purpose of God's law is. It was never intended by God to be a means of justification or sanctification, a motive for Christian service, a rule of life for believers, or a code of moral ethics. The law of God has but one singular purpose. It exposes man's guilt and sin before God, shutting him up to faith in Christ alone for salvation. 'It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.' 'The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.' (Gal 3:24) To use the law for any other purpose is to pervert and abuse the law. Once a man comes to Christ by faith, the law has no more claim upon him and no longer has dominion over him. The law was not made for a righteous man. The language of Holy Scripture in this matter could not be clearer or more emphatic. 'After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.' 'We are not under the law, but under grace.' (Ro 6:14) 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' (Ro 10:4KJV) 'Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' (Ro 7:4KJV) We who are free dare not entangle ourselves again with the yoke of bondage. (Gal 5:1) Our freedom has been purchased at too high a price, the precious blood of Christ. We have a higher, better, more effectual motive for our obedience, service and devotion than the law given by Moses. 'The love of Christ [constraineth us!](#)' (2 Cor 5:14KJV) **When true love reigns in the heart there is no need for law. Love for Christ causes us to love one another. This love makes God's elect patient, kind, honest, generous and faithful. And this love is the fulfillment of the law.** (Gal 5:14)

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**Dwight L. Moody** said: The law is a good looking glass (mirror) in which to show a child how defiled his face is. But who would think of washing the child's face with the looking glass?

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**DeHaan:** The law can't justify, it can't sanctify, it can't satisfy

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**Our Daily Bread** - In his Confessions, Augustine (354-430), the well-known theologian, reflected on this attraction to the forbidden. He wrote, "There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit. One stormy night we rascally youths set out to rob it ... We took off a huge load of pears--not to feast upon ourselves, but to throw them to the pigs, though we ate just enough to have the pleasure of the forbidden fruit. They were nice pears, but it was not the pears that my wretched soul coveted, for I had plenty better at home. I picked them simply to become a thief... The desire to steal was awakened simply by the prohibition of stealing." Romans 7 sets forth the truth illustrated by Augustine's experience: Human nature is inherently rebellious. Give us a law and we will see it as a challenge to break it. Jesus, however, forgives our lawbreaking and gives us the Holy Spirit. He imparts a new desire and ability so that our greatest pleasure becomes bringing pleasure to God. --H W Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Why do we keep on trying  
The fare of this world's sin  
When God has set before us  
The joy of Christ within? --JDB

**Forbidden fruit tastes sweet but has bitter consequences**

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**Today in the Word - What, then, was the purpose of the Law? - Galatians 3:19**

Using the illustration of the willfulness of toddlers, someone might ask, "Why go through all the trouble of giving them instructions if they are just going to do what they want?" This question misses the true point of the instruction. We want to protect children from things that will harm them, but we also want to train them so that they can make wise, healthy choices when they are mature enough to choose for themselves.

- See the "Toddler's Creed" below

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**THE TODDLER'S CREED** - Elisa Morgan, president of MOPS International (Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers), shared this insight into a child's view of the world:

### Toddler's Creed

If I want it, **it's mine.**

If I give it to you and change my mind later, **it's mine.**

If I can take it away from you, **it's mine.**

If I had it a little while ago, **it's mine.**

If it's mine, it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what.

If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.

If it looks just like mine, **it is mine.**

Anyone who has ever known a toddler knows the truth of that creed. We expect to see this trait in toddlers, but we despise it in adults. It is called covetousness. The apostle Paul, who had led an outwardly religious life before he became a follower of Jesus, wrestled with that sin (Ro 7:7). After carefully studying the law, he recognized covetousness for what it was. But God in His grace changed Paul. Instead of being a coveting, grasping man, he became a truly generous person (Acts 20:33-35). Generosity may be the acid test of whether or not we are still spiritual toddlers. Have you allowed Jesus Christ to create in you a new, giving heart? Or are you still following the "Toddler's Creed"? - H W Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Gratefulness wrought by the Spirit  
Overcomes selfishness wrought by the Flesh**

**Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.**

Greek - ο δε μεσιτης ενος ουκ εστιν (3SPA1) ο δε θεος εις εστιν (3SPA1)

Amplified: Now a go-between (intermediary) has to do with and implies more than one party [there can be no mediator with just one person]. Yet God is [only] one Person [and He was the sole party in giving that promise to Abraham. But the Law was a contract between two, God and Israel; its validity was dependent on both].

Amplified (2015) Now the mediator or go-between [in a transaction] is not [needed] for just one party; whereas God is only one [and was the only One giving the promise to Abraham, but the Law was a contract between two, God and Israel; its validity depended on both].

ICB But a mediator is not needed when there is only one side. And God is only one.

Paraphrase Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham. (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary)

Phillips The very fact that there was an intermediary is enough to show that this was not the fulfilling of the promise. For the promise of God needs neither angelic witness nor human intermediary but depends on him alone.

Wuest Now, the mediator is not (a go-between representing the interests) of one (individual), but God is one (individual). ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:20 Now an intermediary is not for one party alone, but God is one.

GNT Galatians 3:20 ὁ μεσ της ν ς ο κ στιν, ὁ θε ς ε ς στιν.

NLT Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is helpful if more than one party must reach an agreement. But God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave his promise to Abraham.

KJV Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

ESV Galatians 3:20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

ASV Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.

CSB Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not for just one person, but God is one.

NIV Galatians 3:20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

NKJ Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

NRS Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.

YLT Galatians 3:20 and the mediator is not of one, and God is one --

NAB Galatians 3:20 Now there is no mediator when only one party is involved, and God is one.

NJB Galatians 3:20 Now there can be an intermediary only between two parties, yet God is one.

GWN Galatians 3:20 A mediator is not used when there is only one person involved, and God has acted on his own.

BBE Galatians 3:20 Now a go-between is not a go-between of one; but God is one.

- **a mediator is:** Job 9:33 Ac 12:20 1Ti 2:5
- **but:** Ga 3:17 Ge 15:18 17:1,2 De 6:4 Ro 3:29
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:20: A Mediator](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc (including those below)

### A DIFFICULT PASSAGE TO INTERPRET

Please note that someone has said there are more than 400 interpretations of this verse! The NET Note says "The meaning of this verse is disputed." We will therefore limit the comments on this verse!

**Now a mediator is not for one party only whereas God is only one** -Paul's point is apparently that a "**mediator**" is required when more than one party is involved, but God alone ratified the covenant with Abraham. 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" ( Gal 3:19) was unilateral and was given to man directly without a **mediator**, God alone having responsibility for fulfilling it. The **Amplified version** has a helpful translation of this passage

Now a go-between (intermediary) has to do with and implies more than one party [there can be no mediator with just one person]. Yet God is [only] one Person [and He was the sole party in giving that promise to Abraham. But the Law was a contract between two, God and Israel; its validity was dependent on both].

**James Montgomery Boice** - This verse is **probably the most obscure verse in Galatians, if not in the entire NT...**Whatever the details of the interpretation—and there probably will never be perfect agreement on Paul's precise meaning—the general thought seems to be that the promise must be considered superior to the law because the law is one-sided. The law was mediated, and this means that man was a party to it. The promise, on the other hand, is unilateral; man is not a party to it. This thought is intended to reinforce what Paul has said earlier about the unconditional and unilateral nature of the promises. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**MacArthur:** "The Greek text of Galatians 3:20 is difficult to translate and interpret, but Paul seems to be pointing out that **mediator** (literally one who stands between two parties) is needed only when more than one party is involved. God gave the covenant directly to Abraham without a **mediator** because He was the only One involved in making the covenant. Abraham was a witness to the covenant and was a beneficiary, but he was not a party to it. Abraham had no part in establishing or keeping the covenant. That responsibility was God's alone. The covenant of law, however, not only involved **mediators** (angels and Moses) but mutual obligations on the two parties (God and Israel). The stipulation of that covenant was, "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live" (Deut. 5:33). Man's part was to obey and God's was to give life, to save. The problem was that man could not keep His part, and therefore God could not grant salvation.

**Swindoll** - Galatians 3:20 has generated dozens of interpretations. I believe it refers to the conditional nature of the Mosaic Law (evidenced by the use of a mediator between two parties) versus the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant (evidenced by the fact that God alone cut the covenant with Abraham). In any case, Paul is once again emphasizing the priority of the promise over the Law. The promise was unilateral and unconditional; the Law was bilateral and conditional. Why, then, would anybody try to trade in the superior and eternal for the inferior and temporary?

**Hendriksen** says: Instead of vexing the reader with the four hundred thirty different interpretations to which this passage has given rise, I shall immediately state the one which appears to me to be the most consistent with the context. It is this: Though a human intermediary may be ever so important, he is, after all, only a third party acting between two other parties. Moses served as a human link between God and the people. Such an intermediary lacks independent authority. God, however, is One. When he made his promise to Abraham—and through him to all believers, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 3:30!)—he did this on his own sovereign account, directly, personally. He was speaking from the heart to the heart.

**Jack Arnold** - This is a very difficult verse to understand and there are over 250 interpretations of this one verse. It probably means that when God spoke the gospel to Abraham, He did it directly without any intermediaries. But when God gave the law to Moses both Moses and the angels were mediators. This proves that the Mosaic Law was not as important as the Abrahamic Covenant in God's sight.

**John Stott** - The rest of verse 19 and verse 20 are acknowledged to be difficult. They have been variously interpreted. The apostle is probably emphasizing the inferiority of the law to the gospel ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**Mediator** ([3316](#))([mesites](#) from **mésos** = middle, in midst) is one who stands in the middle between two people and brings them together. It is basically a neutral and trusted person in middle (**mesos**), a so called "middle Man" (arbitrator). It is one who works to remove disagreement and thus serves as a go-between or reconciler. All NT uses - Gal. 3:19; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 8:6; Heb. 9:15; Heb. 12:24

**Wuest** - In this verse Paul shows that the promise is superior to the law, for the former was given directly from God to Abraham, whereas the latter was given to Israel by God through a mediator. We will examine the statement, "A mediator is not of one." The word mediator is from mesites (μεσιτες), which in turn comes from mesos which means middle, the midst. Thus a mediator is one who intervenes between two, either to make or restore peace and friendship, to form a compact, or ratify a covenant. The word in the Greek text is preceded by the definite article, making the word generic in character. That is, Paul is not referring here to any particular mediator as Moses, but to the office of a mediator, and to mediators in general looked upon as a class of individuals. However, this generic statement is intended to be applied to Moses, the mediator referred to in verse 19. The word one is masculine in gender, and therefore is personal, referring to a person. That is, a mediator does not act simply in behalf of one person. The very genius of the word implies that the mediator stands "in the midst" of two or more persons, thus acts as a go-between. It is not that the mediator acts in behalf of a plurality of persons that constitute one party, but that there is a plurality of parties between which he acts. Thus the law is a contract between two parties. God gives the law through a mediator Moses, and man is obligated to obey it. God will bless man if he obeys, and will punish man if he disobeys. But the promise of free grace is not in the nature of a contract between two parties. God acts alone and directly when He promises salvation to anyone who will receive it by the out-stretched hand of faith. There are no good works to be done by the sinner in order that he might merit that salvation. Grace is unconditional. There are no strings tied to it. God is One, that is, He acts alone without a mediator in respect to the promise of grace. Therefore grace is superior to law. In the case of the former, God spoke directly to Abraham. In the case of the latter, He spoke to Israel through a mediator, Moses. The dignity of the law is thus seen to be inferior to that of the promise. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**Phil Newton** - One commentator said that there is upwards of 250 to 300 interpretations on this verse [L. Morris quoting Lightfoot, Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom, 114]. It has been jostled in the religious world to satisfy all sorts of beliefs! **But in context, Paul is simply showing that the promise given to Abraham by faith is superior to the Law.** Here he explains that the Law required a mediator, which implies that two parties were involved: God and the people. While keeping in mind the language of the covenant, this meant that both parties of the covenant of Law had obligations. God had his part and the people of Israel had their part. If either failed to maintain their responsibilities, then the covenant was broken. With a mediator needed, "the giving of the law was not a direct communication of God to those who were to receive its benefits. This is a mark of the law's inferiority to the promise, which was communicated directly to Abraham without an intermediary" [Curtis Vaughan, Galatians: A Study Guide Commentary, 69]. In contrast, the promise made to Abraham was given directly by God. The Lord Himself came to Abraham, taking upon Himself the fulfillment of His promise unconditionally. Consequently, it is superior to the Law. Why do we wrangle over this? So that each of us might understand the superiority of faith in Christ as the only way to God. And so that we might reject the notion that we can commend ourselves to God by works of personal righteousness. This is made quite clear in the Gospels when Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

**Ironside** says: "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." Two contracting parties suggests the thought of the need of a mediator, but when God gave His promise to Abraham there was only one. God gave the Word, and there was nothing to do on Abraham's part but to receive it. He did not covenant with God that he would do thus and so in order that God's promise might be fulfilled, but God spoke directly to him and committed Himself when He said, "In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8).

**Galatians 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.**

Greek - ο ουν nomoskata ton epaggelion İtou theou. me genoito (3SAMO) ei gar edothe (3SAPI) nomoso dunamenos (PPMNS) zoopoesai (AAN) ontos ek nomou an en (3SIAI) e dikaiousune

Amplified: Is the Law then contrary and opposed to the promises of God? Of course not! For if a Law had been given which could confer [spiritual] life, then righteousness and right standing with God would certainly have come by Law.

Amplified (2015) Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a system of law had been given which could impart life, then righteousness (right standing with God) would actually have been based on law

ICB Does this mean that the law is against God's promises? Never! If there were a law that could give men life, then we could be made right by following that law.

Phillips Is the Law then to be looked upon as a contradiction of the promise? Certainly not, for if there could have been a law which gave men spiritual life then law would have produced righteousness (which would have been, of course, in full harmony with the purpose of the promise).

Wuest Is therefore the law against the promises of God? God forbid. For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, righteousness in that case would have been from the law. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:21 Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

GNT Galatians 3:21 ο ν ν μοσ κατ τ ν παγγελι ν [το θεο ]; μ γ νοπο. ε γ ρ δ θη ν μοσ δυν μενοσ ζ οποι σα, ντωσ κ ν μου ν ν δικαιοσ νη·

NLT Galatians 3:21 Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it.

KJV Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

ESV Galatians 3:21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

ASV Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law.

CSB Galatians 3:21 Is the law therefore contrary to God's promises? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly be by the law.

NIV Galatians 3:21 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

NRS Galatians 3:21 Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law.

YLT Galatians 3:21 the law, then, is against the promises of God? -- let it not be! for if a law was given that was able to make alive, truly by law there would have been the righteousness,

NAB Galatians 3:21 Is the law then opposed to the promises (of God)? Of course not! For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law.

NJB Galatians 3:21 Is the Law contrary, then, to God's promises? Out of the question! If the Law that was given had been capable of giving life, then certainly saving justice would have come from the Law.

GWN Galatians 3:21 Does this mean, then, that the laws given to Moses contradict God's promises? That's unthinkable! If those laws could give us life, then certainly we would receive God's approval because we obeyed them.

BBE Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the words of God? in no way; because if there had been a law which was able to give life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

- **Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God?** Mt 5:17-20 Ro 3:31 7:7-13
- **May it never be!** Ga 2:17 Ro 3:4,6
- **For if a law had been given which was able to impart life** Ga 2:19,21 Ro 3:20
- **then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.** Ro 3:21,22 9:31 10:3-6 Php 3:6-9 Heb 11:7
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3 Commentary](#) - Martin Luther
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc (including those below)

## IS THERE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN GOD'S LAW AND GOD'S PROMISES?

**Wiersbe** quips "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?...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." ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? The Law** was later than, was inferior to and did not annul **the promises of God.** **Contrary** is the Greek preposition [kata](#) which means against. Louw-Nida add that [kata](#) is a marker of opposition...against...in conflict with." This is a straightforward question asking if the law opposes or conflicts with the promises of God? Absolutely not!

As **Donald Campbell** says God "gave both the Law and promises, but for different purposes. And it was not the purpose of the Law to give life."

**Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be!**- Is the Law against or opposed to the promises? Now ponder this a moment. Who gave Law? God. Who gave the promises? God. So logically they cannot be opposed for then He would be in a sense working against Himself! As **Spurgeon** says "The law is not the opponent of the promise, but an agent for putting men where they feel themselves to be in need of mercy and therefore accept salvation by grace."

**Vine** adds "It is inconceivable that these two things, albeit each was instituted with a distinct purpose, could be in themselves inconsistent one with the other. They represent different elements in the character of God. One, the law, is the expression of His righteousness; the other, the promise, is the expression of His grace. Now God is not at war with Himself."

**NIV Study Bible** - The reason the law is not opposed to the promise is that, although in itself it cannot save, it serves to reveal sin, which alienates God from humans, and to show the need for the salvation that the promise offers.

**The promises** (1860) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#)

**May it never be!** God forbid! Perish the thought! Literally "may it never come into existence" or "may it not be thought of." Paul invokes the strongest way in the Greek to disavow the statement that the Law was contrary to the promises of God. (Gal 2:17 3:21 Ro 6:1,2, 7:13) God's Law is Not an Enemy to God's Promises! The problem with the Law is found in its inability to give strength to those who desire to keep it.

"Do this and live!" the Law demands,  
But gives me neither feet nor hands.  
A better word is "Grace doth bring."  
It bids me fly, but gives me wings.

**For if a law had been given which was able to impart life then righteousness would indeed have been based on law:** Paul now explains why the Law is not contrary to the promises. "For if a Law had been given which could confer **[spiritual] life** (ED: AS DESCRIBED IN Jn 6:63, Ro 8:11, 1 Cor 15:22, 36, 2 Cor 3:6), then righteousness and right standing with God would certainly have come by Law." (Amplified)

Paul's point is that the Law could not impart life, speaking of eternal, spiritual life. In other words the Law could not justify a person or save a person, but this is what the Judaizers were teaching the believers in Galatia. If that had been possible it would indeed have been in opposition to the **promises of God** (which give life, justification, salvation), for then there would be two conflicting

ways one could be saved, one way by works (keeping the Law of God) and the other by faith (believing the promises of God). Paul made a related statement in Galatians 2:21+ declaring "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

**John Trapp** on **able to impart life** - That is, have justified a sinner. But herein lay the law's weakness through the flesh, Ro 8:3+ = "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh."

**Was able** (could) (1410)(**dunamai**) conveys the basic meaning of that which has the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end, in this case causing a sinner to be righteous. Thus **dunamai** means the Law is not able, capable, strong enough or power to do justify a sinner.

**John Phillips** - Paul puts an unerring finger on the inherent weakness of the Law, as both a system and a standard; in no way could the Law give life because no amount of doing can generate spiritual life in a dead human soul.

**Impart life** (2227)(**zoopoieo** from **zoos** = alive + **poieo** = to make) means to revitalize, make alive, give life, quicken, vivify, reanimate, restore to life. Most of the NT uses refer to God's ability to give life to men, either by resurrecting them from physical death or by regenerating them from spiritual death. In the present context Paul's point is the Law does not have the inherent power to give men spiritual life (living in right relationship to God as expressed in Gal 2:19+).

**Righteousness** (1343)(**dikaiosune** from **dikaio** = being right in the sense of being justified, in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright and thus conveys the idea of conformity to a standard, which in context is God Himself and His sinless, holy character. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God. There is divine righteousness and human righteousness (cf Mt 5:20+, Lk 18:10-14+), and the Jews, specifically the Judaizers sought to attain the latter by their meritorious works. Paul says "No that is not possible!" And he has shown this in to be impossible in Galatians 3:3-10.

**John Stott** - This second question is different from the first in that it seems to be addressed not to Paul by the Judaizers, but to the Judaizers by Paul. He is accusing them of doing just this, of making the law contradict the gospel, the promises of God. Their teaching was: 'keep the law and you will gain life.' And they thought they were being practical! Paul denies it. Their position was purely hypothetical: if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law (verse 21). But no such law has been given. Turning from hypothesis to reality, the fact is that nobody has ever kept the law of God. Instead, we sinners break it every day. Therefore, the law cannot justify us. ([The Message of Galatians](#))

In Romans Paul clearly establishes that righteousness is never based on LAW but obtained only BY FAITH.

Romans 3:20-22 (Amplified 2015) For no person will be justified [freed of guilt and **declared righteous**] in His sight **by [trying to do] the works of the Law**. For through the Law we become conscious of sin (Cp Gal 3:19-[note](#)) [and the recognition of sin directs us toward repentance, but provides no remedy for sin]. 21 But now the righteousness of God has been clearly revealed [**independently and completely**] **apart from the Law**, though it is [actually] confirmed by the Law and the [words and writings of the] Prophets. 22 **This righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ** for all those [Jew or Gentile] who believe [and trust in Him and acknowledge Him as God's Son]. There is no distinction,

Romans 3:28 (Amplified 2015) For we maintain that an individual is **justified by faith distinctly apart from works of the Law** [the observance of which has nothing to do with justification, that is, being declared free of the guilt of sin and made acceptable to God].

**Wuest** addresses Paul's question about **whether God's Law and God's promises are in conflict** - The answer is that the law and the promises are not in conflict because each has a distinct function.

- The LAW is a ministry of condemnation. The PROMISES are a ministry of salvation.
- The LAW judges a person on the basis of obedience or disobedience. The PROMISES judge man on a basis of faith.
- The LAW, whose ministry is one of condemnation, was not intended to express God's attitude towards man. God's attitude towards man is one of grace.
- The LAW is not the basis of God's judgment of man. A sinner who rejects Christ, goes to the Lake of Fire for all eternity, not because he has broken God's laws, for his sin is paid for. He goes to a lost eternity, because he rejects God's grace in the Lord Jesus.
- The LAW is a revelation of the sinner's legal standing, and as such condemns him. It cannot therefore justify him, as the Judaizers claim.

**LAW and grace are not in conflict,  
since they operate in different spheres.**

For instance, here is a father who has discovered that his son has disobeyed his commands. He calls the son's attention to the law which he broke, and pronounces him guilty. He uses this very sentence of guilty to bring the boy to see his misdemeanor in its true light. The son becomes repentant, and the father assures him of his forgiveness. The father is not in conflict with himself when using law to bring his son to a realization of the true nature of his disobedience, in order that he might repent and thus put himself in a position where the father can forgive him.

God is not in conflict with Himself when He gives the LAW that man might come to see his sin as a transgression or violation of His holy will, which is the first step in his act of repentance and faith, and which latter is answered by God with the gift of eternal life. Furthermore, no LAW could give eternal life. The wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23). The LAW demands of the sinner the death penalty, spiritual and physical death. The LAW will not accept the good works of a sinner in lieu of the death penalty. Only the precious blood of Jesus could satisfy the righteous demands of the broken LAW . Salvation therefore is by grace, since God the Son took the sinner's place on the Cross and offers salvation to the one who believes on Him. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**Martin Luther** - People foolish but wise in their own conceits jump to the conclusion: If the Law does not justify, it is good for nothing. How about that? Because money does not justify, would you say that money is good for nothing? Because the eyes do not justify, would you have them taken out? Because the Law does not justify it does not follow that the Law is without value." ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

Greek - alla sunekleisen (3SAAI) e graphe ta panta hupo hamartian, hina e epaggelia ek pisteos Iesou Christou dothe (3SAPS) tois pisteuousin (PAPMPD)

Amplified: But the Scriptures [picture all mankind as sinners] shut up and imprisoned by sin, so that [the inheritance, blessing] which was promised through faith in Jesus Christ (the Messiah) might be given (released, delivered, and committed) to [all] those who believe [who adhere to and trust in and rely on Him].

Phillips But, as things are, the scripture has all men "imprisoned", because they are found guilty by the Law, that to men in such condition might come to release all who believe in Jesus Christ.

Wuest But the scripture shut up all under sin, in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:22 But the scripture imprisoned everything and everyone under sin so that the promise could be given— because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ— to those who believe.

GNT Galatians 3:22 ἅλ συν κλεισεν γραφ τ π ντα π μαρτ αν, να παγγελ α κ π στεως ησο Χριστο δοθ το ς πιστε ουσιν.

NLT Galatians 3:22 But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ.

KJV Galatians 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

ESV Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

ASV Galatians 3:22 But the scriptures shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

CSB Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

NIV Galatians 3:22 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.

NKJ Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ

might be given to those who believe.

NRS Galatians 3:22 But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

YLT Galatians 3:22 but the Writing did shut up the whole under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ may be given to those believing.

NAB Galatians 3:22 But scripture confined all things under the power of sin, that through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe.

NJB Galatians 3:22 As it is, scripture makes no exception when it says that sin is master everywhere; so the promise can be given only by faith in Jesus Christ to those who have this faith.

GWN Galatians 3:22 But Scripture states that the whole world is controlled by the power of sin. Therefore, a promise based on faith in Jesus Christ could be given to those who believe.

BBE Galatians 3:22 However, the holy Writings have put all things under sin, so that that for which God gave the undertaking, based on faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who have such faith.

- **the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin:** Ga 3:8-10,23 Ps 143:2 Ro 3:9-20,23 5:12,20 11:32
- **so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given** Ga 3:14,17,29 Ro 4:11-16 5:20,21 2Ti 1:1 Heb 6:13-17 9:15 2Pe 1:4 2Pe 3:13 1Jn 2:25 5:11-13
- **to those who believe:** Mk 16:16 Joh 3:15-18,36 5:24 6:40 11:25,26 12:46 20:31 Ac 16:31 Ro 10:9 1Jn 3:23,24 5:13
- [Galatians 3:15-22 God's Promise: Why the Law?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:22 The Great Jail, and How to Get Out of It](#)- C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3 Commentary](#) - Martin Luther
- [Galatians 3:15-22 Why the Law?](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc



Law "Traps" Us

## TRAPPED LIKE FISH IN A NET

**Donald Campbell** - But if the Law is not opposed to the promises, if there is no conflict between them (Gal 3:21), 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. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Wuest** - Scripture in its divine utterances regarding the universality of sin, is spoken of as a jailer who shuts all up in sin as in a prison. The function of the law was therefore to convict of sin that men might turn to the Lord Jesus for salvation. ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**But (alla)** is a term of contrast. What is Paul contrasting? Paul had just closed Gal 3:21 with the phrase **"then righteousness would indeed have been based on the Law."** So now he says "on the contrary" what actually happened was the very opposite of the supposition at the end of verse 21. The Law did not open the door to righteousness, but shut the door in effect, shutting men up under sin.

**The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin** - **Scripture** is personified as a fisherman catching fish in a net or a jailer shutting men in a prison cell under a death sentence, so to speak (Ro 6:23+). Don't miss the word **everyone**, which in Greek means all without exception! We were trapped like a rat! Like the "sinful rats" we are in Adam! Paul switches from Law to the **Scripture** but the sense is not changed. In his last recorded words Paul wrote that **"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."** (2 Ti 3:16+) In that passage the Scripture refers especially to the Old

Testament, since the New Testament had not yet been finalized. And so we see that the OT (see some [representative passages](#) below) makes it very clear that we are **under (hupo)** the heavy burden of SIN, so that mankind is hopelessly (Ro 5:6+, Ep 2:12+) enclosed on all sides, without any possibility of escape, the picture of a school of fish caught in a fisher's net. (exact word in Lu 5:6+ "they enclosed a great quantity of fish!")

**Robertson on under sin** - As if the lid closed in on us over a massive chest that we could not open or as prisoners in a dungeon. He uses ta panta (the all things), the totality of everything. See Romans 3:10-19+; Romans 11:32.

**Spurgeon on the Scripture** - The jailer is **the Scripture**—a lawful authority, for the Scripture is not the word of man, but of the Spirit of God. If the Scriptures shut you up in sin, you are shut up by a lawful authority, against which you cannot rebel (**Ed:** Oh, you can try to rebel, but you will not succeed!). God has done it; God's own voice has declared you to be a prisoner under sin. No authority is more powerful than that of Scripture, for it is not only true, but it has force to support it.

**Gromacki** explains that "The LAW (**Ed:** In this verse synonymous with "**the Scripture**") was given to create within man a consciousness that he was completely enveloped in sin with no ability to rescue himself from his spiritual dilemma." ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** points out that "In the first part of this verse Paul gives a capsule statement of the major truths of the first three chapters of Romans: the law shows that all—the immoral person, the ethical person, and the religious person—have sinned and need a Savior (**ED:** [SEE ROMANS ROAD BELOW](#)). The second half of the verse reminds us that there is indeed a Savior and that it had always been God's purpose to save a great company through faith in him. Seen from this angle, even the law flowed from God's grace, because it prepared men and women to receive the Lord Jesus Christ when he came. In the last phrase, "faith," the sole means of grace, is again prominent." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Scripture** (1124)([graphe](#)) in the NT only of sacred writing scripture; used to designate the Scripture(s) as a whole or any particular part or single passage.

**Bruce Barton on Scripture** - By **Scripture**, Paul may have had in mind Deuteronomy 27:26 or the series of verses that he later quoted in Romans 3:10-18, which describe the universal sinfulness of mankind (Ps 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 140:3; and Isaiah 59:7-8). Or he may have been thinking of the Pentateuch as the biblical context of the law itself, filled with the record of unrelenting rebelliousness against God. What must be understood, however, is that the Scriptures speak with one voice when describing the human condition—we are sinners. (Life Application Bible Commentary – Galatians)

**Under sin** - Under the dominion of sin, the very state believers are no longer **under** as Paul explained in Ro 6:14+ declaring "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under ([hupo](#)) law but under ([hupo](#)) grace."

**Vine** explains why it is so important for men and women to fully grasp that outside of Christ they are under the power of sin for "only those that are conscious of guilt will seek justification. Cp. the words of the Lord Jesus, Luke 5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.""

**John MacArthur** adds "I was once alive apart from the Law," Paul said; **"but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died"** (Ro 7:9-[note](#)), because the covenant with Moses brought **"the law of sin and of death"** (Ro 8:2+). Not until a person smashes himself against the demands of the law and the accusations of conscience does he recognize his helplessness and see his need for a Savior. Not until the law has arrested and imprisoned him and sentenced him to death will he be driven to despair in himself and turn to Jesus Christ. **The ultimate purpose of shutting up men under sin and death was that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** The law was given to bring men under sin to the point of saying, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Ro 7:24-[note](#)). Grace is given to enable those who believe to say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Ro 7:25-[note](#)). God's saving purpose is the climax (cf. Luke 19:10+; 1 Tim. 1:15)." (Galatians: The MacArthur NT Commentary)

**Spurgeon on has shut everyone under sin** - The law (**Ed:** here "the Scripture") has come and proved us all guilty and shut us all up as in a great prison from which we cannot escape by any power of our own. There was nothing about the Mosaic economy to say to man, "You are good, or you can be good, and you can save yourself." Everywhere the declaration was, "You have rebelled and have not served the Lord; you cannot come near to Him until you are purged by the blood of the great sacrifice. God cannot accept you as you are; you are polluted and defiled." The sinfulness of all men is abundantly taught in Scripture. Indeed, it is to be found on every page of it. The Scripture shuts you all up as in a dungeon, that by the one and only door of faith in Christ you might come out into a glorious liberty.

**G. G. Findlay on has shut everyone under sin** - The law was all the while standing guard over its subjects, watching and checking every attempt to escape, but intending to hand them over in due time to the charge of faith. The law posts its ordinances, like so many sentinels, round the prisoner's cell. The cordon is complete. He tries again and again to break out; the iron circle will not yield.

The deliverance will yet be his. The day of faith approaches. It dawned long ago in Abraham's promise. Even now its light shines into his dungeon, and he hears the word of Jesus, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." (cp Mk 5:34) Law, the stern jailer, has after all been a good friend, if it has reserved him for this. It prevents the sinner escaping to a futile and illusive freedom. (Expositor's Bible Commentary - [Galatians 3:19-24 The Design of the Law](#))

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, do you remember that sense of "no escape" you felt when the Spirit of God convicted you of sin, righteousness and the judgment to come? (Jn 16:8) This is why the **good news** must be preceded with the **bad news** when we present the Gospel. If men do not see that they are trapped, enclosed on all sides by the Law and under the [dominion](#) of sin, they will not appreciate the good news of the Gospel.

**The Romans Road** is one of the most concise and Scripturally accurate presentations of the Gospel. **Do you know the Roman Road?** Click for an expanded explanation of the "Romans Road" and the associated "**Bridge Illustration**" which in picture form demonstrates that anyone who has never believed in Messiah is only a step (breath) away from eternal separation from God. See (1) [The Dreadful Dilemma](#) (2) [The Deadly Deception](#) (3) [The Dependable Deliverer](#). Let me encourage you to [memorize](#) several key passages in Romans which will equip you to walk someone else down the Romans Road whenever God gives us an opportunity. You could also draw out (if you at a restaurant just grab a napkin) the bridge diagram to graphically demonstrate the impossible gap separating Sinful Man and Holy God. Then you can write down the Scripture references in the appropriate places on the diagram as you present the Gospel. I usually begin with **Romans 1:16-note**, followed by **Romans 3:10-note** and **Romans 3:23-note**, which clearly shows that all mankind is "trapped like dying fish in a net"! You can follow up (trusting in the intrinsic power of the Gospel, the [dunamis](#) in Ro 1:16-note and not your clever or convincing presentation) and the convicting ministry of the Spirit, their heart should begin to be conscious of the bad news and prepared to hear the good news beginning in **Romans 5:8-note**, followed by **Romans 6:23-note** (bad news then good news) and finally by **Romans 10:9,10-note**. They may desire to confess Jesus as Lord at that moment. If so you can show them 2 Cor 5:17-note which summarizes the "before" and "after" effect of the Gospel on their soul. So there you have the so-called **Romans Road** -- just 6 verses to [memorize](#) that could change of eternal destiny of a human being. Is that not motivation enough to memorize these verses? Will you write these verses down, begin to commit them to heart, and ask God, Who desires "for all to come to repentance" (2 Pe 3:9-note), to give you an open door (Rev 3:8-note) of opportunity to share the Gospel today?

Notice the table The "Romans Road at the bottom of the page - Paul introduces the Gospel in Romans 1:16-17-note but the remainder of the text from Romans 1:18-note to Romans 3:20-note is also a vital component of the Gospel for in this section Paul clearly and convincingly lays out the truth that there is none righteous, that all are sinners and thus all are in need of the good news that he begins to describe in Romans 3:21-note.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that **every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God**; 20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20-note)

**Shut up** (4788)([sugkleio/sunkeio](#) from [sun/syn](#) = together + [kleio](#) = to shut up, enclose) means literally to shut up or enclose together on all sides (there is "no escape"). The idea is to shut up securely, enclosing on all sides with no way of escape, as with fish "shut up" in a net (in Lk 5:6+ = "they enclosed a great quantity of fish"), i.e., completely and without the possibility of escape. Here of course **sunkleio** refers to the Scripture (and especially the Law because that is the Scripture he has been speaking of in context). In the other NT use in Ro 11:32 the enclosing is done by God, "For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all." The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) uses [sunkleio](#) several times for shutting a woman's womb. In secular use it was used in a military context the meaning to "close up" the ranks. It is similarly used in [Polybius](#) to indicate the imprisonment or the "locking up" of people.

Here in Gal 3:22 the [present tense](#) could be rendered "continually holding in confinement." It is clear that there is no escape from this entrapment short of a Gospel rescue!

Here are the 4 NT uses of [sugkleio](#):

Luke 5:6+ When they had done this, they **enclosed** a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;

Romans 11:32+ For God **has shut up** all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture **has shut up** everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being **shut up** to the faith which was later to be revealed.

**Liddell-Scott** - to shut or coop up, hem in, enclose, shut off and intercepted them, Id.:Pass., muffled 2. to set together to fight as in the lists II. to shut close, to close, shut the doors, Ar. III. to lock their shields, to close up the ranks of an army, the part that was not closed up, of a gap in the line, Id. 2. Pass. to be well linked

**Michel** -

1. synkleiō has such senses as “to close up together,” “to close,” “to enclose,” “to imprison,” “to envelop,” “to drive into a corner,” “to compel,” “to press,” “to run out,” “to form a circle.”
2. In the LXX it represents various Hebrew words and is used for the surrounding desert, enclosed cities, delivering up prisoners etc., hemming in, harassing, and periphrastically “hewing down.”
3. The Hebrew verb sgr, one of the originals, occurs in the Dead Sea Scrolls for delivering up, closing (e.g., the jaws of lions or the gates of hell), closing in (i.e., punishing) offenders, and closing the door (i.e., excommunicating).
4. In later Judaism other verbs carry such varied senses as ruling, stopping, enclosing, shutting in, wrapping around, and shaping.
5. In the NT the fish are enclosed in the net in Lk. 5:6. In Gal. 3:22–23 Paul says that Scripture shuts up all under sin so that the promise might be given to those who have faith in Christ. Prior to faith there is custody under the law (v. 23). A teleology of history comes to light here. Scripture manifests shutting up under sin, and the law effects this. The eschatological dimension emerges in Rom. 11:32: God has shut up all under disobedience so as to have mercy on all. The figure of the prison is in the background, with the law as its keeper. But protective custody might be the point in view of the positive purpose. God by the law protects the race against self-destruction until faith is revealed (cf. Gal. 3:24). It is unlikely that Paul has in mind the Gnostic conception of the earthly world as a prison from which the redeemer rescues souls by his descent.
6. In Gnostic thinking the earth is the domain of evil and the descent of the redeemer has the force of a descent into the underworld to open the closed gates of the prison. The idea of the enclosing of the soul in matter occurs in Gnostic works; the female soul is enclosed in matter in which moisture and cold predominate in the composition of the elements. Mandaean works refer to a surrounding ring, an enclosing wall, covered radiance, etc. (TDNT)

**Sugkleio** - 44x in 43v -

Gen. 16:2; 20:18 (“the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech”); Exod. 14:3 (“the wilderness has shut them in”); Jos. 6:1 (“Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel”); 1 Sam. 1:6 (“the LORD had closed her womb.”); 1 Ki. 6:20; 7:49; 10:21; 11:27; 12:24; 2 Ki. 24:14,16; Job 3:10,23; Ps. 17:10; 31:8; 35:3; 78:50,62; Prov. 4:12; Isa. 45:1; Jer. 13:19; 21:4,9; Ezek. 4:3; Amos 1:6,9; Obad. 1:14; Mal. 1:10; Lk. 5:6; Rom. 11:32; Gal. 3:22f

**Septuagint uses of sunkleio:**

- אָלָם 'ālam (0487), Niphal: be speechless (Ezek 33:22—Codex Alexandrinus only).
- מַסְגֵּר masgēr (04674), Smith (2 Kgs 24:14,16).
- סָגַח sāghar (05646), Qal: shut in, shut (Ex 14:3, Job 3:10, Mal 1:10); niphal: be shut (Isa 45:1); pual: be shut up (Jer 13:19); hiphil: deliver, hand over (Joshua 20:5, Ps 31:8, Ob 14).
- סָאָחַח sākḥakh (05718), Hiphil: hedge in (Job 3:23).
- אָצַר 'ātsar (06352), Prevent (Gn 16:2).
- פָּאָסַח pātsach (06723), Piel: break (Mic 3:3).
- צֹר tsūr (06961), Besiege (Jer 21:9, Ezek 4:3).
- צָרָר tsārār (07173), Be hampered (Prov 4:12).

**Gilbrant** comments on uses in the Septuagint where **sunkleio** is usually found translating the Hebrew verb **sāghar** (05646), “to encircle, enclose, imprison” (1 Ki 11:27; 1 Sa 1:6). In certain cases the verb has the idea of “deliver up” (as for imprisonment or capture) as in Joshua 20:5 where provisions for the cities of refuge are discussed: “If the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not give up the slayer into his hand” (RSV) (cf. also Ps 31:8). This is most clearly seen in Ps 78:61,62 where sunkleio is used in parallel with **paradidomi**, “to turn over or deliver”: He “gave up (paredōken) his power to captivity . . . He also delivered His people (sunekleisen) to the sword” (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**All** (pas/panta) means **all** without exception are "caught" in the net of sin! This truth is repeatedly taught in both testaments to make

sure that it is clearly understood. So many sinners say "I'm a good person," but they are arguing with God's holy Word which indicts all mankind!

1 Kings 8:46 "When they sin against You (for there is **no man who does not sin**) and You are angry with them and deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near;

Psalm 14:3 **They have all turned aside**, together they have become corrupt; **There is no one who does good, not even one.** (Ro 3:10)

Psalm 143:2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight **no man living is righteous.**

Proverbs 20:9 **Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin"?** (Rhetorical Question expects the answer "NO ONE!")

Isaiah 53:6 **All of us like sheep have gone astray**, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

Romans 3:23 for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 11:32 For God has **shut up all in disobedience** so that He may show mercy to all.

One would think that any rational soul would be thoroughly convinced of his great sin and thus come to see his great need for the promised Savior.

I love the title of Spurgeon's sermon on Galatians 3:22 ["The Great Jail, and How to Get Out of It"](#)

## **ALL MEN ARE UNDER THE POWER OF SIN**

The phrase **under sin** gives us a clear and striking picture of the deadly predicament of every person outside of Christ. What is the striking picture? **Under** is the Greek preposition [hupo](#) which (with the accusative - **sin** = [hamartia](#) in the accusative) is a marker of a controlling power so the idea is that **all** sinners are **under** the control of sin, **under** obligation to sin. Sinners think they are free to do as they please. They are deceived (by definition a deceived person does not even know they are deceived!) and in their spiritual blindness are in total bondage to **sin** ([hamartia](#)) which constrains them to continually "miss the mark" as far as God's will for their life is concerned. This horrid picture of men enslaved to their harsh taskmaster "**Sin**" is repeatedly emphasized by Paul...

Romans 3:9+ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all **under sin** ([hupo](#) [hamartia](#))

Titus 3:3+ For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, **enslaved** (in bondage [present tense](#) continually - [douleuo](#)) to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

Romans 6:17+ But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves** ([doulos](#)) **of sin**, you (by grace through faith and reception of a new heart and the Holy Spirit) became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

Romans 6:22+ But now **having been freed** ([eleutheroo](#) used in Gal 5:1+) **from sin** (Implying we were enslaved to sin) and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

As discussed above, the LAW "**was added because of transgressions**" (Ga 3:19-[note](#)) to make it clear what sin is--a transgression of the holy character of God and His perfect will. When people understand the nature of sin, it soon becomes clear that all people are **under sin** (Ro 3:9+) and all are sinners by birth ([inherent/inherited sin](#)) and by imputation of Adam's sin to our account ([imputed sin](#)) (Ro 3:10, 12, 23+ Ro 5:12,19+) and that because of this SIN nature we commit personal sins against the will of God. It follows logically that all need to come to Christ to receive redemption, justification, reconciliation and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (salvation). The Law was intended not only to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24), but also to convict us of our sins so that we might look to the promise of God for His "MUCH MORE" (Ro 5:9,10+) salvation. Our attempts to keep the Law only show that we are incapable of keeping it perfectly, as the Law itself demands (Jas 2:10+ Eccl 7:20 Ro 3:10+).

**John Stott** - No man has ever appreciated the Gospel (ED: THE GOOD NEWS) until the law has first revealed him to himself (ED: THE BAD NEWS). It is only against the inky blackness of the night sky that the stars begin to appear, and it is only against the dark background of sin and judgment that the Gospel shines forth.

**Martin Luther** wrote "When the Law drives you to the point of despair, let it drive you a little farther, let it drive you straight into the arms of Jesus who says: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - Some protest and say, "I'm not a prisoner to sin." There is a simple way to prove it: stop sinning. But if you can't stop sinning, or ever have a record of sin, then you are imprisoned by the law of God.

## THE LAW PREPARES THE WAY FOR THE GOSPEL

**So that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe**- Notice the emphasis on faith (by faith...those who believe) Amplified = "so that [the inheritance, blessing] which was promised through faith in Jesus Christ (the Messiah) might be given (released, delivered, and committed) to [all] those who believe [who adhere to and trust in and rely on Him]. "

**So that - purpose clause** - The purpose of the Law shutting every human being under the power of sin is so that we might hear, receive and believe the Gospel ("**The promise by faith in Jesus Christ**"). And so we see that the Law is not opposed to the Promises of God, because the Law works like God's "sheep dog" to herd us toward the promises. As **Donald Campbell** says "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."

Compare similar thought in Romans 11:32+ "For God has shut up (sugkleio/sunkeio) all in disobedience ([apeitheia](#) = unwillingness to be persuaded, willful unbelief, obstinacy) **SO THAT** ([PURPOSE CLAUSE](#)) He may show mercy to all."

**G. G. Findlay** - Where Law has done its work well, it produces, as in the Apostle's earlier experience, a profound sense of personal demerit, a tenderness of conscience, a contrition of heart which makes one ready thankfully to receive "the righteousness which is of God by faith." In every age and condition of life a like effect is wrought upon men who honestly strive to live up to an exacting moral standard. They confess their failure. They lose self-conceit. They grow "poor in spirit," willing to accept "the abundance of the gift of righteousness" in Jesus Christ. (Expositor's Bible Commentary - [Galatians 3:19-24 The Design of the Law](#))

**Martin Luther** writes that Paul had just stated that "the Scripture has shut up all under sin." Forever? No, only until **the promise** should be fulfilled. **The promise**, you will recall, is the inheritance itself or the blessing promised to Abraham, deliverance from the Law, sin, death, and the devil, and the free gift of grace, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. This **promise**, says Paul, is not obtained by any merit, by any law, or by any work. This **promise** is given. To whom? To those who believe. In whom? In Jesus Christ. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**The promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe:** The promise is that through the Seed of Abraham, the Messiah, Christ Jesus, all the nations would be blessed, the ultimate blessing being eternal life in Christ which is realized only in those men and women, boys and girls, who express genuine belief in Christ.

**Spurgeon on faith in Jesus Christ** - Paul constantly comes back to this point: that salvation is all of grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

**MacDonald** points out that "The key words in Gal 3:22 are **faith, given, and believe**. There is no mention of "doing" or "law-keeping." (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Faith** ([4102](#))([pistis](#)) in this context refers to personal belief directed toward a person, in this case Jesus Christ, in whom one places their full confidence, trust, and reliance in His faithfulness and reliability to save us from the guttermost to the uttermost.

**Promise** ([1860](#))([epaggelia/epangelia](#)) describes what God Himself commits to do for us (and to refrain from doing) in the future. This word refers to the content of what God promised, new life in Christ and reckoning of His righteousness to our spiritual bank account just as occurred in the case of our spiritual father Abraham when he believed God in Genesis 15:6+. The English dictionary says a **promise** is a verbal commitment by one person to another agreeing to do (or not to do) something in the future.

**Promise** is clearly a [key word](#) (see importance of recognizing and interrogating [key words](#)) in Galatians especially in chapter 3 where it occurs 7 times - Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:16; Gal. 3:17; Gal. 3:18; Gal. 3:21; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:29. It is used again Gal. 4:23; Gal. 4:28. In the parallel discussion of Abraham in Romans 4 the word promise occurs 4 times - Rom. 4:13; Rom. 4:14; Rom. 4:16; Rom. 4:20.

**W E Vine** has a good discussion of [epaggelia](#) as it relates to Galatians 3 ([see preceding note](#))

**Gerald Borchert** sums up verse 22 and this section on the law - "While law and promise may at first glance appear to be at odds,

they are actually partners in providing a solution to the human problem. In summary, the law was a temporary parenthesis to the basic promise that was given to Abraham; the law functioned to identify human sin and to prepare people for God's solution of faith in Christ Jesus. The law could never replace the expected promise; it did not enable direct communication with God, and it never had the power to give life. Rather, the law judged humanity by showing the divine standard. It pointed beyond itself to the coming promise of life through faith in Christ. This way of faith in the living Christ is the only way that leads to life." ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 14: Romans and Galatians](#))

**John Stott** asks "How, then, is it possible to create a harmony between the law and the promise? Only by seeing that men inherit the promise because they cannot keep the law, and that their inability to keep the law makes the promise all the more desirable, indeed indispensable. Verse 22: The scripture consigned all things to sin, for the Old Testament plainly declares the universality of human sin, e.g. 'there is none that does good, no, not one' (Ps. 14:3). And Scripture holds every sinner in prison for his sins, in order that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Luther expresses the matter with his usual forcefulness: 'The principal point ... of the law ... is to make men not better but worse; that is to say, it sheweth unto them their sin, that by the knowledge thereof they may be humbled, terrified, bruised and broken, and by this means may be driven to seek grace, and so to come to that blessed Seed (sc. Christ).' ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**Boice** adds that the Law condemns all men "so that they might turn from attempts to please God through legalism (~[REPENTANCE](#)) and instead receive the promise of God through faith in Jesus Christ." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

The Law is a court of justice,  
but the Gospel a throne of grace.

- George Swinnock

**Who believe** (4100)([pisteuo](#)) here describes one continually having ([present tense](#)) a firm conviction as to the mercy, goodness, efficacy, and ability of Jesus to be our Savior from our sins.

**Morris** concludes that "Far from being the gateway into a glorious liberty, it (THE SCRIPTURE/LAW) turns out to be a jailor, shutting people up. The result is that the only way of escape was through faith."

**Guzik** adds that "The bars of our sin are strong; we can't see through them ourselves. There is no chance of a jailbreak. Instead, an offer is made by the warden Himself to simply open the door and walk out – but you have to acknowledge you are confined, that you deserve to be in the cell, and ask Him to free you. When the prosecutor accuses the warden of not being just, the warden simply points out that the freed prisoner's sentence was completely fulfilled – by Himself!

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## Turnaround Expert

Read: Galatians 3:22-4:7 | When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. — Galatians 4:4

Members of The Turnaround Management Association are rarely asked to join successful companies. Instead, these skilled professionals are called into ailing businesses to help get them back on their feet.

The same need for dramatic change exists throughout society. People who can reverse the downward spiral in an individual's life, a relationship, or a team are constantly in demand.

But what about changing the world? Many people would say that only God can do that. And that's exactly what He sent His Son to do. The Bible describes humanity's downward spiral by saying that the entire world was imprisoned by sin and "in bondage" (Galatians 3:22; 4:3).

Into that hopeless situation Jesus came "to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (4:5). The personal turnaround for us begins when we accept God's offer of eternal life in Christ and receive His Spirit into our hearts (v.6). Rather than simply being given a new set of rules and sent off on our own, we are adopted into God's family.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate turnaround expert. He specializes in impossible cases. Will you invite Him into your life today? -- David McCasland

The Lord will turn your life around  
If you'll invite Him in;  
Then you'll at once be heaven-bound,  
No longer chained by sin. —Hess

**When we choose to follow Jesus,**

our whole life changes direction.

**Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.**

Greek - Pro tou de elthein (AAN) ten pistin hupo nomon ephrouroumetha (1PIPI) sugkleiomenoi (PPMPN) eis ten mellousan (PAPFSA) pistin apokaluthenai (APN)

Amplified: Now before **the faith** came, we were perpetually guarded under the Law, kept in custody in preparation for **the faith** that was destined to be revealed (unveiled, disclosed),

Phillips Before the coming of faith we were all imprisoned under the power of the Law, with our only hope of deliverance the faith that was to be shown to us.

Wuest But before the aforementioned faith came, under law we were constantly being guarded, being shut up with a view to the faith about to be revealed. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:23 Now before faith came we were held in custody under the law, being kept as prisoners until the coming faith would be revealed.

GNT Galatians 3:23 Πρ το δ λθε ν τ ν π στίβ π ν μόν φρουρο μεθα συγκλει μενοι ε ς τ ν μ λλουσαν π στίβ ποκαλυφθ ναι,

NLT Galatians 3:23 Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed.

KJV Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

ESV Galatians 3:23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

ASV Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

CSB Galatians 3:23 Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed.

NIV Galatians 3:23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

NKJ Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

NRS Galatians 3:23 Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.

YLT Galatians 3:23 And before the coming of the faith, under law we were being kept, shut up to the faith about to be revealed,

NAB Galatians 3:23 Before faith came, we were held in custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed.

NJB Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, locked up to wait for the faith which would eventually be revealed to us.

GWN Galatians 3:23 We were kept under control by Moses' laws until this faith came. We were under their control until this faith which was about to come would be revealed.

BBE Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in prison under the law, waiting for the revelation of the faith which was to come.

- **But before faith came:** Ga 3:19,24,25 4:1-4 Heb 12:2
- **we were kept in custody under the law:** Ga 4:4,5,21 5:18 Ro 3:19 6:14,15 1Co 9:20,21
- **being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed:** Lu 10:23,24 Heb 11:13,39,40 1Pe 1:11,12

- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:23: Under Arrest](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3:23: Under Arrest \(Notes\)](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3 Commentary](#) - Martin Luther
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc (including those below)



Law Keeps Us in Custody

## THE LAW SERVED AS A GUARD

**But before faith came - Before faith came** is where all men were as Paul describes for example in Romans 1:18-21.

**John Stott** explains "What We Were Under the Law (Gal 3:23, 24) In a word, we were in bondage. The apostle uses two vivid similes in verses 23 and 24, in which the law is likened first to a **prison**, in which we were held captive, and then to **atutor**, whose discipline was harsh and severe." ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**Martin Luther** comments on **before faith came** - The Apostle proceeds to explain the service which the Law is to render. Previously Paul had said that the Law was given to reveal the wrath and death of God upon all sinners. Although the Law kills, God brings good out of evil. He uses the Law to bring life. God saw that the universal illusion of self-righteousness could not be put down in any other way but by the Law. The Law dispels all self-illusions. It puts the fear of God in a man. Without this fear there can be no thirst for God's mercy. God accordingly uses the Law for a hammer to break up the illusion of self-righteousness, that we should despair of our own strength and efforts at self-justification. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Faith** (**pistis**) (Literally = "the faith") in this context refers to the faith just mentioned in Gal 3:22-note. Faith in Christ alone releases people from bondage to law, whether the Mosaic law (which speaks to the Jews), or the law written on the hearts of Gentiles as Paul described in Romans 2:

For when **Gentiles** who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Ro 2:14-16-note)

**Wuest** explains "The correct understanding of the expression, "**Before faith came**" is found in the fact that the definite article (Greek = ten pistin where "ten" is translated "the" which is the definite article) is used before the word **faith**, namely, "**before the faith came.**" The article here identifies **the faith** mentioned in this verse with **the faith** spoken of in Gal 3:22-note, personal faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, exercised in this Age of Grace. That faith is fundamentally alike so far as its character goes, to the faith Abraham exercised (Ge 15:6-note), but different in that it looks back to an accomplished salvation at the Cross, whereas the faith of Abraham looked forward to the accomplishment of that salvation at Calvary. The former is faith in an *historic Christ*, whereas the latter was faith in a *prophetic Christ*. **Faith** has been the appointed means of obtaining the salvation of God since Adam's time. Faith itself did not begin to be exercised on the occasion of the Cross. **Faith** as such did not come then. But the particular **faith** in Jesus Christ as exercised in this Age of Grace came at the beginning of the age (**Ed**: As did the Gospel of Grace - cp Ge 3:15-note, Gal 3:8-note)." ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**Spurgeon on before faith came** - Here we have a condensed history of the world before the gospel was fully revealed by the coming of our Lord Jesus. Before the clear and plain revelation of the way of salvation, the Hebrew nation was put under the tutorship and governance of the Mosaic law. So far as salvation was to be obtained by it, that law was a total failure. It did not make the Jews a holy people. Whenever they reached any point of excellence, they soon went back from it, for they were bent on backsliding. Whatever the influence of that blessed law might be supposed to be, the actual net result was very poor indeed. When Christ came to the chosen people, they were in a most miserable condition, and there was no hope for them at all apart from the promised Messiah. They were shut up to the alternative of receiving Him, or else being put away as a nation for a long time of banishment and exile. This, indeed, they have actually endured through their rejection of the one and only Savior.

**MacArthur** - Whether through the written law of Scripture (**Ed**: Jews) or the inward law of conscience (**Ed**: Gentiles), until a person acknowledges his basic sinfulness and inability to perfectly fulfill the demands of God's law, he will not come repentantly to seek salvation. Until he despairs of himself and his own sinfulness, he will not come in humble faith to be filled with Christ's righteousness. A person who says he wants salvation but refuses to recognize and repent of his sin deceives himself. Salvation is deliverance from sin, and a person cannot: want to keep his sin and at the same time want to be free from it. He cannot truly want the new Christ-life of righteousness without renouncing the old self-life of sin. (Ibid)

**We were kept in custody under the law** - Kept secure and under watch. As noted below the verb phroureo is a military term -- the Jews were kept from being contaminated by the pagan culture and the Law also kept them from getting in trouble.

**John Trapp on kept in custody under the law** - as in a prison or garrison, being circled with a compassing strength. The sinner, having transgressed, is kept by the law, as with a guard or garrison, that he cannot escape unless he be delivered by Christ.

**John Stott** - He gave the law in His grace in order to make the promise more desirable....Both verses (Galatians 3:22 and Galatians 3:23-24) tell us that the oppressive work of the law was temporary, and that it was ultimately intended not to hurt but to bless. Its purpose was to shut us up in prison until Christ should set us free, or to put us under tutors until Christ should make us sons. Only Christ can deliver us from the prison to which the curse of the law has brought us, because He was made a curse for us. Only Christ can deliver us from the law's harsh discipline, because He makes us sons who obey from love for their Father and are no longer naughty children needing tutors to punish them. ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**MacArthur** notes that "After using the third person for most of the chapter (Gal 3:6-22), Paul reverts to the first person (**we**). In using **we**, he first of all identifies himself with the Jewish people, to whom both covenants were given. But in a broader and more comprehensive sense he is also identifying himself with all of mankind, Jew and Gentile. Even the most pagan Gentile who has never heard of the true God is under obligation to keep His moral and spiritual standards and, if he disregards those standards, to face the judgment of God. Paul uses two figures to represent God's law and its effect on unbelievers, first that of a prison and then that of a guardian....The believer who looks back realizes that being under the law had a good effect, because it showed him his guilty helplessness, his moral and spiritual degeneracy, his fearful danger, and his need of a deliverer. The impossible demands of the law are not designed to save but to condemn sinners and drive them toward the Savior." (**ILLUSTRATION**) As a college football player, I wrenched my knee during practice but was determined to play in the next game. I went to a doctor and was given some cortisone shots and a bottle of ethyl chloride to deaden the pain by temporarily "freezing" the tissue around the knee. I played the entire game without mishap, periodically applying the ethyl chloride to eliminate the recurring pain. But the result of covering up the pain was a permanently damaged knee with more severe ligament injuries that still affect my mobility. By rejecting pain, the body's warning system, I paid serious consequences. The purpose of pain is to warn and protect. When that warning is ignored or covered up, the results are always bad. So it is with guilt. It is the divine warning system telling man he is destroying his soul. It ignored, the results are eternally bad. ([MacArthur NT Commentary- Galatians](#))

**Martin Luther** - The Law is a prison to those who have not as yet obtained grace. No prisoner enjoys the confinement. He hates it. If he could he would smash the prison and find his freedom at all cost. As long as he stays in prison he refrains from evil deeds. Not because he wants to, but because he has to. The bars and the chains restrain him. He does not regret the crime that put him in jail. On the contrary, he is mighty sore that he cannot rob and kill as before. If he could escape he would go right back to robbing and killing. The Law enforces good behavior, at least outwardly. We obey the Law because if we don't we will be punished. Our obedience is inspired by fear. We obey under duress and we do it resentfully. Now what kind of righteousness is this when we refrain from evil out of fear of punishment? Hence, the righteousness of the Law is at bottom nothing but love of sin and hatred of righteousness. All the same, the Law accomplishes this much, that it will outwardly at least and to a certain extent repress vice and crime. **But the Law is also a spiritual prison, a veritable hell.** When the Law begins to threaten a person with death and the eternal wrath of God, a man just cannot find any comfort at all. He cannot shake off at will the nightmare of terror which the Law stirs up in his conscience. Of this terror of the Law the Psalms furnish many glimpses. The Law is a civil and a spiritual prison. And such it should be. For that the Law is intended. Only the confinement in the prison of the Law must not be unduly prolonged. It must come to an end. **The freedom of faith must succeed the imprisonment of the Law.** Happy the person who knows how to utilize the Law so that it serves the purposes of grace and of faith. Unbelievers are ignorant of this happy knowledge. When Cain was first shut up in the prison of the Law he felt no pang at the fratricide he had committed. (Genesis 4:8-12) He thought he could pass it off as an incident with a shrug of the shoulder. "Am I my brother's keeper?" he answered God flippantly. (Ge 4:9b) But when he heard the ominous words, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," (Ge 4:10) Cain began to feel his imprisonment. **Did he know how to get out of prison? No. He failed to call the Gospel to his aid** (cp It was available! see Ge 3:15-note) He said: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." (Genesis 4:13) He could only think of the prison. **He forgot that he was brought face to face with his crime so that he should hurry to God for mercy and for pardon. Cain remained in the prison of the Law and despaired.** As a stone prison proves a physical handicap, so the spiritual prison of the Law proves a chamber of torture. But this it should only be until faith be revealed. The silly conscience must be educated to this. Talk to your

conscience. Say: "Sister, you are now in jail all right. But you don't have to stay there forever. It is written that we are 'shut up unto faith which should afterwards be revealed.' Christ will lead you to freedom. Do not despair like Cain, Saul, or Judas. They might have gone free if they had called Christ to their aid. Just take it easy, Sister Conscience. It's good for you to be locked up for a while. It will teach you to appreciate Christ." How anybody can say that he by nature loves the Law is beyond me. The Law is a prison to be feared and hated. Any unconverted person who says he loves the Law is a liar. He does not know what he is talking about. We love the Law about as well as a murderer loves his gloomy cell, his straight-jacket, and the iron bars in front of him. How then can the Law justify us? ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**POSB** - Very simply, the law shuts man up under sin; it imprisons and holds man in bondage to sin. How?

1. **The law shows man exactly where he fails—exactly where he comes short.** There is no question about it: the law said to do this, but the man did that. He did not do this. The failure is clearly spelled out, just as clearly as a speed limit sign spells out the violation of the speeder.
2. **The law accuses and condemns man.** As soon as a person violates the law, the law charges him. The law is in black and white, written down, so there is no question about it having been broken. Therefore, it preys upon his mind, cuts and convicts his heart. Guilt and conviction take over and the man is troubled and vexed to varying degrees, all dependent on the seriousness of the violation.
3. **The law has no life and no power to deliver man from the punishment due him for his violation.** This is the whole point: the law reveals the violation and condemns man; it imprisons him. The law does not deliver man; it condemns man to bondage. It continues and continues to point out man's sins and failures. And the case of the law is endless: its finger of accusation points out the man's failure every time he violates it. The bondage to the law is perpetual. **The only hope for man is for someone to appear** on the scene with the power to release him. That someone has appeared: Jesus Christ has come to set us free. But note: as prisoners we have to accept His deliverance. The choice is ours. We can believe and trust His power to deliver us or not. (Galatians-Colossians - KJV - POSB - Leadership Ministries Worldwide)

**Were kept in custody** (5432) ([phroureo](#) from **phrouros** = a sentinel in turn derived from **pro** = before, toward + **horao** = take special notice of) means to pay attention to something, thus giving us a clear picture of the action involved in guarding or protecting. To keep by guarding. **Phroureo** is a military metaphor speaking of a fortress with strong walls being guarded by a battalion of soldiers.

Paul says "we were guarded or protected by the Law". An interesting figurative use of this verb (*phroureo*) which is elsewhere used of a literal guarding of "the city of the Damascenes" in order to seize Paul when he tried to escape. This gives us quite a strong picture that this "guarding" is not a casual one, but it was used both of keeping the enemy out and of keeping the inhabitants in, lest they should flee or desert.. So in sum, the Law functions like a prison guard which keeps one under protection until faith opens the floodgates of heaven's grace to salvation by faith. But the other side of the Law is that it functions like a medieval jailer who keeps a man's dead spirit in a "dark dungeon" from which he will never be freed because he loves his sin and is unwilling to come to Jesus that he might be saved.

**Vine** adds that **phroureo** means "to keep by guarding, to keep under guard, as with a garrison (*phrouros*, a guard, or garrison), is used, (a) of blocking up every way of escape, as in a siege; (b) of providing protection against the enemy, as a garrison does (2 Cor. 11:32, "guarding the city," as "with a garrison.") It is used of the security of the Christian until the end, 1 Pet. 1:5 and of the sense of that security that is his when he puts all his matters into the hand of God, Phil. 4:7. In these passages the idea is not merely that of protection, but of inward garrisoning as by the Holy Spirit. **In Galatians 3:23 it means rather a benevolent custody and watchful guardianship in view of worldwide idolatry** (cp God's watchcare of Israel in Isaiah 5:2-note).

**Wuest** adds that in Galatians 3:23 **phroureo** "means "to keep inward under lock and key." The law was a jailer who held in custody those who were subjected to sin, in order that they should not escape the consciousness of their sins and their liability to punishment."

Here are the 4 uses of *phroureo*...

2 Corinthians 11:32 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was **guarding** the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were **kept in custody** under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Philippians 4:7-note And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, **will guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 1:5-note who are **protected** by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in

the last time.

**Comment:** This term in this context also implies that those who have been born again are in a holy war and are under constant enemy attack from a host of unholy enemies = the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#) (cp similar military metaphor in 1Pe 2:11-[note](#))

**Under the Law** - The phrase **under the Law** (or "under law") is used several times by Paul (Galatians 4:4,5,21 5:18 Ro 3:19 6:14,15 1 Co 9:20,21). As noted above the preposition [hupo](#) means under and here with Law (in the accusative case) conveys the sense of under the control of the Law.

**Gromacki** - All unregenerate men are **under the curse** (Gal 3:10), **under sin** (Gal 3:22), and "**under the law**" (Gal 3:23). Although these relationships have some distinctiveness, Kent remarked that "these are not totally different, for the law contained the standards which had been transgressed and thus was the proof that sin had been committed." All unsaved men are **under sin** regardless of whether they have had personal contact with the Mosaic law. The isolated heathen has rejected the revelation of God in nature and thereby demonstrated his slavery to sin (Ro 1:18-32). As a legalistic Jew, Paul then inserted himself into the argument (note the usage of "**we**" and "**our**"). In their unsaved lives, both the Galatians and the apostle "were kept under the law." They were literally under constant surveillance. They were in the prison house of sin with no way of escape. The law was like a jailor or a sentry, watching every act of moral disobedience. They were being guarded at all times. ([Stand Fast in Liberty - Exposition of Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon on under the law** - When the Spirit of God begins to deal with us, we find that we are always within the sphere of law; we cannot get out of it. We wake in the morning, and there is the law right in front of us. All during the day, there is the law right before our eyes. If we go to sleep at night, there is the law. We are everywhere under the law. When once we recognize God and realize the fact that we are His creatures, there comes into our startled conscience the remembrance of the universality of law. It was said of the old Roman Empire that, under the rule of Caesar, if a man once broke the law of Rome, he was in prison everywhere. The whole world was one vast prison to him, for he could not get out of the reach of the imperial power.

**John MacArthur** comments on **under the Law** - The purpose of the law is to reveal and convict men of sin. "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law," Paul declared; "for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' ... I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (Rom. 7:7, 9).

**Forgiveness** means nothing to a person who is either unaware he has done anything wrong or is unconvinced the wrong he knows he has done produces any serious consequences to him. **Grace** means nothing to a person who does not know he is sinful and that such sinfulness means he is separated from God and damned. **It is therefore pointless to preach grace until the impossible demands of the law and the reality of guilt before God are preached.** In the opening chapter of his classic allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan writes: *As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and, not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do?"* ([Click link if you have never read Pilgrim's Progress](#)) A short while later the man encountered Evangelist, who asked, "Wherefore dost thou cry?" Pilgrim answered, "Sir, I perceive by the book in my hand that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment." Evangelist then pointed the pilgrim toward a gate in the distance and to a light beyond it and a hill. With the great burden on his back and the book in his hand, Pilgrim started off toward the hill, crying out, "Life! Life! Eternal life!" The burden on Pilgrim's back was his sin, the hook in his hand was the Bible, and the hill toward which he journeyed was Calvary. It was in reading God's Word that he learned God's law condemned him to death and hell because of his sin, and it was that knowledge of sin and judgment that drove Him to the cross of Christ, where the penalty for his sin was paid in full and complete forgiveness offered. ([Ibid](#)) ([See also his sermon](#))

## **FAITH IN CHRIST FREES US FROM BONDAGE OF THE LAW**

**Being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed** (unveiled) - "Kept in custody in preparation for the **faith** that was destined to be **revealed** (unveiled, disclosed)" (Amplified) "We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed." (NLT)

God's Law hemmed in all men, in a sense keeping all men in prison with no way of escape, keeping all of us effectively "on death row" waiting to receive our just punishment of death, for the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23). Like a modern day criminal on death row, we were in desperate need of a pardon from the "Governor" (so to speak, the Governor of course being God). God the Spirit convicted us of our sin (using the Law), the Father offered a pardon (giving us grace), and Christ effected the pardon so to speak (by fulfilling the Law). Our part was simply to accept the pardon, the redemption provided by the precious blood of Jesus (1 Peter 1:18,

19), Who Alone could set us free from "death row!" As Phillip Bliss wrote "[Hallelujah! What a Savior!](#)"

"Man of Sorrows!" what a name  
For the Son of God, who came  
Ruined sinners to reclaim.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile, and helpless we;  
Spotless Lamb of God was He;  
"Full atonement!" can it be?  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Lifted up was He to die;  
"It is finished!" was His cry;  
Now in Heav'n exalted high.  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When He comes, our glorious King,  
All His ransomed home to bring,  
Then anew His song we'll sing:  
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**Spurgeon on being shut up and faith...revealed** - Well do I remember when I was "imprisoned" in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I found no way of escape. I was "imprisoned" until faith came, and opened the door, and brought me out into "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Ro 8:21). The only thing that could bring us out of prison was **faith**. Our duty is to show men how the way of human merit is closed. We must shut them up to simple **faith** only, and show them that the way of **faith** is available.

**J J Findlay on faith - Faith** is trebly honored here. It is the condition of the gift, the characteristic of its recipient (Gal 3:22 = "might be given to those who **believe**", Gal 3:24 = "so that we may be justified by **faith**."), and the end for which he was put under the charge of Law (Gal 3:23). "To them that believe" is "given," as it was in foretaste to Abraham (Gal 3:6-[note](#)), a righteousness unearned, and bestowed on Christ's account (Gal 3:13-[note](#); Ro 5:17, 18-[note](#)); which brings with it the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, reserved in its conscious possession for Abraham's children in the faith of Christ (Gal 3:14-[note](#); Gal 4:4). These blessings form the commencement of that true life, whose root is a spiritual union with Christ, and which reaches on to eternity (Gal 2:20-[note](#); Ro 5:21-[note](#); Ro 6:23-[note](#)). Of such life the Law could impart nothing; but it **taught** men their need of it, and **disposed** them to accept it. This was the purpose of its institution. **It was the forerunner, not the finisher, of Faith** (Expositor's Bible Commentary - [Galatians 3:19-24 The Design of the Law](#))

**Wuest on to the faith which was later to be revealed** - The word unto (KJV = "unto the faith") is from eis, and is not temporal in its significance, having the idea of *until*, but means here "*with a view to*." That is, sinners were kept guarded under the law with a view to their exercising faith in Christ. The law shut them up to one avenue of escape, namely, **faith in Christ**, for during the 1500 years in which the law was in force, it was the means of convicting sinners of their sins and of causing them to look ahead in faith to the atonement God would some day offer which would pay for their sins. These sinners were saved by the blood of Christ just as surely and just as eternally as believing sinners since the Cross.

**Martin Luther** feels (and I generally agree with his interesting application) that there are two aspects to **the faith which was later to be revealed** - (1) We know that Paul has reference to the time of Christ's coming. **It was then that faith and the object of faith were fully revealed.** (2) But we may apply the historical fact to our inner life. When Christ came He abolished the Law and brought liberty and life to light (cp 2 Ti 1:10 - Christ did this the first time when we initially believed on Him = "past tense salvation" - see [Three Tenses of Salvation](#)). This He continues to do in the hearts of the believers. (**Ed:** Now Luther is speaking about how faith is revealed in our day to day life as believers, in our [progressive sanctification](#) or "present tense salvation") The Christian has a body in whose members, as Paul says, sin dwells and wars. I take sin to mean not only the deed but root, tree, fruit, and all. A Christian may perhaps not fall into the gross sins of murder, adultery, theft, but he is not free from impatience, complaints, hatreds, and blasphemy of God. As carnal lust is strong in a young man, in a man of full age the desire for glory, and in an old man covetousness, so impatience, doubt, and hatred of God often prevail in the hearts of sincere Christians. Examples of these sins may

be garnered from the Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, and all the Sacred Scriptures. **Accordingly each Christian continues to experience in his heart times of the Law and times of the Gospel. The times of the Law are discernible by heaviness of heart, by a lively sense of sin, and a feeling of despair brought on by the Law. These periods of the Law will come again and again as long as we live.** To mention my own case. There are many times when I find fault with God and am impatient with Him. The wrath and the judgment of God displease me, my wrath and impatience displease Him. Then is the season of the Law, when "the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." (Gal 5:17-note) The time of grace returns when the heart is enlivened by the promise of God's mercy (**Ed**: I would add that when we are filled with Christ's Spirit [Eph 5:18-note] and enabled thereby to walk by His Spirit [Gal 5:16-note], it is then that we will be empowered to not fulfill the desire of the flesh! Memorize these passages and study the notes on these vitally important Scriptures, if you want to minimize those times when there is as Luther calls it a "season of the Law"! See also notes on "[Make Disciples](#)"). It **soliloquizes**: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? (Ps 42:5) Can you see nothing but law, sin, death, and hell? Is there no grace, no forgiveness, no joy, peace, life, heaven, no Christ and God? Trouble me no more, my soul. Hope in God who has not spared His own dear Son but has given Him into death for thy sins." When the Law carries things too far, say: "Mister Law, you are not the whole show. There are other and better things than you. They tell me to trust in the Lord." There is a time for the Law and a time for grace. Let us study to be good timekeepers. It is not easy. Law and grace may be miles apart in essence, but in the heart, they are pretty close together. **In the heart fear and trust, sin and grace, Law and Gospel cross paths continually.** Whether reason hears that justification before God is obtained by grace alone, it draws the inference that the Law is without value. The doctrine of the Law must therefore be studied carefully lest we either reject the Law altogether, or are tempted to attribute to the Law a capacity to save. There are three ways in which the Law may be abused. First, by the self-righteous hypocrites who fancy that they can be justified by the Law. Secondly, by those who claim that Christian liberty exempts a Christian from the observance of the Law. "These," says Peter, "use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness," (1 Peter 2:16KJV-note) and bring the name and the Gospel of Christ into ill repute. Thirdly, the Law is abused by those who do not understand that the Law is meant to drive us to Christ. When the Law is properly used its value cannot be too highly appraised. It will take me to Christ every time. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** - The second half of the verse reminds us that there is indeed a Savior and that it had always been God's purpose to save a great company through faith in him. Seen from this angle, even the law flowed from God's grace, because it prepared men and women to receive the Lord Jesus Christ when he came. In the last phrase, "**faith**," the sole means of grace, is again prominent. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Ryken** - The law is a guardian, refusing to let go until it hands us directly over to Christ.

**W E Vine on be revealed** notes that "until the revelation was made there was no way of escape from the strict surveillance and the unrelenting condemnation of the law. But when Christ came He led out from that fold all who heard His voice and followed Him, and to them He gave eternal life, John 10:28, as a free, unearned gift."

**Revealed** (601)(**apokalupto** from **apó** = from + **kalúpto** = cover, conceal, English = apocalypse - see [apokalupsis](#)) literally means to remove the cover from and so the idea is to remove that which conceals something. Almost all of the NT uses have a figurative sense referring to some aspect of spiritual truth that was heretofore hidden but now has had the "lid removed" so that it can be seen (understood). Here the secret so to speak was "faith" ([pistis](#))

**Revealed** is in the [passive voice](#) (be revealed) and in this context would be the "**divine passive**" for only the Spirit of God could remove our spiritual blindness and give us eyes of faith to see that belief in the Messiah was the "key" to our release from the dark dungeon in which we were shut up by the Law (Gal 3:23) and Sin (Gal 3:22).

The fourth stanza of Charles Wesley's classic aptly describes our release from **imprisonment by the Law and Sin**...Play Steve Green's vocal version of [And Can It Be?](#)

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
thine eye diffused a quickening ray;  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
my chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
alive in Him, my living Head,  
and clothed in righteousness divine,

bold I approach th' eternal throne,  
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,  
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

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### Galatians 3:23-25 TODAY IN THE WORD

A good teacher is like a guide, not only knowing but also showing the way. A teacher's life-experience can be a valuable part of a student's learning experience.

With these axioms in mind, in 1986 evangelist Leighton Ford began a ministry to find and develop young evangelical leaders. In 1992, he started the Arrow Leadership Program, a focused, group-oriented, two-year training program emphasizing evangelism and leadership skills.

Ford told Christianity Today: "I sensed a desire among the younger generation of emerging leaders for a highly personalized leadership development program. They hungered for mentoring relationships with older leaders and affirmation between peers--and above all, a program that stressed character development alongside skills for growing ministries."

As Paul explains in today's reading, the law was God's "development program" for the Jews, teaching and guiding them. First, yesterday's main idea continues: that the law led to the fulfillment of the promise. The verb in verse 23 often has the connotation of protecting rather than imprisonment for punishment, and probably should be so understood here. God protected His children from the excesses of the heathen nations through the controls of the law. The purpose of this protective function of the law was to urge or push people to faith.

In verse 24 the law as a teacher leads men to faith. In Greek the law is called "paidagogos," not a "didaskalos." In other words, the law was an inferior slave or servant ("paidagogos") committed with the task of bringing the master's son to school or to the schoolmaster ("didaskalos"). The "pedagogue" was charged with disciplining the child and giving him moral training, by protecting him and regulating his outward habits. That was all the law could do; but when it led the son to Christ, its work was finished. Christ was the schoolmaster ("didaskalos"), a point of Paul's illustration which would have been clear to the Romans of that day.

APPLY THE WORD Salvation is one of the most precious gifts God has given us. As we've been studying Galatians, our hope is that you are gaining a greater appreciation for God's grace and our redemption in Christ.

### Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Greek - hoste o nomos paidagogos hemon gegonen (3SRAI) eis Christon hina ek pisteos dikaiothomen (1SAPS)

Amplified: So that the Law served [to us Jews] as our **trainer** [our **guardian**, our **guide** to Christ, to lead us] until Christ [came], that we might be justified (declared righteous, put in right standing with God) by and through faith.

Amplified (2015) With the result that the Law has become our **tutor** and our **disciplinarian to guide us** to Christ, so that we may be [a]justified [that is, declared free of the guilt of sin and its penalty, and placed in right standing with God] by faith.

ESV So then, the law was our **guardian** until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

KJV Wherefore the law was our **schoolmaster** to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NET Thus the law had become our **guardian** until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith.

NLT Let me put it another way. The law was our **guardian** until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith.

Phillips Or, to change the metaphor, the Law was **like a strict governess** in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in him.

Wuest So that the law became our **guardian** until Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be justified. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

YLT so that the law became our **child-conductor** -- to Christ, that by faith we may be declared righteous,

GNT Galatians 3:24 στε ν μοσ παιδαγωγ ς μ ν γ γονεν ε ς Χριστ ν, να κ π στεω ς δικαιοθ μεν·

ASV Galatians 3:24 So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

CSB Galatians 3:24 The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

NIV Galatians 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

NKJ Galatians 3:24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NRS Galatians 3:24 Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.

NAB Galatians 3:24 Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NJB Galatians 3:24 So the Law was serving as a slave to look after us, to lead us to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

GWN Galatians 3:24 Before Christ came, Moses' laws served as our guardian. Christ came so that we could receive God's approval by faith.

BBE Galatians 3:24 So the law has been a servant to take us to Christ, so that we might have righteousness by faith.

- **the law:** Ga 3:25 2:19 4:2,3 Mt 5:17,18 Ac 13:38,39 Ro 3:20-22 7:7-9,24,25 Ro 10:4 Col 2:17 Heb 7:18,19 9:8-16 10:1-14
- **justified:** Ga 2:16 Ac 13:39
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:24-25: The Stern Pedagogue](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3 Commentary](#) - Martin Luther
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc



Law Serves As Our Tutor

## THE LAW SERVED AS OUR GUIDE

This Paul's final answer to his question in Gal 3:19: ["Why the Law then?"](#)

**Martin Luther** - Here again the law and the Gospel are combined. The law is not put in charge forever, but only until it has led us to Christ (see also Gal 3:19, 23). The law does not justify hypocrites, for they remain without Christ in their presumption and complacency; conversely, it does not leave the contrite in death and damnation but drives them to Christ. Those who remain in their wickedness and do not lay hold on Christ by faith eventually fall into despair. But those who are troubled and oppressed by the law know that these terrors and troubles will not continue forever, but that they are prepared in this way to come to Christ and to receive the freedom of the spirit. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Therefore the Law** - Paul does not mean just the "Do's and Don't's" aspects of the Law but also the Ceremonial Aspects of the Law for they both are of value to lead one to Christ. For example, the ceremonial law taught Israel about the need for a blood sacrifice to cover (but not take away sins because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins Heb 10:4-[note](#)).

As **Spurgeon** says "Neither the Jewish law of ten commands nor its law of ceremonies was ever intended to save anybody. It was not the intent of the ceremonial law in itself to effect the redemption of the soul. By a set of pictures it set forth the way of salvation, but it was not itself the way. It was a map, not a country—a model of the road, not the road itself. The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, could not really take away sin. These sacrifices and offerings were but types of the great sacrifice that in due time was presented by the true priest.

As **Robert Morgan** says the Old Testament Tabernacle "is packed with pictures and prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ. We

primarily see this in three ways: First, the sacrifices on the Tabernacle altars speak of Christ. Second, the office and duties of the priests speaks of Christ. And third, the feasts and festivals of ancient Israel teach us various aspects of our Lord's person and work." ([Leviticus 11-15 The Divine Dermatologist](#))

**Has become our tutor to lead us to Christ:** The "tutor" was a person (often a slave) employed by Greek/Roman higher class and delegated as tutor and guardian for young boys until they came of age (usually from about age 6 -18 yr). This position was a temporary and not very prestigious, position. These slaves were strict disciplinarians causing those under their care to yearn for the day when they would be free from their tutor's custody. Beloved, does this sound like what the "Law" does to us when are under its heavy yoke? These individuals were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. The pedagogue watched they young boy's behavior at home and attended him when he went away from home to school. When the son entered on all the privileges of adult sonship, the schoolmaster's responsibilities were fulfilled.

And so by way of analogy Paul says the Law as [pedagogue](#) kept watch over us and by showing us our sins, and in the ideal situation by finally escorting us to Christ. Seeing in the law the perfection of God and the imperfection of man, one realizes how far short they fall of God's holiness. Even as the paidagogos was to see that the child back and forth to school safely, the Law supervised God's people until the coming of Christ (Mt 5:17,18).

As John Stott has written "We cannot come to Christ to be justified until we have first been to Moses to be condemned. But once we have gone to Moses, and acknowledged our sin, guilt and condemnation, we must not stay there. We must let Moses send us to Christ" ([The Message of Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon on tutor** - The pedagogue was a slave who was employed by the father of a family to take his boy to school and bring him home again. He often also was permitted to whip the boy if he did not learn his lessons well. The law whipped us to Christ and taught us that we could not be saved except by Christ. The law acts as a pedagogue by teaching us our obligations to God, by showing us our sinfulness, by sweeping away all our excuses. Did you ever know a boy without an excuse? I never did. I think I never knew a girl either. We all make excuses readily enough. But those rough, surly pedagogues always answered the boy's idle apologies by giving the offender an extra stroke of the whip for daring to impose upon his guardian. That is what the law does with us. We say to it, "We have not done exactly as we ought, but then think of poor human nature!" The law says, "This is what God commands, and if you do not obey, you will have to be cast away forever from His presence." A man will say, "Well, I know I got drunk, but that is merely gratifying an instinct of human nature." Suppose that this drunk when he gets sober falls into the hands of a thief. Will he not hand the rogue over to a policeman? But what if the thief claims it was human nature that committed the robbery? Would the drunk say, "I will get human nature locked up for twelve months if I can"? He does not recognize soft speeches about human nature when anyone does wrong to him, and he knows in his own soul that there is no valid defense in such a plea when he does wrong to God. Many transgressors also argue, "Well, I have not done worse than other people." To which the law replies, "What do you have to do with other people? Each individual must stand or fall on his own account before the law. The law is to you. If another has broken it, he shall be punished even as you will, inasmuch as you have broken it." Then the man cries, "But I have been better than others!" But the law says, "If you have not perfectly walked in all the ways of the Lord your God to do them, I have nothing to do with comparing you with others." When the law comes, it sweeps all excuses away and makes us see how hollow, false, and even wicked they are.

**Tutor** (child conductor, guardian or guide)([3807](#))(**paidagogos** from **país** = a child under development by strict instruction + **agōgós** =a leader from **ágō** = to lead) literally means a child leader. Properly, a legally appointed overseer, authorized to train (bring) up a child which includes administering discipline, chastisement, and instruction – i.e. doing what promotes development. Paidagōgos is used of the role of the Law (OT), especially as the necessary "letter" (foundation) to establish the doctrines of salvation, grace, faith, etc. The Law is not replaced (overturned) by the NT; rather, the OT is fulfilled (consummated) in the NT. "The two are two distinct time-periods (ages) of the same covenant (testament)" (G. Archer).The Law looks to people knowing (obeying) Christ through faith. Accordingly, 3807 (paidagōgós) and faith (4102/pístis) are closely connected. The paidagōgos was usually a slave with the duty of: taking the child to school, supervising their general conduct, etc. (Arndt, 608). "The law produces the startling realization of sin which does not save (Ro 3:20, 7:7)" (DNTT, 2, 445,446).

**Vine** notes that in Gal. 3:24, 25A.V., "schoolmaster" (R.V., "tutor,"), but here the idea of instruction is absent. "In this and allied words the idea is that of training, discipline, not of impartation of knowledge. The paidagōgos was not the instructor of the child; he exercised a general supervision over him and was responsible for his moral and physical well-being. Thus understood, paidagōgos is appropriately used with 'kept in ward' and 'shut up,' whereas to understand it as equivalent to 'teacher' introduces an idea entirely foreign to the passage, and throws the Apostle's argument into confusion."

**Morris** feels a better word is **custodian** - "The custodian was not a teacher, but a slave whose special task was to look after a child. He exercised a general supervision over the boy's activities, and it was his responsibility to bring him to the teacher who would give him the instruction that befitted his station."

There are only 3 uses in the NT - Gal 3:23, 24 and 1 Corinthians 4:15

For if you were to have countless **tutors** in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

**John Stott** explains that "Paul uses the word again in 1 Corinthians 4:15, saying 'You may have ten thousand tutors in Christ, but you have only one father' (NEB). In other words, 'there are plenty of people to discipline you, but I am the only one to love you.' Later in the same chapter he asks: 'Am I to come to you with a rod in my hand (i.e. like a *paidagōgos*), or in love and a gentle spirit (i.e. like a father)?' (1 Cor. 4:21, NEB)." ([The Message of Galatians](#))

#### Resources on [Pedagogue](#)

- [Click picture of first century pedagogue.](#)
- [Wikipedia article on pedagogue](#)

**Thayer** - Among the Greeks and Romans the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood . . . The name carries with it an idea of severity (as a stern censor and enforcer of morals) in 1 Cor 4:15, where the father is distinguished from the tutor as one whose discipline is usually milder, and in Gal. 3:24, 25 where the Mosaic law is likened to a guide which arouses the consciousness of sin, and is called *paidagogos eis Christon*, i.e., preparing the soul for Christ, because those who have learned by experience with the law that they are not and cannot be commended to God by their works, welcome the more eagerly the hope of salvation offered them through the death and resurrection of Christ, the Son of God

**Vincent**, "'Schoolmaster' however is an error. The word means an 'overseer-guardian.' . . . 'Tutor'; (Rev) is defensible on the ground of etymology, *tueri* (to look upon, thence, to guard). In civil law, a tutor is a person legally appointed for the care of the person and property of a minor. So Bacon (*Adv of Learning*, ii. 19): 'the first six kings being in truth as 'tutors' of the state of Rome in the infancy thereof.' The later use of the word, however, in the sense of 'instructor,' has so completely supplanted the earlier, that the propriety of the revisers' rendering is questionable.

"The law is represented, not as one who conducts to the school of Christ; for Christ is not represented here as a teacher, but as an atoner; but rather as an 'overseer' or 'guardian,' to keep watch of those committed to its care, to accompany them with its commands and prohibitions, and to keep them in a condition of dependence and restraint, thus continually bringing home to them the consciousness of being shut up in sins, and revealing sin as positive transgression" (WS, 980).

Xenophon (about 429 BC), "When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad, others release him from his moral tutor and his schoolmaster: he is then no longer under a ruler and is allowed to go his own way (Constitution of the Lacedaemonians 3.1)" (LCL).

Barclay, "When a boy went to school, the *paidagōgos* really took over the management of the boy and retained it till the boy was eighteen. The *paidagōgos* was not in our sense of the word a teacher at all. His duty was to accompany the boy to school each day and to see that he got there safely . . . to train the boy in morals, in manners and in deportment." J. Freeman, "The *paidagōgos* was a mixture of nurse, footman, chaperon and tutor."

Clement of Alexandria (in *The Paedagogus*), "The *paidagogos* being practical, not theoretical, his aim is thus to improve the soul, and to train it up to a virtuous life . . . It is told of a good *paidagōgos* that, when he was asked, 'What is your duty?' he replied, 'My duty is to make the good, pleasant to the boy.'

"In a third century papyrus a mother writes to her son,: 'Let you and your *paidogōgos* see to it that you go to a fitting teacher,' and she ends the letter, 'Salute your much honored *paidogōgos*, Eros.' But the balance is very much the other way. . . . the *paidogōgos* existed for no other reason than to make his charge (the boy) independent of his care."

Xenophon (Sparta, 3.1), "Whenever they emerge from childhood to youth, they cease from *paidogōgoi*, they cease from the teachers. No one governs them any more, but they let them go as masters of themselves" (ala Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*, 87-90).

Ro 10:4: "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (NASB).

**Rod Mattoon** - The school master was not a school teacher, but a slave in the home. He was a servant that took care of children. They clothed, washed, cared for, and disciplined the child. The Greek word is *paidagogos* which means "a child conductor, one who

takes the child by the hand and leads him to school." In the same manner, the law takes us by the hand to the cross of Calvary. It says, "You need a Savior. You are a sinner. You need to be saved." Salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are saved by God's grace, not by keeping the law because no one can keep it. Christ was the only one who did.

- The law demands, but grace gives.
- The law says, "Do," but grace says, "Believe."
- The law threatens, pronouncing a curse, but grace entreats, pronouncing a blessing.
- The law condemns the very best of men, but God's grace saves the worst of men. Thank God for His wonderful grace and mercy.

**Donald Macleod** - the Reformers spoke of the pedagogical use of the law. This terminology comes from the Greek word *paidagogos*. The *paidagogos* was the slave who took the child to school. It is misleading to equate the law with the teacher in this connection. The teacher, in Paul's thought, is Christ Himself. The law is the servant who performs the humble function of taking the child to Jesus or bringing the soul to Christ. Luther was particularly interested in this. The law could not justify, but it could bring the soul to Christ. Luther explored this with passionate intensity and often very movingly, particularly in his great Commentary on Galatians. What does the law do as a pedagogue? Well, one thing it does is to multiply transgressions. The Old Testament Jews could hardly move without falling over some legal trip-wire. When they ate food, when they sowed their seed, when they made their clothes, when they went to war, when they sold, when they bore children, they were for ever falling over rules. **The effect of all this was to heighten the sense of sin.** Augustine went further and said that sometimes the law itself caused sin. He was, in fact, building on Paul's comment, 'I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, "Do not covet"' (Romans 7:7-[note](#), cp similar truth in Ro 7:5-[note](#)). **It is brilliant psychology: the prohibition itself prompting the disobedience** Augustine describes in his Confessions how as children they lived near an orchard full of pears and, although they hated pears, just because they were banned, every day they broke in and stole them. But it is not simply psychology: it is biblical teaching. Those who are in charge of young people are surely aware that very often the well-intentioned intent to forbid or ban something serves instead to suggest the idea of a sin never before present in the child's mind. **But the chief thing, of course, is that the law brings us to Christ by giving us a bad conscience. It is by the law that there comes the knowledge of sin. Christ came to call sinners, not the righteous, to repentance (Luke 5:32) and the function of the law is to create that sense of need, that conviction of sin, out of which alone can faith be born.** (A Faith to Live By - Understanding Christian Doctrine)

**William Barclay** on *paidagogos* - THE word *paidagōgos* occurs in the NT in only two passages; but it is a word the correct understanding of which is essential, if Paul's thought is to be understood. In 1 Cor. 4:15 Paul says to the Corinthians that they may have ten thousand *paidagōgoi*, but they have not many fathers; that it is he who is their true father in the Christian faith. There, the AV translates the word 'instructors'; Moffatt translates 'thousands to superintend'; the RSV translates 'guides'. In Gal. 3:24, 25 the AV says that the law was our 'schoolmaster' (*paidagōgos*) to lead us to Christ ... but after faith comes we are no longer under a *paidagōgos*. There Moffatt translates, the law 'held us as wards in discipline'. And the RSV has it that the law was our 'custodian'. **None of these translations is fully satisfactory, for the very good reason that the *paidagōgos* carried out a function to which there is nothing precisely corresponding in our educational system.** Up to the age of seven the Greek boy was almost exclusively in his mother's charge. But even then, if there was a *paidagōgos* in the household, he had his say. Socrates in Plato's Protagoras (325 c) says of the child: '*Mother and nurse and father and paidagōgos are quarrelling about the improvement of the child as soon as ever he is able to understand them.*' It was when he went to school that the *paidagōgos* really took over the management of the boy and retained it till the boy was eighteen. **The *paidagōgos* was not in our sense of the word a teacher at all. His duty was to accompany the boy to school each day and to see that he got there safely; to carry the boy's books and his lyre; to watch his conduct in school; to see to his conduct in the street; to train the boy in morals, in manners and in deportment. He must see that the boy walked modestly with downcast head in the streets; he must see that he gave place to older people and was becomingly silent in their presence; he must teach him to be well-mannered at table and to wear his clothes with grace.** He had to teach him all the Greek meant by *eukosmia*, good manners, good deportment, pleasantness of life. K. J. Freeman says of the *paidagōgos* that he was 'a mixture of nurse, footman, chaperone and tutor'. When in the Lysis (208 c) Socrates is trying to teach the lad that life does not consist in doing what you like, there is a conversation like this. '*Are you your own master, or do they not even allow that?*' '*Nay; of course they do not allow that.*' '*Then you have a master?*' '*Yes, my paidagōgos; there he is.*' ... '*And what does he do with you?*' '*He takes me to my teachers.*' It was an anxious and a most practical job, especially if the lad was a high-spirited and independent boy....In any event the *paidagōgos* existed for no other reason than to make his charge independent of his care. Xenophon in his work on Sparta (3.1) writes: '*Whenever they emerge from childhood to youth, they cease from paidagōgoi, they cease from teachers. No one governs them any more, but they let them go as masters of themselves.*' When Paul spoke of the law as our *paidagōgos* to bring us to Christ, in the very phrase he affirmed that the law was an inadequate, unsatisfactory thing, doomed to come to an end. It was another way of saying that Christ is the end of the law. (New Testament Words)

**Phillip Ryken** - In wealthy Greek families, children were individually raised by pedagogues. From age six until late adolescence, the child was under constant care and supervision. The pedagogue was part babysitter and part chaperone. Since he was in charge of

discipline, the pedagogue was also part probation officer. Ancient drawings usually depict him holding a rod or a cane to administer corporal punishment. The pedagogue was not primarily a teacher, although sometimes he helped a child review his lessons. Thus the King James Version is somewhat misleading when it translates the word as "schoolmaster." The pedagogue did have to make sure that his pupil made it to and from school. He helped to feed and dress the child, and also to carry the child's educational tools (tablet and stylus, book or scroll, musical instrument). Once at school, there was a special room where pedagogues waited for their young students until their lessons were finished. But the pedagogue was not the educator; he was the disciplinarian. A pedagogue served the best interests of the child in many ways, and a close bond of affection often developed. Discipline was not necessarily severe, and the pedagogue provided protection as well as punishment. He also served as a moral tutor, shaping the child's ethics. In the plan of salvation, the law is the pedagogue that raised the Jews from childhood through adolescence. It was not a schoolmaster to teach them how to get better and better until God finally accepted them. On the contrary, the law was for discipline. It told God's people what to do, and then it punished them for failing to do it. There were times when the Jews chafed under this discipline (chaperones never have been very popular!). But all the while, the law was preparing God's children to enter their majority. Like any pedagogue, the law eventually worked its way out of a job. When a child comes of age, it no longer needs constant supervision. The ancient Greek writer Xenophon (c. 428-c. 354 B.C.) explained, "When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad, others release him from his 'pedagogue' and from his teacher; he is then no longer under them, but is allowed to go his own way." In much the same way, the law was needed only until the coming of Christ. This is what Paul means when he speaks of the coming of faith. In one sense, faith had already come, since God had always told his people to trust him. But what they trusted in was the Savior to come. The true object of their faith was Jesus Christ, and when he came on the scene, the time for the law was over and the era of faith had begun. (Galatians - Reformed Expository Commentary)

**So that** - Always pay attention to this important [term of purpose or result](#).

**So that we may be justified by faith** Judaizers wanted their hearers to go back to Moses (to be their "PP" their permanent pedagogue!), but that was not far enough. In fact they really needed to go back to Abraham where the promise of justification by faith was given (Ge 15:6-note). The Law came hundreds of years after Abraham's "conversion" by faith and notably did not annul the promise of salvation by grace through faith. To the contrary the LAW was given to reveal sin (Ro 3:20-note) and prepare the way for Christ to come and fulfill the promise (Galatians 3:24,25).

The Law is a tutor, not a savior...a mirror, not a cleanser.

**Justified** (acquitted, vindicated, freed) (1344)(**dikaioo** from **dike** = right, expected behavior or conformity, not according to one's own standard, but according to an imposed standard with prescribed punishment for nonconformity) ([Click](#) for more discussion of **dikaioo**) primarily means to deem to be right. **Dikaioo** describes the act by which a man is brought into a right state of relationship to God. **Dikaioo** is a legal term having to do with the law and the courtroom, where it represented the legally binding verdict of the judge. This is the sense in which Paul uses **dikaioo** in this section in Galatians and in the parallel passages in Romans (Ro 3:21-5:11) in which he unfolds the doctrine of justification.

**Martin Luther** - The law does not lead us to another lawgiver requiring good works, but to Christ, our justifier and Saviour, so that we might be justified by faith in him, and not by works. But when we feel the force of the law we do not understand or believe this; that is why we say, "I have lived wickedly, for I have transgressed all God's commandments, and therefore I am guilty of eternal death. If God would prolong my life for a few years, or at least a few months, I would amend my life and live a holy life from now on." This is an abuse of the proper function of the law. Our reason is overtaken in these troubles and boldly promises God to fulfill the whole law. From this come many sects and many ceremonies designed to merit grace and forgiveness. Those who devised these things thought that the law led them not to Christ but to a new law, or to Christ as a lawgiver and not as one who has abolished the law. The true function of the law is to bring me to the knowledge of my sin and to humble me, so that I may come to Christ and be justified by faith. But faith is neither law nor work, but an assured confidence that lays hold of Christ, who is the end of the law (Romans 10:4). How? It is not that he has abolished the old law and given us a new one, or that he is a judge who must be pacified by what we do. He is the end of the law to all those who believe; that is to say, everyone who believes in him is righteous, and he will never accuse such people. The law, then, is good, holy, and just if we use it as we should. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

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### Spurgeon - Never Go Back to the Law

If you are a Christian, you must never go back to the law. Do not begin to judge yourself as if you were under the law. What if you are a sinner? It is true, you are. Confess your sin and mourn over it, but remember there is a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness. That sin of yours was laid on Christ before you committed it. It was laid on the scapegoat's head and put away. At this moment you are still clean in the sight of God through that great washing that you have received in the precious blood. Do not imagine that God will change His mind about you; He never did and never can change His mind. He has said concerning each soul that believes in His dear Son, "He who believes in Him is not condemned." You are complete in Christ Jesus. In Him you have righteousness and strength; in Him you may even glory. Get away from legal doctrines, and stand upon the gospel rock, and you will

be happy and holy all your days.

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### **Spurgeon - Always Keep the Law in Its Proper Place**

Those of you who teach, when you try to teach others you must always keep the law in its proper place. We preach good works with all our might as the result of faith, as the outgrowth of faith, but not as the groundwork of salvation. The tree of human nature must be altered first, or the fruit cannot be good. There will be no pears on that crabtree until you change the stock. Do not, therefore, go preaching to crabtrees and tell them to bear pears and apples.

Christ is able to change man's nature, and then good fruits will come as a matter of course. But I am afraid that in many Sunday schools the children are taught a different doctrine, somewhat like this: "Now, dear children, be very good, and obey your parents, and love Jesus, and you will be saved." That is not the gospel, and it is not true. Often I hear it said, "Love Jesus, dear children." That is not the gospel. It is, "Trust Him. Believe." It is not love, but faith that is the saving grace. That sentimental love of Jesus, which does not spring out of faith in Him, is a spurious emotion, a counterfeit of love, and not at all the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The root of the matter is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). That is the gospel for a child of two years of age, and the gospel for a man of a hundred. It is not your doing, not your obeying the law. You have broken that and put yourself out of all possible hope in that direction. But your acceptance of what Christ has done will save you at once, and save you forever.

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### **Spurgeon - The Beauties of the Plan of Salvation**

Observe a few of the beauties of the plan of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ: It prevents men from having low thoughts of sin. If a man says, "I have not kept this law of God perfectly, but still I have done very well, and any mistakes I have made are little sins; God is merciful, He will wipe them out," he is sure to be a believer in self-salvation. It always is connected with narrow thoughts of sin. A man knows he has sinned, but he thinks little of the wrong. He cannot believe that sin is such a great evil that men should be cast into hell for it. He kicks against the doctrine of damnation. He will not believe it, just because he does not know and will not admit that sin is a great and tremendous evil. So long as the idea of self-salvation exists, sin is lightly thought of. But when we see that sin could not be put away until the incarnate God Himself hung upon the tree and bled to death for men, then we see sin in its true colors and loathe it as a deadly thing, and with our joy for pardoned guilt we mingle abhorrence of the sin that required such an atoning sacrifice.

The plan of salvation by grace gives men high thoughts of God. In the other system, their idea of God is that He is very much like themselves. They try to save themselves, and they pull down God to their standard. Each man has a different standard. That miserly old gentleman—his standard is that he will build a row of poorhouses with his moldy leavings, and that will content the Most High. Another says, "I never open my shop on a Sunday." Perhaps he cheats enough on Monday to make up for it, but Sunday's rest, that will do for his God. Another, who is living a wicked life in private, believes the doctrines of grace, and that will satisfy his God. But the man who is saved by the grace of God says, "My God is infinitely just. Nothing will content Him but a perfect righteousness. As a moral lawgiver, He will not put away sin till He had laid punishment upon one who stood in the sinner's stead. He is so loving that He gave his Son; He is so just that He slew His Son on my behalf." All the divine attributes flame forth with splendor before the eyes of the man who is saved by faith, and he is led to reverence and to adore.

The way of salvation by grace is the best promoter of holiness in all the world. Salvation by grace promotes good works far better than the teaching of salvation by works ever did, for those who hope to be saved by their works have generally very scanty works to be saved by. Those who put works aside altogether as a ground of hope, and look to grace alone, are the very people who are most zealous to perform good works. And I will tell you why. Who loved Christ best at the Pharisee's feast? Simon the Pharisee, who had kept the law? No. He was to be saved by his doings. And yet Christ said to him, "You did not give me a kiss; you gave me no water to wash my feet" (Luke 7:44-45). Simon did not love the Master. He did what he did because he thought he ought to do it and must do it. But there was a poor woman there who was a sinner, and she had had much forgiven, and she it was who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Simon shows how self-righteous men love the Savior: They do not even wash His feet or kiss His cheeks. Those who are saved by grace love Jesus, and therefore kiss His feet and bathe them with their tears, and would willingly lay down their lives for Him.

Law drives our spirits to rebellion, but love has magic in it. The law does not furnish me with a constraining principle, but the gospel does. The law treats me like a mere hired servant, and a hired servant never can serve with the zeal that is born of love. You do not give your child wages, and you do not bind him by indentures or agreements. He loves you, and his sense of your love leads him to a tender obedience, and what he does is doubly sweet to you. Missionaries and martyrs have done and borne for love's sake what law could not have forced from them. The doctrine of salvation by grace, by teaching men to love, transforms them and makes new creatures of them. I have seen it hundreds of times. If you want to get rid of the guilt of sin, you must believe in Jesus. But equally, if you would be rid of the chains of sin, the tyranny of your passions, the domination of your lusts, you must believe in Him. From His side there flows not merely blood but water—blood to take away your criminality, and water to take away your tendencies to sin—so that from now on you shall not serve sin or live any longer in it. It is all there in that pierced heart. It is all there in that crimson fount,

opened on Calvary's bloody tree. Look to Jesus, and you shall be saved. It is all in that nutshell. (From Spurgeon's sermon - [Galatians 3:22 The Great Jail, and How to Get Out of It](#))

## Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Greek - elthouses (AAPFSG) de tes pisteosouketi upo paidagogon esmen (1PPAI)

Amplified: But now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a trainer (the guardian of our childhood).

Phillips Once we had that faith we were completely free from the governess's authority.

Wuest But (this) faith having come, no longer are we under the guardian. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

GNT Galatians 3:25 λθο σης δ τ ς π στεω ς ο κ τι π παιδαγωγ ν σμεν.

NLT Galatians 3:25 And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.

KJV Galatians 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

ESV Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

ASV Galatians 3:25 But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.

CSB Galatians 3:25 But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

NIV Galatians 3:25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

NKJ Galatians 3:25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

NRS Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,

YLT Galatians 3:25 and the faith having come, no more under a child-conductor are we,

NAB Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian.

NJB Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come we are no longer under a slave looking after us;

GWN Galatians 3:25 But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under the control of a guardian.

BBE Galatians 3:25 But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a servant.

- **faith**: Ga 3:23
- **we**: Ga 4:1-6 Ro 6:14 7:4 Heb 7:11-19 8:3-13 10:15-18
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:24-25: The Stern Pedagogue](#) - C H Spurgeon
- [Galatians 3 Commentary](#) - Martin Luther
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## BELIEVERS NO LONGER NEED A TUTOR

**But now that faith has come:** In other rowe are born again by grace through faith is the idea. **Now that** faith in Jesus Christ **has come**. Believers, through faith in Jesus Christ, have come of age as God's children and are not under the guidance of the law like a young child. The Law has fulfilled its role in leading us to Christ.

**Wuest on faith in Christ Jesus** - The (definite) article appears before the word faith (= "the faith") in the Greek text, showing that it is the faith in the historic Christ which is referred to, as in Gal 3:22 and Gal 3:23.

**Faith** (4102) (**pistis**) represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Pistis** is clearly a key word in Galatians 3 occurring in 13 of the 29 verses of this chapter - Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:7; Gal. 3:8; Gal.

3:9; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 3:25; Gal. 3:26

**We are no longer under a tutor** -Ro 6:14+ "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace." Of course, we are not now lawless but still obligated to obey God's holy law. The difference is that now the law is written in our hearts

"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. (Heb 8:10+)

We also have the indwelling Spirit Who enables us to put to death the (evil, disobedient) deeds of the body.

"for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Ro 8:13+)

Now we love not out of sense of onerous, fearful duty, but out of a sense of Spirit driven love obeying our Father. As John says "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19+) And Jesus links our obedience with our love of God declaring ""If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

**Donald Campbell** - 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. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon on we are no longer under a tutor.** - We have outgrown him. God has given us power now to go to Christ's school ourselves, willingly, joyfully, and cheerfully. I remember—and I daresay you also do—when that pedagogue whipped us very sorely. I am glad that I am no longer under his power. The pedagogue's work is done so far as we are concerned. The law ceases its office as pedagogue when it comes to be written on our hearts. Boys have their lessons on slates, but men have their laws in their minds. We trust a man where we would carefully watch a boy. When the child becomes a man, his father and mother do not write down little rules for him, as they did when he was a child. He is trusted. His manliness is trusted; his honor is trusted; his best feelings are trusted. Now we who have believed in Jesus have the law written in our hearts, and it corresponds with what is written in the Scriptures. Now we do not say of a sin, "I am afraid to do that because I would be lost if I did." We do not want to do it. We loathe it. We do not say of a virtue, "I must do that, or else I shall not be a child of God." No, we love to do it. We want to do it. The more of holiness, the better. The law that once was on the stony table, and there was broken, is now written on the fleshy tablet of a renewed heart, and the Lord sweetly inclines us to keep His testimonies and observe His statutes.

### Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Greek - Pantēs gar huioi theou este (2PPAI) dia tes pisteos en Christo Iesou

Amplified: For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

Phillips For now that you have faith in Christ you are all sons of God.

Wuest For all of you are God's sons through faith, in Christ Jesus. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:26 For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

GNT Galatians 3:26 Π ντες γ ρ υ ο θεο στε δι τ ς π στεως ν Χριστ ησο .

NLT Galatians 3:26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

KJV Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

ESV Galatians 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

ASV Galatians 3:26 For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus.

CSB Galatians 3:26 for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

NIV Galatians 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

NKJ Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

NRS Galatians 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

YLT Galatians 3:26 for ye are all sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus,

NAB Galatians 3:26 For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

NJB Galatians 3:26 for all of you are the children of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus,

GWN Galatians 3:26 You are all God's children by believing in Christ Jesus.

BBE Galatians 3:26 Because you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

- Gal 4:5,6 Joh 1:12,13 20:17 Ro 8:14-17 2 Co 6:18 Eph 1:5 5:1 Php 2:15 Heb 2:10-15 1Jn 3:1,2 Rev 21:7
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:26-29 Commentary - Sons of God](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## YOU ARE SONS BY FAITH IN HIS SON

**For (gar)** is a [term of explanation](#) which should always prompt at least the question "What is the author explaining?" At times the answer is difficult to answer (especially in some of Paul's detailed logic - cp 2 Pe 3:16+, but in this case the answer is relatively straightforward. Paul is explaining what the coming of faith did for us and how it freed us from the guiding function of the Law. We were young children who needed guidance, but now we are "**sons of God**" ("full adults" spiritually speaking and "heirs" Gal 3:29) and we have an internal Guide, the Holy Spirit Whom God has provided for our journey of [progressive sanctification](#) (Gal 3:5+, Gal 3:3+).

**MacArthur** points out that in Galatians 3:26-28 "Paul shows three aspects of the freedom of that relationship. Those who believe in Him and thereby become one with Him are sons of God, are one with every other believer, and are heirs of the promise." (Ibid)

**You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus:** In the next chapter Paul adds that we were redeemed from being "under (the dominion of) the Law, that we might receive the [adoption as sons](#)." (Gal 4:5+)

**Wayne Barber** - Now in Christ Jesus we are made **sons of God** by **faith**. And that's what we are going to look at today. It is through Christ that we are set free from the bondage to the law. We're completely set free. So when a person chooses to go back and be religious again he has just simply chosen his flesh over choosing Jesus to be Jesus in his life. When we trust Christ as our Savior, we enter the family of God. ([Galatians 3:26-29 Commentary - Sons of God](#))

**W E Vine** on **sons of God** - "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God," (Ro 8:14-[note](#)) i.e., these and no other. For all who become children of God **attest the reality of their confession by yielding themselves to the guiding and enabling of the Spirit of God; thus by becoming sons of God, i.e., by manifesting in their conduct the character of God, they give evidence that they are indeed the children of God.** As to his "[standing](#)" (cp "position") the believer is a child of God, as to his "state" (the condition of a person or thing, as with respect to circumstances or attributes. Compare "practice") he ought to be a son of God, and it is a vain thing for anyone to be a child of God unless he is giving evidence that he is a **son of God**. But full conformity to the "image of His Son" will be attained only when the Lord comes, cp. Romans 8:29-[note](#) with 1 John 3:2-[note](#); for that consummation the groaning creation waits, Romans 8:19-[note](#)....Here the contrast is between the Jewish state of pupilage under the law and the believer's state of sonship in Christ. It is noteworthy, too, that the apostle does not now call the converts sons of Abraham, as in Gal 3:7-[note](#), above, but much more and higher than that, they were sons of God. ([Collected Writings](#))

While one might say that God is the Father of all people in a general sense because He "made the world and all things in it" (Acts 17:24-28+), not every created being can rightly refer to God as their Father. In fact John explains that "the one who practices sin is of the devil." (1 John 3:8+) It is only those who have put their **faith in Christ Jesus** who can rightly say they are spiritual children of God the Father.

John 1:12+. But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who **believe** in His name,

1 John 3:1+ See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called **children of God**; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

1 John 3:9+ No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the **children of God** and the **children of the devil** are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1 John 5:1+ Whoever **believes** that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

As the preceding passages clearly show, there are only two "families" on earth (Spiritually speaking) - those who believe in Christ Jesus and those who do not. It is worth noting that there are two "races" for all mankind can be classified as either Jew or Gentile. However every individual in those two "races" belongs either to the family of God or the family of the devil. In other words (and this is definitely not politically correct) every person who has ever lived on earth is either a spiritual child of God and an heir to the kingdom of God (Lk 18:25, John 3:3, 5, Acts 8:12, Acts 14:22) by virtue of placing their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord (cp Ro 10:9,10+) or they are a spiritual child of the devil by "default" based on their sinful nature inherited from Adam (Ro 5:12+).

Matthew 13:38 and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are **the sons of the evil one**;

John 8:38 (For context see Jn 8:30-31 for the audience Jesus is addressing in this section! They had made a profession of faith but did not have a "possession" of faith!) "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the things which **you heard from your father.**"

John 8:41 "**You are doing the deeds of your father.**" They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

John 8:44 "**You are of your father the devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Acts 13:10+ and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you **son of the devil**, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

Eph 2:3+ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath**, even as the rest.

Paul speaks more of the benefits of our sonship in the family of God in Galatians 4

Galatians 4:5+ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has **sent forth the Spirit** of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Paul speaks of **sons of God** in Romans 8

Romans 8:14-17+ **For** (explaining that those who are putting to death **present tense**] the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit - Ro 8:13-**note**) all who are being led (**present tense** = continually) by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**. 15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a **spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him (Not our favorite part of this passage but true - 2 Ti 3:12-**note**, Php 1:29-**note**, etc) so that we may also be glorified with Him.

**Comment:** This is an important passage because it helps us identify those who are truly the children of God. How so? Notice that first of all they are those who are being led by the Spirit. And in context how do you know someone is being led by the Spirit? Because they will be actively (not perfectly but as the general direction of their life) putting to death the deeds of their fallen flesh by relying not on their natural power but by relying on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:13-**note**). Ultimately, He is the only One Who can enable us to defeat the lusts of the flesh!

## **SONS OF GOD NEED TO SHOW A FAMILY RESEMBLANCE**

**Sons of God** - This is an incredible privilege I fear that I too often fail to appreciate. Think for a moment that Paul even describes "the anxious longing of the creation" which "waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God." (Ro 8:19+). The lost world has no concept of who we are now and what is our eternal destiny, John writing "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (1 Jn 3:1+, 1 John 3:2+) Like Him. Like Jesus Christ! No wonder the creation is waiting eagerly for this glorious day. But sons of God should even now bear a family resemblance. We have a different future which should motivate us to live different in the present. Privilege always conveys responsibility. In fact John says that "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him (the hope = absolute certainty that we will be like Him) purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:3+) 2 Cor

6:14-18 Paul gives us a similar exhortation as sons of God writing "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (in the world but not of the world!) in the fear of God." (2 Cor 7:1+). What promises? Those Paul had just described calling on believers to live as holy (separated) sons and daughters...

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 "Therefore, **COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,**" says the Lord. "AND **DO NOT TOUCH** WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And **I will welcome you.** 18"**And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.** (2 Cor 6:14-18)

**Comment:** Notice that the verbs in **red** are not suggestions but commands, commands which we can ONLY obey by relying on God's provision of supernatural power via His Spirit (cp Ro 8:13+). Don't treat these commands as laws you will try to keep in your own power, for (1) you will fail, (2) you will be frustrated and (3) you will place yourself under the law which is **legalism** (eg, [see the note](#) on "**do not touch**" in Col 2:20-21)!

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!"
- [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#) - Chart Showing one who is filled with the Spirit of Christ is one who is filled with (letting it richly dwell within) the Word of Christ.

**Timothy George** - Paul was not teaching here the liberal Protestant doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He did not say that all persons are by nature the children of God. He pointed instead to a decisive difference within the human family, the distinction between those who know God as Father through faith in Jesus Christ and others who remain under the curse of the law and in bondage to the demonic forces that prevail in the world at large. (New American Commentary)

**Wuest on you are all sons of God** - By the change from the first person **we**, with its reference to the Jews, to the second person **you** with its reference to his readers, both Jew and Gentile, Paul shows that the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile had been broken down at the Cross, and that both Jew and Gentile become children of God in Christ Jesus. The word translated children is *huioi* and is the important word here. This word signifies someone of full age. Under LAW, the individual was in his minority and under a guardian. Now, under GRACE, he has attained his majority, having outgrown the surveillance of his former guardian. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmann Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Faith** (4102) (**pistis**) is that state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, in this case Christ Jesus, the sole Source of soul salvation (Acts 4:12). **Pistis** as noted above is clearly a key word in Galatians 3 occurring in 13 of the 29 verses of this chapter - Gal. 3:2; Gal. 3:5; Gal. 3:7; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:9; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:12; Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:23; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 3:25; Gal. 3:26

**In Christ Jesus** - The object of our faith is what is critical. We all manifest faith in something (or someone), but the ONLY object of faith that saves one's soul is Christ Jesus. Paul will elaborate on this idea of **in Christ Jesus** in the following verses.

**Martin Luther** - As a true and excellent teacher of faith, Paul is constantly saying through faith in Christ Jesus. He does not say, "You are God's children because you are circumcised, because you have heard the law and have obeyed it," but through faith in Christ Jesus. It is not the law, then, that makes us God's children, much less human traditions. The law cannot give us new birth, but it sets before us the old birth, by which we were born into the kingdom of the devil; and so it prepares us for a new birth that comes through faith in Christ Jesus and not through the law. (See also John 1:12; Romans 8:16-17.)

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**Philip Graham Ryken** has a very encouraging word on **sons of God** - When it comes to personal identity, the first thing to know is who the father is. So the apostle Paul establishes the Christian's paternity: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal. 3:26). If you know Jesus Christ, then you know who you are, because you know to whom you belong. A Christian is a child of God. Back in verse 7 Paul said that every believer is a child of Abraham. Now he takes it one step further: every believer is a son or a daughter of the Most High God.

This is the climax of Paul's argument. He has just finished explaining how the law is a pedagogue for underage children. But eventually children outgrow their need for a guardian, so the law lasts only until the coming of Christ. Now we have the full rights of sons and daughters. We are no longer "minors, under the restraint of a tutor, but sons of God and heirs of His glorious kingdom,

enjoying the status and privileges of grown-up sons."

This was a message that the Galatians especially needed to hear. Remember what the Judaizers were saying. Since they were Jews, they had always thought of themselves as God's only children, so they treated Gentile Christians like second-rate members of the family. Until they got circumcised, Gentiles could not be siblings; at most, they were only cousins.

Paul responded to this teaching by welcoming the Gentiles within the full embrace of God's family: "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal. 3:26). His emphasis falls on what is the first word of the verse in Greek: "all," meaning both Jews and Gentiles. The gospel is for Gentiles as much as for Jews, and therefore the privilege of sonship is for all God's children.

The way anyone becomes a member of God's family is by legal adoption, which the Westminster Shorter Catechism defines as follows: "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God" (A. 34). Legally speaking, an adopted child is a true son or daughter. He or she has the same rights and privileges as a natural-born child. There is someone to call "Father." There is someone to care for every need. There is someone to give fatherly affection and discipline. In addition, the adopted child will receive a full share of the family inheritance.

The Christian gains all these rights and privileges by becoming a child of God. There is someone to call "Father," for we pray to our Father in heaven (Matt. 6:9). There is someone to care for us, for our heavenly Father knows exactly what we need (Matt. 6:32). He loves us with tender affection. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us," marveled the apostle John, "that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1).

Our Father loves us so much that he refuses to let us go our own way. Instead, he disciplines us to make us holy: "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Heb. 12:7). Best of all, God has promised his children a full share of his infinite and eternal inheritance. If we are God's children, Paul reasoned with the Romans, then we are heirs—"heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). A good father gives everything he is and everything he has to his children. God, who has the most to give, is the best Father of all. Thus there is no higher status a human being can ever achieve than to be called a son or a daughter of the Most High God. ([Reformed Expository Commentary - Galatians](#))

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### **Children of God by Faith in Christ** - Devotional by C H Spurgeon

The fatherhood of God is common to all his children. Ah! Little-faith, you have often said, "Oh that I had the courage of Great-heart, that I could wield his sword and be as valiant as he! But, alas, I stumble at every straw, and a shadow makes me afraid." List thee, Little-faith. Great-heart is God's child, and you are God's child too; and Great-heart is not one whit more God's child than you are. Peter and Paul, the highly-favoured apostles, were of the family of the Most High; and so are you also; the weak Christian is as much a child of God as the strong one.

"This cov'nant stands secure,  
Though earth's old pillars bow;  
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,  
Are one in Jesus now."

All the names are in the same family register. One may have more grace than another, but God our heavenly Father has the same tender heart towards all. One may do more mighty works, and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the King's mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, "Our Father. "

Yet, while we are comforted by knowing this, let us not rest contented with weak faith, but ask, like the Apostles, to have it increased. However feeble our faith may be, if it be real faith in Christ, we shall reach heaven at last, but we shall not honour our Master much on our pilgrimage, neither shall we abound in joy and peace. If then you would live to Christ's glory, and be happy in his service, seek to be filled with the spirit of adoption more and more completely, till perfect love shall cast out fear

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### **Peter Kennedy - The Highest Rank**

- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."—Galatians 3:26-27

Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. grew up under the shadow of a large man. His father was the hero of San Juan Hill and the President of the United States. The pressure to excel often caused him problems, but Teddy, Jr. went on to be a highly decorated Brigadier General during World War II, receiving the Medal of Honor for heroism. He was also the Governor General of the Philippines, Governor of Puerto Rico, and Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

During World War II, while waiting for a flight at an airport, Teddy, Jr. saw a sailor step to a ticket window and ask for a ticket. "I want to see my mother," the sailor explained. "I don't have much time."

The indifferent woman at the ticket window was not impressed by the sailor's sense of urgency, "There's a war on, you know," she

rudely replied.

At this point, Roosevelt, who had overheard the conversation, stepped to the ticket window and told her to give the sailor his seat. A friend of the general spoke in surprise, "Teddy, aren't you in a hurry too?"

"It's a matter of rank," he replied. "I'm only a general; he's a son!"

Sons of God. What a marvelous name! This is what the Bible calls everyone who trusts in Christ. Do you sometimes forget you have the rank of a son? Today give thanks that you have been bestowed with this high rank.

"Abba, Father, we approach thee in our Savior's precious name. We the children of your mercy bow before your throne today."—James G. Deck

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### **Vance Havner - Is God Your Father?**

I will be a Father unto you. II Corinthians 6:18.

Yes, if you are born from above by faith in His Son. Popular modern preaching to the contrary notwithstanding, He is the father of them only that believe (Gal. 3:26). Jesus' word to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44), is forgotten these days.

But we are told that if we come out and are separate and touch not the unclean thing, God will be a Father unto us. Does His Fatherhood depend on our separation? No, it depends on our regeneration. But He cannot be to some of us the Father He wants to be because we are not in fellowship. There are fathers who cannot be to their children what they want to be because their children are in no condition for such favors. Sometimes they must be corrected and chastised. What a grief it is to want to do things for a child whose rebellious spirit makes it impossible! God wants to bless us with all the riches of His grace, but He cannot until we are separated from sin and made "blessable."

God may be your Father in relationship and still not be your Father in fellowship. Don't miss anything His Fatherhood holds for you!

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**Adrian Rogers** - Often we hear people speak of the universal fatherhood of God. But that is not right. All people are not necessarily brothers. We may be brothers in our humanity, but spiritually we are not brothers until we are born into the family of God and have one common Father. The first thing that must occur if you want your prayers to be answered—if you want your prayers to be powerful—is to become a child of God. And in order to be a child of God, you must receive Jesus as your personal Savior. Have you done that? Does He live in your heart? If so, then you are ready to pray.

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### **Galatians 3:26-29 TODAY IN THE WORD**

#### **You are all one in Christ Jesus. - Galatians 3:28**

The caste system in India creates a rigidly stratified culture where opportunities for social mobility do not exist. In fact, Hinduism actually sanctions the hierarchical, birth-ordained Indian caste system. It's little wonder, then, that the Christian gospel has held appeal for many Dalit, those least regarded in India who were formerly known as the Untouchables.

The Christian gospel, quite contrary to the teachings of Hinduism in India, celebrates the joyful announcement of the unity and equality of all people in the name of Jesus Christ. Disparities based upon ethnicity, economic status, and race disappear. People are not valued based on these distinctions. God's family members are all equal to one another.

This was radically new for these believers in Galatia, who were undoubtedly quite familiar with first-century attitudes. It was common for the Pharisees in Paul's time to give thanks to God that they were not Gentiles, slaves, or women. Clearly,

a great deal of prejudice existed against these groups as well as others. But the false teachers who had come from Jerusalem had not yet embraced this new message of equality: by preaching that Gentiles must become "Jewish" and be circumcised was to insist upon the rules of the old system and reject everything that had been made new through Christ.

Paul sums up much of the argument of chapter 3 in these closing verses. Christ Jesus is Abraham's rightful heir. When we declare faith in Christ, we are baptized into Him and are guaranteed to inherit all the divine promises and the family name of Abraham. We are fully and completely adopted by God into His family. In this family, it does not matter if one is a Jew or Gentile, a slave or a free man, a man or a woman, because what becomes the most defining piece of our identity is that we are "Christian." We belong to Him through faith, not through the law. The law was a guardian for us, but now this new era was hailed when Jesus the Messiah came.

APPLY THE WORD The message of unity in Paul's letter to the Galatians is still relevant today. We often separate from one another based upon our race, economic status, or other differences. It is a beautiful and dramatic testimony to the gospel when Christian communities are formed among people who are different from one another. True unity comes from our recognition that we are all recipients of saving grace from God through Jesus Christ. This is unity we should pray for and work towards.

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### **Henry Morris - True Equality**

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"

(Gal. 3:28).

One of the wonderful aspects of America's great Declaration of Independence is its repeated recognition of God as our Creator, beginning with its thrilling assertion that "all men are created equal" and that this fact is "self-evident."

However, it is not self-evident that men are all born equal. Even in colonial America, there were those who were bondmen (that is, slaves), and these were not equal politically with their owners. Furthermore, some men were wealthy landowners, some were poor clerks. Women were hardly equal to men in terms of suffrage or wages or various other ways.

As a matter of fact, nowhere in the world has there ever been a society in which all people were true equals in physical beauty, in mental or physical strength, or in many other ways. In truth, such a society would hardly even be desirable if it could ever be produced.

How is it, then, that we are created equal? The only possible answer is that we are equal in God's sight. He is, indeed, the One who has created us and we are all equally responsible to Him.

Yet, "all have sinned," and "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 5:12; 3:10). Consequently, all people were lost sinners, unfit to enter God's perfect kingdom, but "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8), and He is "the propitiation... for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

When we believe on Christ as our Savior, we each are created equal in Him "after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10)—whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, man or woman—"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

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### **SPOTTED CHARACTERS.**

The brill, or pearl fish, is somewhat like a turbot, and is known by its white pearly spots. But pearly spots don't make pearls, although pearls may have spots. A man may be spotted with many Christian characteristics and yet be as far from being a Christian as the brill is from a pearl. God's children may have spots, but the spots do not make them children. "Ye are the children of God by faith" (Gal. 3:26).

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### **Joining The Family**

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:26

Maurice Griffin was adopted when he was 32 years old. He had lived with Lisa and Charles Godbold 20 years earlier as a foster child. Although Maurice was now a man living on his own, adoption had been what the family and he had always longed for. Once they were reunited and the adoption was official, Maurice commented, "This is probably the happiest moment in my life. . . . I'm happy to be home."

Those of us who have joined the family of God may refer to that time as the happiest moment in our lives. When we trust Christ for salvation, we become God's children, and He becomes our heavenly Father. The Bible assures us, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

As God's adopted children, we acquire spiritual siblings—our brothers and sisters in Christ—and we all share an eternal inheritance (Col. 1:12). In addition, Jesus' Spirit indwells our hearts and enables us to pray using the name Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6)—like a child calling, "Daddy."

To be a child of God is to experience the closeness and security of a Father who loves us, accepts us, and wants to know us. Our adoption into His family is a wonderful homecoming. — Jennifer Benson Schuldt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I once was an outcast stranger on earth,  
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth;  
But I've been adopted, my name's written down,  
An heir to the mansion, a robe, and a crown. — Buell

God's arms are always open to welcome anyone home.

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**Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

Greek - hosoi gar eis Christon ebaptisthete (2PAPI) Christon enedusasthe (2PAMI)

Amplified: For as many [of you] as were baptized into Christ [into a spiritual union and communion with Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah] have put on (clothed yourselves with) Christ.

Phillips All of you who were baptised "into" Christ have put on the family likeness of Christ.

Wuest For as many as were introduced into (a mystical union with) Christ, put on Christ. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

GNT Galatians 3:27 σοι γ ρ ε ς Χριστ ν βαπτ σθητε, Χριστ ν νεδ σασθε.

NLT Galatians 3:27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes.

KJV Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

ESV Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

ASV Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

CSB Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment.

NIV Galatians 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

NKJ Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

NRS Galatians 3:27 As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

YLT Galatians 3:27 for as many as to Christ were baptized did put on Christ;

NAB Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

NJB Galatians 3:27 since every one of you that has been baptised has been clothed in Christ.

GWN Galatians 3:27 Clearly, all of you who were baptized in Christ's name have clothed yourselves with Christ.

BBE Galatians 3:27 For all those of you who were given baptism into Christ did put on Christ.

- **For all of you who were baptized into Christ:** Mt 28:19,20 Mk 16:15,16 Ac 2:38 8:36-38 9:18 16:15,31-33 Ro 6:3,4 1Co 12:13 Col 2:10-12 1Pe 3:21
- **have clothed yourselves with Christ:** Job 29:14 Isa 61:10 Lu 15:22 Ro 3:22 13:14 Eph 4:24 Col 3:10
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:26-29 - Sons of God](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## SPIRITUAL BAPTISM NOT WATER BAPTISM

**For (gar)** is a [term of explanation](#). **Vine** says **for** introduces "the ground for the statement that "all" were sons of God in Christ Jesus. This ground is twofold, the first reason is adduced in this verse, the second in Gal 3:28."

**For all of you who were baptized into Christ:** When were we **baptized**? The [aorist tense](#) indicates that this occurred at a point in time in the past and logically would be at the moment of our conversion. At that moment, in a mysterious, but very real spiritual sense, we were placed (presumably by the Spirit) **into Christ, immersed** into Christ. We were placed into a perfect and permanent union with Christ. We entered into [oneness \(union\)](#) with Christ when we entered into the New Covenant by grace through faith. We are forever identified with Christ.

**THOUGHT** - Note carefully that contrary to what you may have heard, thought or been taught, the baptism of which Paul is speaking in this passage is not a reference to water baptism. It certainly is not a reference to so-called "[baptismal regeneration](#)" (which I consider a false teaching! We are saved by faith apart from any works including the work of baptism! (See Ro 3:28-[note](#) See [CARM note](#)) Beloved, water baptism never saved anyone, period! Jesus Alone is the Savior! To believe "[baptismal regeneration](#)" is to put your eternal destiny in grave danger. Baptism in this verse refers to the "immersion" (or union) of the believer into the body of Christ (and includes union with His death, burial and resurrection), a supernatural transaction which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit at the time of our conversion (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13-[see note below](#)). Clearly this baptism is a supernatural work of God, Who Alone could "baptize" a man or woman into the body of Christ. It is a mystery as to how every person who believes is transported back to the Cross, to die with Christ, to be buried with Him

and to be resurrected with Him. O holy mystery! Praise God for this profound [transcendent](#) truth and for opening the eyes of our heart (cp Acts 16:14-note) to respond by faith and not by sight. To reiterate at the very moment of [conversion/regeneration](#) we were immersed spiritually into the body of Christ, and He became our spiritual identity and our life not only in eternity but even now in this temporal life (read Col 3:4-[note](#))

**Wuest** comments that "Having spoken of the Galatians in the previous verse as in Christ ("in Christ Jesus" - Gal 3:26), referring to that mystical and vital union which exists between the Lord Jesus and the believer, Paul now reminds them of how they became united with Christ. When they put their faith in Him as Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptized (introduced or placed) them into vital union with Christ (Ro 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13). The reference cannot be to water baptism, for that never put a believing sinner in Christ. (See more on this below)." ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Ryken** - Being united to Christ means that we are connected to everything Christ ever did for our salvation. We participate in his obedient life, his suffering death, and his glorious resurrection. This is all symbolized in baptism....The message of Galatians, like the message of Romans, is the gospel message of the cross and the empty tomb—Christ crucified and Christ risen. Baptism signifies our personal connection to Christ in these saving events. We are united to the Savior who died and rose again; we have a new identity in Christ. Another way of describing this union is to say that we are clothed with Christ. ([Reformed Expository Commentary - Galatians](#))

**Baptized** (907) ([baptizo](#) from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. A study of the 77 NT uses reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with **literal** water baptism, but Paul use in this passage is figurative. Notice also that there is no mention of water anywhere in the context of Galatians 3! Thus figuratively, **baptizo** pictures the introduction or placing of the believing soul into the new environment (in Christ Jesus) or into union with Christ Jesus, this union resulting (and this is mysterious to me) forever alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. In this sense baptizo means to be identified with.

We see this figurative, spiritual meaning of **baptizo** and the related noun [baptisma](#) in other Pauline passages...

Romans 6:3-[note](#) Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized** into Christ Jesus have been **baptized** into His death? (The day we believed in Christ, was both the day we died and the day we rose from the grave as those who have been born again! Paul goes on to explain this in the next verse) Ro 6:4 ([note](#)) Therefore we have been buried with Him through **baptism** (noun [baptisma](#)) into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in [newness](#) of life (a brand new life that heretofore we had never experienced = life on a "higher plane" in Christ and enabled by His Spirit!). (See also [Wuest's note below](#) which is from Wuest's comments on Romans 6:3).

(Figurative use of the related noun [baptisma](#)) Colossians 2:12+ having been buried with Him in **baptism** ([baptisma](#)), in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

1 Cor 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all **baptized** into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

**Comment** - At conversion, the believer is born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3–6). He is also baptized by the Holy Spirit, which unites him to the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor 12:13), and to Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Ro 6:3–5). Thus, by this one baptism (Eph. 4:5), he is in Christ indeed (Gal. 3:26, 27). The Lord Jesus Christ was described by John the Baptist as the baptizer (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), in the sense that He poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (the Promise of the Father) after He had been crucified, buried, and raised to glory. Christ Jesus is the ultimate Source, for He sent the Spirit as an ascension gift at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is the Agent Who is baptizing. The Lord's Body (the Church) is the element into which all believers are immersed. Spirit baptism is a miracle of God at the New Birth. We are then added to the body of Christ.. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**James Montgomery Boice** helps understand this figurative meaning of **baptizo** writing that "The clearest example that shows the meaning of **baptizo** is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be '**dipped**' (**bapto**) into boiling water and then '**baptised**' (**baptizo**) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of **baptizing** the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to **our union** and **identification** with Christ than to our water baptism... mere

intellectual assent is not enough. **There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle**" (Bolding added)

**Warren Wiersbe** makes a good point noting that "When you read about "baptism" in the New Testament, you must exercise discernment to determine whether the word is to be interpreted literally or symbolically. For example, in Romans 6:3, 4 and Galatians 3:27, 28, the reference is symbolic (**Ed**: and figurative) since water baptism cannot put a sinner into Jesus Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that (Ro 8:9; 1Co 12:13; see Ac 10:44, 45, 46, 47, 48). Water baptism is a public witness of the person's identification with Jesus Christ, while Spirit baptism is the personal and private experience that identifies the person with Christ. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Wayne Barber** illustrates the spiritual meaning of **baptism** in Galatians 3:27- And the beautiful picture of this is, if I had a bowl of red dye I could explain it to you. A clear bowl of red dye, and I took a white cloth and I am going to put that white cloth down into that red dye. I immerse it into it, completely submerge it into the red dye. Now, the cloth is in the dye, but the moment it gets inside the dye, something else happens, doesn't it? The dye gets inside the cloth, and the cloth is no longer a white cloth. There has been a change. Something has been identified with it. The red dye has entered into the cloth and now you have a red cloth. That's exactly what he's talking about here. That is spiritual immersion into Christ and Him into us.....He's not talking about water baptism. He's talking about the spiritual immersion into Christ. ([Galatians 3:26-29 - Sons of God](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** explains that **baptizo** "can be illustrated by the action of the smith dipping the hot iron in water, tempering it, or the dyer dipping the cloth in the dye for the purpose of dyeing it...The word refers to the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. While the word...had other uses, yet the one that predominated above the others was the above one. Observe how perfectly this meaning is in accord with the usage of the word in Romans 6:3, 4, where the believing sinner is **baptized into vital union with Jesus Christ**. The believing sinner is introduced or placed **in Christ**, thus coming into **union** with Him. By that action he is **taken out of his old environment** ("in Adam" because of Ro 5:12-note) and condition in which he had lived, the First Adam (cp 1 Co 15:22 "For as **in Adam** all die, so also **in Christ** all will be made alive."), and is placed into a new environment and condition, the Last Adam ("in Christ" - cp 1Co 15:45). By this action his condition is changed (at that moment and forever) from that of a lost sinner with a totally depraved nature to that of a saint with a divine nature (2 Peter 1:4-note). His relationship to the **LAW** of God is changed from that of a guilty sinner to that of a justified saint (Ro 3:28-note). All this is accomplished by the act of the Holy Spirit introducing or placing him into vital union with Jesus Christ (Ro 6:3-note, Gal 3:27). **No ceremony of water baptism ever did that. The entire context is supernatural in its character.** The Greek word (in Romans 6:3) should not be transliterated but translated, and the translation should read; "**As many as were introduced (placed) into Christ Jesus, into His death were introduced. Therefore we were buried with Him through the aforementioned introduction into His death.**" ([Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#))

In short **baptizo** as used in the present context describes the introduction or placing of an individual into a new environment, union with Christ, an unbreakable union which forever alters the individual's relationship to their previous environment.

**Ridderbos** - Just as a garment which one puts on envelops the person wearing it and defines his appearance, so the person baptized in Christ is entirely taken up in Christ and in the salvation brought by Him.

**Vine** on the phrase **into Christ**—ideally the moment of believing is the moment of baptism, for in the act of being baptized the believer sets forth in symbol what happened when he first trusted in Christ. But in actual experience the baptizing takes place at a time later, by more or less, than the moment of believing. The mention of baptism was probably intended to remind the Galatians that they had themselves declared their identification with Christ in His burial, whereas the new teaching was a practical denial thereof. For of believers on the Lord Jesus it is said that they:

- died with Christ, Colossians 2:20;
- were buried with Christ, Colossians 2:12;
- were quickened with Christ, Ephesians 2:5;
- were raised with Christ, Colossians 3:1;
- are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, Ephesians 2:6;
- are to be manifested with Christ in glory, Colossians 3:4.

All this is said of the believer at the present time, as he is "in Christ Jesus," for these words, which appear at the end of Ephesians 2:6, are to be read with each separate statement of that and the preceding verse. But mere submission to a rite in the flesh, such as circumcision, and obedience to the law, did not contemplate such a result. The practical import of baptism is expressed in Romans 6:11: the believer is to reckon himself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. ([Collected Writings](#))

## OUR NEW POSITION CALLS FOR A NEW PRACTICE

**Clothed yourselves with Christ** - ESV "have put on Christ." NLT = "have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes." Have you heard the secular expression "*The clothes make the man?*" In the spiritual world that saying is even more true, for in the Father's eyes "the clothes of Christ make the man!" Jesus Christ has become the garment of our righteousness, Christ's perfect righteousness which the Father now sees forever covering us! Hallelujah! We once were spiritually dressed with a righteousness that was like [filthy](#) rags (garments)" (Isaiah 64:6 Literal Hebrew = "Heb "and like a garment of menstruation [are] all our righteous acts") but when we were baptized into (identified with) Christ, our "filthy rags" were exchanged forever for Christ's "robe of righteousness." (Isa 61:10). But with privilege comes responsibility. Now enabled by the Spirit, we need to "wear Christ" in a way that others see Him on and in us. Writing with joy from "house arrest" (chained to a Roman imperial guard), Paul exhorted the saints a Philippi (10 years after that church was planted in Acts 16), to walk worthy or in keeping with the Gospel which "clothed" them in Christ...

Only **conduct yourselves** ([present imperative](#) - command to make this conduct one's lifestyle - the only way to obey this command continually is to daily jettison self reliance and rely wholly on the Holy Spirit - cf Eph 5:18-note) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ("let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" ESV), so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel;" (Php 1:27-note).

The **ESV** translates it as "**have put on Christ**." Paul speaks of the important concept of **putting on (and putting off)** in Ephesians and Colossians

Ephesians 4:20-24-note But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you **lay aside the old self** (see Barber's note), which is being (continually) [corrupted](#) in accordance with the lusts of [deceit](#) ([apate](#) - our flesh "tricks" us and seduces us with guile, treachery and delusions!), 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (See more discussion by Dr Barber on put off/put on = Ephesians 4:17-27 A Brand New Way of Life)

Colossians 3:9-10-note Do not lie to one another, since you **laid aside the old self** with its evil practices, 10 and **have put on the new self** who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—

**Application** - What "clothes" did you wear this past week?

**W E Vine** on **clothed yourselves with Christ** (or "put on Christ") - **put on Christ**.—**enduo** = "to clothe oneself with," a word which, beside its frequent use for literal garments, Acts 12:21, e.g., is also used of the incorruptible body, wherein the dead in Christ shall be raised, and of the immortal body, which is to swallow up the mortal body of those who are alive at the [Parousia](#), 1 Corinthians 15:53; 2 Corinthians 5:3-note. It is the word used by the Lord Jesus to express the relationship between the promised Holy Spirit and those who were to receive Him, Luke 24:49-note. The believer is said to have put on "the new man," Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; and "therefore," he is exhorted to "put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, ... and love," Gal 3:12, 14. **Such is to be the ordinary apparel of the Christian; in this character he is to appear daily in the world**(**Ed**: And notice that the apparel of "a heart of compassion, etc" is a perfect picture of the character of Jesus, the very One we have been clothed with!) The same thought is expressed in the words, "**put on** the Lord Jesus Christ," Romans 13:14-note. The believer, however, is "enrolled—as a soldier," 2 Timothy 2:4-note, and as such has suitable armor provided for him, and with this he is exhorted to clothe himself, Romans 13:12-note, Ephesians 6:11-note; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-note. The whole is summed up in Romans 13:14-note, for the man who "**puts on the Lord Jesus Christ**" stands both in the Christian's dress and in the Christian's [panoply](#). *Enduo* occurs in Job 29:14, [LXX](#), "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me," and in Judges 6:34-note, "the Spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon" (NAS = "So the Spirit of the LORD **came upon** Gideon"); in the latter passage at least the idea is not dissimilar to that of this passage. The apostle may also have had in mind the Roman custom whereby on attaining to manhood the youth discarded the garments of childhood and put on the toga virilis, the garment of manhood, and became a citizen, enjoying the freedom and privileges of citizenship, and discharging its responsibilities, and at the same time taking his place in the councils of his family. In this sense the words "put on Christ" are without exact parallel elsewhere, though they suggest Paul's characteristic expression "in Christ," for it is by putting on Christ that a man comes to be **in Christ**, and at His [Parousia](#) will be found **in Him**, Philippians 3:9-note. The intimacy of the relationship thus described stands in vivid contrast with the relationship between God and the believers contemplated by the Judaizer, who wished to bring them again under the bondage of the law. ([Collected Writings](#))

**John Piper** alludes to the practical application of the truth that we are clothed with Christ associating our new position with what

should now be our new (Spirit enabled) practice. Piper writes

"How then does the apostle Paul teach us to live? Will he say: "You are decisively and irrevocably new, so you can coast through life with no fight to become new"? Or will he say: "You are not decisively and irrevocably new and must fight to get to that place in Christ"? No, neither of these. He will say: "By faith, embrace all that God is for your good in Christ and all you are for his glory in Christ. Believe that. And now, with that confidence, fight to take possession of the territory that Christ has conquered for you. Fight to become in practice what you are in Christ. Eight illustrations of this truth....(Illustration #6) 6. Statement of newness: Galatians 3:27, **"All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ"** Command to become new: Romans 13:14 ([note](#)), "But **put on** ([aorist imperative](#) = command to "Do this now!" "Don't delay!" Enabled by the Spirit) the Lord Jesus Christ." ([click to see the entire article and the seven other illustrations that describe our position and our practice](#)).

**Comment:** Do you understand what Dr Piper is saying? He is saying in essence that yes, we have the character of Christ (position), but that in everyday life we are to live like Christ lived when He was on the earth. And the only way to succeed is by daily jettisoning self-reliance (natural power, self will, etc) and trusting wholly in the Holy Spirit to give us the supernatural desire and power to live like Christ. See Php 2:13NLT-[note](#) where **"God Who is at work** ([energeo](#) in the [present tense](#) = continually supernaturally "energizing") **in you"** is a description of the Holy Spirit, Who is continually "energizing" and enabling us to live a godly life, to live a Christ-like life. In other words, don't just try to act and speak and think like Christ by relying on your natural power. You will fail and become frustrated. And the world will not see the "garment of Christ" on you. Our new position should motivate a new practice. Galatians 3:3-[note](#) is a key truth you should memorize - "Are you so foolish? Having begun **by the Spirit** [saved by grace through faith], are you now being perfected [[progressively being sanctified](#), daily growing in Christ-likeness] by the flesh?" And the answer to Paul's rhetorical question is "Of course not!" Just as you began by the Spirit (Jn 3:3-8) by faith, now daily continue by the same Spirit by faith, by trusting and obeying. ([Already: Decisively and Irrevocably Free, Not Yet: Finally and Perfectly Free](#))

Ray Pritchard says

"Paul's point is that when we come to Christ, we enter into a new relationship that changes all of life. Now we are **clothed with Christ**. Coming to Christ is like gaining a whole new wardrobe. You exchange the tattered rags of the old life for the beautiful robes of the **character of Jesus Christ**. The old life is gone forever. Out with the old addictions! Out with the swearing! Out with the lies! Out with the evil relationships! Out with the sinful habits! Out with the anger! Out with the lust! Out with the racial prejudice! All of it must go out the door when Jesus comes in. (**Ed:** Yes, that is true, but because we still have the fallen flesh in us, some of the rotten garments we once wore continually, will potentially from time to time raise their ugly head so to speak - when they do put them to death by the Spirit - Ro 8:13, kill them - Col 3:5. Confess failure, repent, and walk on enabled by the Holy Spirit!) What does the well-dressed Christian wear? He wears the **character of Jesus Christ**. When people see us, they see Him, and if they knew us before, they want to know, "What happened to you?" And we tell them, "I'm a new person. Jesus Christ has changed my life." (2 Cor 5:17-[note](#)) Of course, this change is both instantaneous (**Ed:** Our new position in Christ) and gradual (**Ed:** Our daily practice in Christ, enabled by His Spirit). We are given a new wardrobe the moment we are saved but we usually hang on to our old one for a while. We're so used to the smelly rags of sin that it's hard to give them up (**Ed:** We will spend the rest of our time on earth casting off these old smelly rags -- but they should be on us less and less as we grow daily in Christ-likeness). But we have to (**Ed:** Yes, but not legalistically, not under law which says "You must do this!", but under grace which enables us to obey), because coming to Christ is like joining a new team and putting on a new uniform. Suppose a member of the New York Yankees is traded to the Chicago White Sox and he shows up at Comiskey Park still wearing his Yankee pinstripes. What will his new teammates do? They will tell him to change his uniform or go back to New York! And well they should. Once you join a new team, you change uniforms. Coming to Christ is like that. We've joined his team and now we wear the "uniform" of the character of Christ so that everyone will know we belong to him." ([Born Free: Seven Promises You Can Count On](#))

## OUR SPIRITUAL "TOGA VIRILIS"

John MacArthur notes that Paul's description of the believer being clothed with Christ

"might be a reference to a Roman custom...There was a very significant ceremony among the Romans. It was kind of like [bar mitzvah](#), only it came a little later. Roman young men went through it, and it was called [toga virilis](#), which implied a robe and virility. It was the ceremony that occurred when a young man had reached the age of manhood. He was given a robe and robed with the [toga virilis](#), which signified that he was now a grown-up son, enjoying full citizenship with all the rights and responsibilities that came with it, no longer to be treated like a child. Here he says, "You are no longer under a [paidagogos](#), you've been through spiritual [toga virilis](#), you have put on Jesus Christ. You are robed with Him." The Christian joined to Christ, baptized into His death and resurrection, in union with Him, is clothed with Christ's own robe of righteousness (**Ed**: cp 1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21-[note](#), Php 3:9-[note](#)). There's a really interesting verse, and I've really hunted around in my head for a way to illustrate this. I'm not sure I can ever illustrate it totally because it's such a deep spiritual truth. In Judges 6:34-[note](#), it says, "But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." What's so significant about that? The word 'came', in the Hebrew, is [labash](#). (**Ed**: And is translated in Lxx with enduo) What does that mean? It means 'clothed'. It means to be laid around someone like a coat of armor so that he becomes invisible. It says there that, in preparation for Gideon's battle, the Holy Spirit surrounded him so that he was invisible. That's exactly the same concept you have in Galatians. When you became a Christian, the moment you believed, you became invisible to God, in the sense that you were robed with Jesus Christ, clothed with Him. That's why God can pour out everything on you, because He's pouring it out on Christ. Blessings. This is the great truth of our salvation, beloved, that I am His and He is mine. That's what he said in Galatians 2:20, isn't it? "I am crucified with Christ. I died with him. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God." In other words, it's Christ in me and around me, living through me. Listen, friend, in Galatians 3:16, it says this. "The promise was made to Abraham and to his seed was the promise made. He said not, 'And to seeds,'" God didn't make His promise to a whole bunch of people, He made it to one, "As of many, but of one. 'And thy seed,' which is Christ." Listen, all of God's promise to Abraham was for one person, Christ. The only way you'll ever get in on it is to be what? In Christ. You see the point of that? In Christ. If Christ has the love of the Father, so do I. If Christ has full access to the Father, so do I. If Christ has the full blessing, so do I. In fact, some day, I'm going to be just like Him. I will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2-[note](#)).

Beloved, there is no way that you'll ever know all the blessing of the Father unless you're in Christ. Someone gave me an illustration this week that may help you to understand this. Do you remember a man by the name of Thomas Edward Lawrence? He was a British scholar, soldier, and author who was better known as Lawrence of Arabia. He was one of the great heroes of World War I, and he was also a leader in the Paris Peace Talks of 1919. He represented a number of the tribes from the Arabian desert at that point. It was interesting that it said in this little article that when he was attending the peace talks, several of the leaders of these Arabian tribes came to Paris with him and stayed in hotels there. Their greatest attention was attracted by the large water faucets in the bathtubs, which appeared to have an unending supply of water. All one had to do was turn a handle and water continued to flow. This was quite a luxury for people who had grown up and spent their whole lives in the desert. As Lawrence was preparing to leave Paris, he discovered that the Arabians had secured plumbing tools and were taking the bathtub faucets off the wall. They explained to him that they were going to take the faucets back to the desert so that they could have an unending supply of water there. Lawrence had to convince them that it was not enough merely to have the faucet, but that the faucet had to be connected to a pipe, which, in turn, was connected to a water main, which went to a water reservoir, which got its supply of water from springs, rivers, and wells. Hence, in order for the faucet to work, it had to be connected to the original source of water. There is no blessing that comes to any man unless that man is connected to the source. All blessing comes from the Father to the Son, and unless you are plugged into the Son, there is no blessing (John 15:5). There is none. ([Sermon](#))

As an aside **the Spirit of the LORD came upon** many individuals in the OT (however not all of these use the Hebrew verb [labash](#) or the Greek verb enduo) - Othniel = Jdg 3:10 (Heb = [hayah](#)), Gideon = Jdg 6:34 (labash/enduo); Jephthah = Jdg 11:29; Jdg 13:25; 1Sa 10:9,10,19:20,23; 2Ch 20:14; Nu 24:2; 1Chr 12:18). He was also IN some people (Nu 27:18; Da 4:8; 6:3; 1Pe 1:11) and filled some for special service (Ex 31:3; 35:31). These relationships are characterized by the Lord, as the Spirit, being "with" them, in contrast to His permanent indwelling of all believers from the Day of Pentecost on (Jn 14:17).

## **LET'S GET PRACTICAL WITH THIS GREAT TRUTH**

**Have clothed yourselves with Christ** - This figurative description symbolizes the believer's (forever) identification with Christ. This

is our "position" and our privilege, but as noted above our privileged position calls for daily personal practice. Since we have clothed ourselves with Christ (position), the world needs to see us live like Christ and the only way to do that is to depend on the Spirit of Christ to give us the desire and the power to live like Him (Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)). When we live in this supernatural manner, the "clothes" that the world sees on us each day are Christ-like garments. That does not mean they will love us because most of the world hated Him. It does mean that when we suffer persecution it is for His sake (2 Ti 3:12-[note](#), Php 1:29-[note](#), etc), that is, we suffer because of His likeness shining through us by His Spirit. In Second Corinthians Paul used a different metaphor ("divine perfume" if you will) which conveys the same idea writing

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? (2 Cor 2:14-16)

**Comment:** The world is watching our behavior, "sniffing" us out (so to speak) to see if we are authentic followers of Jesus, to see if we have an "odor" of the natural or supernatural. Who is adequate? None of us! We must continually rely on the omnipotent adequacy of God "Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:5-6) Are you walking by the Spirit or walking by the flesh? Only the former lifestyle will give a "sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him (Jesus) in every place."

**Wayne Barber** explains the practical application of **clothed with Christ** -

You have clothed yourselves with Christ, is a graphic illustration of what happens at salvation. His presence, His power, all of who He is comes to live in us. It envelops the believer. You say, "I remember when I got saved. I had a lot of joy in my heart, but I didn't know this took place."...At the moment we were saved whether we felt it or didn't feel it, God came to live in us and His presence now saturates our very being....There is no such thing as a believer who is not clothed with Christ. You say, "Wait a minute wait a minute. I know believers and I have been one myself, and if you are telling me I am clothed with Christ? I haven't lived that way all the time." And that's exactly the point in Galatians 3. Inwardly we are clothed with Christ. You don't ever get any more of God than you are going to get at the moment of salvation. But is He seen outwardly? Remember, Paul says in Philippians "work out your salvation." Let the Jesus who is on the inside be seen on the outside. And the same way that you are clothed with Christ, by faith, is the same the way He's manifest that clothing in your life. He manifests His character in your life. I will tell you what. As long as I pastor churches, and it will be that way till Jesus comes back, you wonder sometimes if people know Christ from a hole in the ground. We sing the hymns. We sing the choruses. We walk right out and act as if we don't even know Him. And yet we are clothed with Christ. You see, this is the whole point. If it's going to be Christ living in you, then all that's within you begins to be manifested through your life. Paul says this to believers in Romans. He tells them in Romans 13:14, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ." You already have put Him on. I know inwardly. What he's saying is, put Him on as your behavior. Make sure He is manifested in your life. And he goes on and tells you how. "And make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." You see, they have put Him on, but now put Him off. It is two different things here. At [[salvation]] He came to live in you and the clothing is there. The garment is there. Now wear the garment; and you wear the garment by saying yes to Him. He says the same thing in Ephesians 4:22. And he is really on these folks. He says, "That in reference to your former manner of life [your former behavior, before you became a believer], you lay aside the old self." You know, he isn't contradicting himself. What he's saying is, quit living as if you have never been clothed with Christ. Here in our text Paul is referring to the clothing that took place when we were baptized into Christ. And that's a beautiful part here. Everything I need for life and for godliness, Peter says, I already have. He's given me the ability to partake of the divine nature. You say, "Well, brother Wayne, I talked to a church during the last week and they didn't act like they were filled with the divine nature." That's exactly right and isn't that sad? Isn't it sad when people that are clothed with the very presence of Christ live as if that they're the pagan that is next door? You see, when you are walking in His garments, when you're clothed in His garments, the flesh has no way and no will whatsoever. It's the Spirit controlling our lives. But the very moment we choose to resurrect that old flesh it seems like it crawls off the altar every day, doesn't it? And when we choose to say yes to it, then it shuts the whole process down, even though we have been given everything that we need, everything in Christ. Well, the word "clothed" here is the word *enduo*, which means to be dressed a certain way. When I got to military school the first thing they did was cut my hair off. Then they took my regular clothes, put them in a box and sent them home, and I was to wear a uniform every day. Why? Because we were identified with that school. And if you are going to be identified with that school, there's a certain garment that you have to wear. That's exactly what Paul is saying. Why is he? He's not talking about uniformity—we are all different—but he is talking about unity

of the brethren when we live surrendered to Him. Why is it, you say? Well, we have Gal 5 to deal with, and he'll tell you why, how the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. When everybody wears the same uniform they all have the same identity.

Now what's his point here in the passage? Jew and Gentile alike are dressed in the same garment. The person who has received Christ by faith, then he has put Christ on as a garment, His nature, His presence, His power, that all wraps themselves around and envelops them. Now, his point is that if you go back up under the Law, you have just chosen to deny your total identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. **What does it mean to go back up under the law?** When I choose my flesh over choosing Him (**Ed**: Surrendering or yielding to the Spirit of Christ in me), I have just put myself under some law because I'm going to either (attempt vainly to) measure up it or rebel against it. And what he is saying here is if you do that you have denied your identity. Your identity is in Christ.....

Here is my question to you this morning: are you wearing that garment? When people are around you, do they see that garment? Are they affected by that garment? (**Ed**: cp 2 Cor 2:14-16 where Paul describes believers as an aroma of Christ instead of clothed with Christ, but the effect is the same on all we encounter!) I believe all heaven rejoices when we start wearing the garment God has already given to us. A believer has an eternal destiny, but I want to make sure we understand something clear. We as a church have a clear identity. **We have an eternal destiny, but we have a clear identity. And the key is, and the challenge is, wear the garment. Wear the garment. Wear the garment.** (**Ed**: Remember don't try to "wear it" in your own power, but by relying on the power provided by the Spirit of Christ) When I preached out of Ephesians I ask "What garment are you wearing?" As a matter of fact, the next time somebody walks up to you and says something just a little bit different, ask them "What garment are you wearing?" Why can't we get gut honest about this? We're either wearing it or we are not wearing it. Yes, we have it (positionally), but are we wearing it (practically)? When I was preaching out of Ephesians I had some parents come to me and say, "Would you quit preaching out of Ephesians?" I said why? They said, "We were coming to church today and we were arguing about something and our little children in the back leaned up and said 'Momma, Daddy, what garment are you wearing?'" What garment are you wearing? Is your speech seasoned with grace so it edifies and lifts up your brother? (Col 4:5-6) Is your character walking in the garment of Jesus Christ? (Eph 5:2, cp Gal 5:16) Or is it just another flesh game that many of us are playing until Jesus comes back, embracing a religion, but denying the power thereof? ([Galatians 3:26-29 - Sons of God](#))

Let's explain the practical application of "clothed with Christ" another way to help you understand this vitally important truth. And remember it is one thing to have a head knowledge of the truth but quite another thing to practice it. The Pharisees were experts at this -- they had a head knowledge but lacked the heart change and thus had no power to practice the righteousness they professed! All who have been baptized into Christ are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17-[note](#)) and now in this new covenant with Christ, they received a new power, the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel 36:27-[note](#) says

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

Do you see the dual spiritual dynamic in that passage? In the first half God speaks of our privilege, His Presence (His Spirit) and His power to enable us to walk in a manner which pleases Him. In the second half of the verse God says we have a responsibility to observe His laws. God's provision and Our practice. You see, if God had just said you must "be careful to observe My ordinances" that's what the law says. But the law had no provision of power to obey. In the New Covenant of grace, God gives us the power to obey and it is our responsibility to obey in dependence on the power He provides (via His Spirit). One of my favorite Christian writers Jerry Bridges (now with Jesus) once wrote that believers are 100% responsible and 100% dependent to live the Christian life. For more discussion of this truth see the [Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)

Now back to Galatians 3:27 where Paul describes Christ "**on**" the believer (clothed) whereas in Galatians 2:20 he described Christ "**in**" the believer (using himself as the example), writing

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20-note)

**Comment:** Christ clothing me (united with me, identified with me, in covenant with me, in [oneness](#) or [union](#) with me) should result in the same spiritual dynamic as me being in Christ (and Him in me). In both cases we live out the "Christ life" just as did Paul, by faith, by trusting in His Word and His Spirit to give us the desire and the power to live supernaturally (Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)). Paul exhorted believers to **imitate** him just as he had imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1-[note](#)). That means we need to live out the "Christ life" in our

everyday practice, just as the God-Man Jesus did when He walked the earth. And how did Jesus do it? He did it by laying aside His divine prerogatives (otherwise we could never have imitated Him! Php 2:6-7-note) and by depending wholly upon the Holy Spirit. This truth is often forgotten when we study His life in the Gospels because admittedly He did miraculous things that we will never be able to imitate. But in His day to day life, in the moral-ethical sphere, Jesus continually relied on the Spirit's filling and power (Lk 4:1-note, Lk 4:14-note, etc).

Peter summed up how Jesus lived out His 3+ year ministry (thus giving us an example to follow, cp 1 Pe 2:21-note, 1 Jn 2:6-note) declaring "you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed. You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (the same Spirit with which every believer has been anointed, cp 1 Jn 2:20-note, 1 Jn 2:27-note; see [Our Anointing - The Holy Spirit](#)) and with power ([dunamis](#), supernatural power to live like Jesus and the same power Jesus promised believers in Acts 1:8-note, Lk 24:49-note, etc), and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." (Acts 10:37-38)

**Clothed** (1746) ([enduo](#) from **en** = in + **dúo** = to sink, go in or under, to put on) means literally to clothe or dress someone and to put on as a garment, to cause to get into a garment (eg, Lk 15:22 where the father says "quickly bring out the best robe and **put it on** him...").

**Wuest** notes that **enduo** is used in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), "of the act of clothing one's self with strength (Isa 52:1), righteousness (Isa 59:17), glory, salvation (Isa 61:10). The word does not convey the idea of putting on a mask or playing the part of another. It refers to the act in which one enters into actual relationship with some one else. Chrysostom says, "If Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put Him on, having the Son in thyself and being made like unto Him, thou hast been brought into one family and one nature." ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

Other figurative uses of **enduo** in the Septuagint - Ps 35:26 (= figurative use = "Let those be **clothed** with shame and dishonor"); Ps 65:13 (= figurative use = "The meadows are **clothed** with flocks") Ps 93:1 (= 2 figurative uses = "The LORD reigns, He is **clothed** with majesty; The LORD has **clothed** and girded Himself with strength.") Ps 104:1 (= figurative use = "You are **clothed** with splendor and majesty") Ps 109:18 (= figurative use = "But he **clothed** himself with cursing as with his garment"), Ps 109:29 (= figurative use = "Let my accusers be **clothed** with dishonor"); Ps 132:9 (= figurative use = "Let Your priests be **clothed** with righteousness"),

**MacArthur** sums up the significance of this great truth writing "Whatever the Lord Jesus is and has becomes the believer's. Because Christ has the love of the Father, so do believers. Because Christ has full access to the Father, so do believers. And because Christ has the full resources of the Father, so do believers."

**Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Greek - ouk eni (3SPAI) Ioudaios oude Hellen ouk eni (3SPAI) doulos oude eleutheros ouk eni (3SPAI) arsen kai thelu pantes gar humeis eis este (2PPAI) en Christo Iesou

Amplified: There is [now no distinction] neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Phillips Gone is the distinction between Jew and Greek, slave and free man, male and female - you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Wuest There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female—for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

GNT Galatians 3:28 ο κ νι ουδα ος ο δ λλην, ο κ νι δο λος ο δ λε θερος, ο κ νι ρσεν κα θ λυ· π ντες γ ρ με ς ε ς στε ν Χριστ ησο .

NLT Galatians 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

KJV Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

ESV Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

ASV Galatians 3:28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.

CSB Galatians 3:28 There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

NIV Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

NKJ Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

NRS Galatians 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

YLT Galatians 3:28 there is not here Jew or Greek, there is not here servant nor freeman, there is not here male and female, for all ye are one in Christ Jesus;

NAB Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

NJB Galatians 3:28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female -- for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

GWN Galatians 3:28 There are neither Jews nor Greeks, slaves nor free people, males nor females. You are all the same in Christ Jesus.

BBE Galatians 3:28 There is no Jew or Greek, servant or free, male or female: because you are all one in Jesus Christ.

- **neither** (KJV): Ga 5:6 Ro 1:16 2:9,10 3:29,30 4:11,12 9:24 10:12-15 1Co 7:19 1Co 12:13 Eph 3:5-10 Col 3:11
- **male** (KJV): 1Co 7:14
- **for** (KJV): Joh 10:16 11:52 17:20,21 1Co 12:12 Eph 2:13-22 4:4,15,16
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:26-29 Commentary - Sons of God](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## UNITY IN CHRIST JESUS

In the Bible there is no word for "person." "Name" is used for "person." Therefore, having the name of Christ pronounced over one in baptism means that one belongs to Christ and that the personality of Christ must be expressed in that life.

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

**There is** ("there exists") **neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female** -Vine writes "'there exists," does not merely state the fact, it asserts the impossibility of the contrary. Thus James declares that "partiality cannot exist with the Father of Lights," James 1:17-[note](#); and Paul asks "could it be possible that there did not exist one wise man in the Church at Corinth?" 1 Corinthians 6:5. See also Colossians 3:11. **neither Jew nor Greek**,—i.e., national distinctions do not obtain in Christ; the world, men of "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," is the object of the love of God and the proper sphere of the gospel. Cp. "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek," "for the same Lord is Lord of all," Romans 10:12. **there can be no male and female**:—i.e., distinction of sex does not obtain in Christ; woman, no less than man, finds in Him her Savior and her ....sex is not a barrier to salvation, nor is it a hindrance to the development of the graces of the Christian life.

**POSB** - This is a startling truth: Jesus Christ is the answer to all the prejudice, bitterness, hatred, oppression, and inequalities of

earth. How can He solve the divisions among men? Note the phenomenal statement: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Every believer stands on an equal footing before Jesus Christ: the footing of faith. No person is accepted for any other reason than faith. All persons who come to Jesus Christ come ...

- because they are ever so short of Christ
- because they are ever so different from Christ
- because they are ever so imperfect

Yet, Jesus Christ accepts them. Jesus Christ reaches out and embraces all believers despite their being so much less and so different from Him. Therefore, when we look at another believer and he differs from us, we do just what Jesus Christ did for us. We love, accept, and embrace him; differences do not matter. All that matters is love, acceptance, and brotherhood in Christ. Every true believer loves and stands in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we look at another believer we see him in Christ. We do not see the believer, but we see Christ covering the believer. We pay no attention to his color, nationality, sex, social status, or any other differences. Differences just do not matter. All that matters is that we all grow into the image of Christ—love, accept and become more and more the brothers and sisters of God. (POSB - Leadership Ministries Worldwide)

**Philip Graham Ryken** - We have the best and the truest fellowship when we recognize our diversity, but see it as less important than our unity in Christ. ([Reformed Expository Commentary - Galatians](#))

Why those three groups?

#### **Dr MacArthur has an interesting comment**

Well, those are obvious distinctions, but more than that, there was a thanksgiving prayer that Jews said in the evening. If Paul was a good Pharisee, which I'm sure he was before he was saved, he probably said this every night. Part of the prayer went like this: *I thank God that You have not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman...* So Paul takes a straight shot at that and says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female." You say, "Well, that's part of Paul's problem. That's why he never got married. He didn't know the difference." No. He was not saying there's no difference, he was saying the difference doesn't matter spiritually. You get the difference?....

**There is no place for racial prejudice.** "There is neither Jew nor Greek." There is no place for racial partiality, none whatsoever. There is no justification for it Biblically. Romans 2:11 says, "There is no respect of persons with God." If you set yourself up partially to races over against other races, you set yourself above God. That is true in terms of your relationships, that is true in terms of your employment. Ephesians 6:9 says, "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." No respect of persons.

In Acts 13:1, we find that the pastors of the church in Antioch, five of them are listed, one of them (Simeon) is mentioned. Regarding Simeon, Niger, indicating the possibility that he himself was black and one of the five pastors there. Timothy was the child of a mixed marriage. I'll never forget the terrible, tragic suicide of a Southern pastor, who was caught in the tension of hatred in his own church toward black people. He wound up diving out of a third-story window and killing himself. There is no place in Scripture for any racial difference.

**Secondly, there is no place for social strata.** "There is neither bond nor free." There are no ranks in the body of Christ, none at all. In James 2:1, that most sensitive passage, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." You know, Dr. Ryrie made a very good statement. He said, "Sometimes our prejudice erodes into our faith," and that's what happened here. "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment," did you know people could actually go to church in crummy clothes? He was a poor man, he had nothing better. "And ye have respect to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say unto him, 'Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my feet', are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." There it is. If you are a social climber and you do more for the wealthy and less for the poor, you have respect of persons and commit sin.

**Thirdly, there is no sexual distinction.** "There is neither male nor female." Christianity elevated women to a

place the had never known in the ancient world, never known. Spiritually, they are equals. In God's pattern for the church and for the home, the man is to rule and the woman is to be submissive. But from the spiritual dimension, they are equally, in Christ, recipients of all spiritual blessing in the heavens, right? So we're all one person in Christ. The benefits of being in Christ are being sons of God and one with each other.

**Ray Pritchard** - In Christ the barriers that separate us have been torn down. Outward distinctions are no barrier to salvation. There are no divisions in the body of Christ on the basis of race, ethnic origin, skin color or national origin. You can be a Jew or a Greek or a Bolivian or an Egyptian or a Russian or a Filipino or a Nigerian or a Norwegian and it doesn't matter to God at all. Or you can be a "Heinz 57 Varieties" type person and still come to Christ. God doesn't favor one race or ethnic group over another. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. The same thing is true regarding social classes. Slave and free walk hand in hand into the family of God. This would have been an astounding thought in the first century. In the Christian church you might have a slave who was an elder giving spiritual oversight to a slave owner. The class distinctions that matter so much in the world (rich vs. poor, middle class vs. upper class, old money vs. new money, etc.) are not to dominate the Christian church. We are all saved on the same basis—by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And sexual distinction doesn't matter when it comes to salvation. Men and women are saved in exactly the same way. This means that a Gentile slave woman would have exactly the same rights in the eyes of God as a Jewish free man. Thus the ground is laid for true Christian unity. In Christ we are all one. God doesn't play favorites and neither should we.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Paul's assertion does not obliterate social or role distinctions. Observation will confirm the continuing existence of Jew and Greek, male and female. The statement is an affirmation of the impartial nature of the love of God in salvation (cf. Acts 10:34, 35). The equality of personhood which God gave to His entire creation is a birthright of new life, to be exercised as an opportunity for intimate fellowship with God Himself. Similarly, the divinely assigned responsibility of race, position, or sex is a mandate of office, to be accepted as an opportunity in service and for glory to the Lord. This is no contradiction to the equality and unity we experience "in Christ," which transcends all racial, ethnic, social, national or sexual distinctions.

**Vine on are one man in Christ Jesus.**—"man" is added (the RV adds) in accordance with Ephesians 2:15, where the apostle speaks of Jew and Gentile becoming "one new man" in Christ. The figure is closely analogous to that of "the body," under which the mutual relation of believers is set forth in 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; Ephesians 4:4, et al. In John 10:16, where the Lord speaks of gathering His sheep from the different "folds" into "one flock," the final gathering is in view, "they that are Christ's at His Parousia," 1 Corinthians 15:23. In John 17, where the Lord asks the Father for those who believe on Him (and who are thus already incorporated into the "one [new] man in Christ Jesus") that they "may be one," spiritual progress is in view. Hence this unity is moral; [oneness \(union\)](#) of life is already theirs, then let them all have one ideal, one ambition—to be like the Son, that so they might please the Father and confirm their testimony to the world, Gal 3:11, 21. In Gal 3:22, 23 the consummation at the coming of the Lord seems to be in view, for whereas "believe" is the word that answers to present testimony, "know" is the word that answers to the revelation of that day. Here and in Ephesians 2:15 "one" is masculine in gender, i.e., "one person"; in John 17 "one" is neuter, i.e., "one thing," as in 1 Corinthians 3:8; 11:5. In the first case vital union is in view; in the second moral. The first is present, an already accomplished fact in Christ—life; the second is a process in course of accomplishment in the power of the Holy Spirit—character. ([Collected Writings](#))

**Warren Wiersbe on "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....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). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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### **Galatians 3:26-29 TODAY IN THE WORD**

Oliver Otis Howard, a New England abolitionist, served as a general in the Union Army during the Civil War. He never drank, smoked or swore, and his soldiers called him ""Old Prayer Book."" After the war, Howard led the Freedmen's Bureau, a government effort to assist former slaves. He helped to found a university for African-Americans in 1867--Howard University, today one of the leading black universities in America. He also stirred controversy when he tried to integrate a church. Howard understood the truth of today's verse: racial and ethnic barriers have no place in the body of Christ.

Despite Jew-Gentile frictions, Paul could give his Gentile converts in Galatia the assurance: ""You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"" (v. 26). ""Through faith"" should be underscored because again and again in this epistle the apostle means to emphasize faith as opposed to works. Those who have received Christ by faith have been baptized into Him (v. 27). They have been linked to Him in a living union and made positionally to participate in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4).

In the process they have also "put on Christ" or "clothed" themselves with Christ. This is a reference to a significant ceremony for a young Roman male. When he came of age he was invested with the toga virilis, signifying that he was now a grown-up son, with the accompanying rights and responsibilities.

The image helps to explain how we mature as God's children. We are joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit and clothed with Christ's robe of righteousness, by which means we can stand before God without fear of condemnation.

In this divine family all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). None of us are entitled to superior Christian privileges, no matter what our spiritual or cultural background. A beautiful example of this is seen in the slave Onesimus, who in Christ became a "dear brother" to his master Philemon (Philemon 16).

APPLY THE WORD Galatians 3:28 captures the tremendous reality of believers' unity in Christ. What distinctions or barriers separate Christians in our culture or community? Barriers of race? Social class? Economic status? Education? Career choice? It's time to break down those walls!

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### A Shared Bond

You are all one in Christ Jesus. — Galatians 3:28

When I needed a locksmith to get into my car, I had a pleasant surprise. After he arrived and began opening my little Ford's door, we began chatting and I recognized his warm, familiar accent. It turned out that my rescuer was originally from Jamaica—a land I've visited often and have grown to love. This changed a negative event into a positive one. We were in a small way kindred spirits because of our shared love for that beautiful island nation. This struck me as a reminder of an even greater camaraderie—the joy of meeting someone new and discovering that he or she is also a believer in Christ. In some places, this is not unusual because there are many believers. But in those lands where there are few believers, the joy of meeting someone else who loves Jesus must be even greater. It's thrilling to share together the amazing reality of the freedom from sin we have through Christ! For all who know Jesus, there is a shared bond, a [oneness \(union\)](#) in Christ (Gal. 3:28), **a joy of fellowship that can brighten even the darkest day**. Praise God that He brings a **bond of unity** to all who know Him as Savior. — Dave Branon

What a miracle it is, dear Lord, that You can bring together people of all tribes, tongues, and nations to be like-minded in Christ—to share a bond of love and affection for Jesus.

Christian fellowship builds us up and binds us together.

**Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

Greek - ei de humeis Christou ara tou Abraam sperma este (2PPAI) kat epaggelian kleronomoi

Amplified: And if you belong to Christ [are in Him Who is Abraham's Seed], then you are Abraham's offspring and [spiritual] heirs according to promise.

Phillips And if you belong to Christ, you are true descendants of Abraham, you are true heirs of his promise.

Wuest And since ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

NET Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise.

GNT Galatians 3:29 ε δ με ς Χριστο , ρα το βρα μ σπ ρμα στ , κατ παγγελαν κληρον μοι.

NLT Galatians 3:29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

KJV Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

ESV Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

ASV Galatians 3:29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

CSB Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

NIV Galatians 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

NKJ Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

NRS Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

YLT Galatians 3:29 and if ye are of Christ then of Abraham ye are seed, and according to promise -- heirs.

NAB Galatians 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

NJB Galatians 3:29 And simply by being Christ's, you are that progeny of Abraham, the heirs named in the promise.

GWN Galatians 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs, as God promised.

BBE Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and yours is the heritage by the right of God's undertaking given to Abraham.

- **Christ's** (KJV): Ga 5:24 1Co 3:23 15:23 2Co 10:7
- **Abraham's** (KJV): Ga 3:7,16,28 4:22-31 Ge 21:10-12 Ro 4:12,16-21 9:7,8 Heb 11:18
- **heirs** (KJV): Ga 4:7,28 Ro 4:13,14 8:17 1Co 3:22 Eph 3:6 Tit 3:7 Heb 1:14 6:17 Heb 11:7 Jas 2:5 Rev 21:7
- [Galatians 3:23-29 Under the Law or in Christ?](#) - John MacArthur
- [Galatians 3:26-29 Commentary - Sons of God](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Galatians 3:23-29 The Tutor and the Sons](#) - Phil Newton
- [Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#) - Kenneth Wuest
- [Galatians 3 Resources](#) - Multiple sermons, commentaries, etc

## THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

**And if you belong to Christ** - Wuest translates it "since ye are Christ's. "

**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

**Vine** says **belong to Christ** signifies "not merely if ye are His property, but if ye are "members of His body" Ephesians 5:30."

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. (Wiersbe)

**Ray Pritchard** - To be Abraham's seed means that we inherit the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12. Originally those promises were just for the Jews, but in Christ they are now extended to all believers. Jeremiah 31:31-34-note explains that those promises revolve around total forgiveness of our sin and the implantation of a new heart (Ezek 11:19-note, Ezek 36:26-note) that gives us a desire to obey God (Ezek 36:27-note, Php 2:13NLT-note). Ultimately those promises extend past death to guarantee us eternal life with God in heaven. An heir is a person who by law is a member of a particular family. If you are an heir, you have a legal right to an inheritance. Since we are now members of God's family, we have a right to all that God has promised to His children. This week I saw a tabloid cover story on Prince William, the oldest son of Prince Charles of England. The picture showed a smiling face of the young prince and noted that he was the handsome heir to the British throne. No doubt many young girls look at him and think, "That's my ticket to the good life." That's what the world focuses on—money, position, power and an earthly throne with all the wealth that goes with it. But as Christians we have something much greater. We know Jesus Christ! In Him we find forgiveness, justification, freedom, an abundant life, joy, inner peace, new power, new motivation, redemption, and that's just for this life. When we die, we go to heaven forever. The world has no answer to the problem of sin and death. In Christ we have been delivered from our sins and set free from the fear of death (Heb 2:14, 15-note). If you know Jesus, death is the doorway to the presence of God (2 Cor 5:8-note). It's not the end, it's only the beginning. ([Born Free](#))

**Temper Longman** on "if you belong to Christ" (better "since you belong to Christ" for Paul assume his readers do) - Now being "in Christ," one's ethnicity, life station, or gender is no longer relevant to one's redemptive identity. Such outward distinctions remain, of course: Jews do not become Gentiles, and women do not become men; but these distinctions no longer carry the significance in God's redemptive program that they once had. All alike are "Abraham's seed," and all alike will be included in the fullness of God's redemptive promises. All alike have become "heirs," Abraham's spiritual offspring, because they are in Christ Jesus according to faith in the promise, not according to works of the law. (Expositor's Bible Commentary - Revised Ed)

**Promise** (1860) see preceding discussion of [epaggelia/epangelia](#)

**Epaggelia** - Used 50v in the NT and 7x in Galatians 3 - Gal. 3:14; Gal. 3:16; Gal. 3:17; Gal. 3:18; Gal. 3:21; Gal. 3:22; Gal. 3:29. Also used in Gal 4:23 and Gal 4:27.

**And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants:** Christ is the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16); being in Christ makes the believer a spiritual descendant of Abraham and thus an heir of the promise to Abraham (Ge 15:6) of justification by faith (Gal 3:8). National promises made to Abraham (esp "the land" of Canaan Ge 15:18, 17:8) as the father of the Jewish people are not in view in this verse, only the glorious promise of (Gal 3:8).

**Vincent on Abraham's descendants** - As being one with Christ. See Gal 3:7, 16. In Romans 4. Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all believers in Christ, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. The purpose of God in making the inheritance of the promise dependent on faith was that the promise might be sure to all the seed. Abraham, he says, is "**the father of us all**" (Ro 4:16-note). This spiritual paternity does away with the current Jewish notion of physical paternity. Physical relationship with Abraham is of no significance in the economy of salvation.

**Heirs according to promise:** What is the promise? The word **promise** occurs 7 times in 6 verses in Galatians 3. The first mention of promise is in Gal 3:14 where Paul writes describes "the **promise** of the Spirit through faith."

**Robert Dean** concludes that "according to Gal 3:29 if you belong to Christ you are a believer and an heir **according to the promise**, i.e. that you have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation." (Ed: Not everyone interprets promise in this way, but it is included to be "food for thought.")

In Romans 4 Paul explains that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them." (Ro 4:11) What is the promise in Romans 4? Righteousness (of Christ) imputed to or placed upon our "spiritual bank account."

To suggest (as do many evangelicals today) 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.

**Cleon Rogers** - It does not mean that the believer receives the land promises of Abraham, but rather that he partakes of the blessing of justification which is through faith, the universal blessing promised to Abraham for the whole world.

**John MacArthur** - The spiritual promise of eternal salvation and blessing given to Abraham belongs to all those who belong to Christ. They are all heirs according to that promise, which is fulfilled in Christ. **This is not a reference to the promises given to Abraham regarding the land** (Gen. 12:1; 13:14-15; 17:8), **but refers to the spiritual blessings that come to all who, being justified by faith just as Abraham was** (Ge 15:6; Ro 4:3-11), **will inherit the spiritual promises given to Abraham.** Not all the physical seed of Abraham will receive the promises of salvation (Ro 9:6-11), but many who are not physical seed of Abraham will receive them by coming to God by faith as he did, thereby becoming his spiritual offspring. Those who are children of God are "heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Ro 8:17). Christ's inheritance belongs to "all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32), His fellow "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). They are "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13), the promise of inheriting God Himself. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup, exulted David (Ps. 16:5). John Stott lucidly summarizes his comments on this passage in the following words: "We cannot come to Christ to be justified until we have first been to Moses to be condemned. But once we have gone to Moses, and acknowledged our sin, guilt and condemnation, we must not stay there. We must let Moses send us to Christ" (The Message of Galatians [London: Inter-Varsity, 1968], p. 102). ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Kenneth Wuest** has a good point that the problem in Galatia was not over the promise of **land** but of **life**, of salvation. The Judaizers were not trying to get the Galatian Gentiles to come under the law so that they would receive the land promised to Israel. Wuest writes that "The Judaizers taught that by becoming subjects of the Mosaic law, the Galatian Gentiles would become the seed or progeny of Abraham. Paul asserts that this privilege comes to one by faith in Christ. In Romans 4, Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Christ, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. God made salvation dependent upon faith in order that it might be available to both Jew and Gentile. Since Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers, this does away with the false Jewish notion that kinship to Abraham brings one into the divine favor and gives one salvation. By belonging to Christ, believers are also Abraham's posterity, for Christ is the seed of Abraham. Since believers have entered into relationship with Christ, they must consequently have a share in the same state, and must likewise be Abraham's seed." ([Galatians Commentary - Verse by Verse](#))

**Andy Woods** - (from spiritandtruth.org - Galatians Study) Many will use this text to argue for [replacement theology](#) (See also Topic: [Replacement Theology](#)). However, in order for someone to be a Jew, the designation "sons of Abraham" is not enough. Ishmael and his descendants were also sons of Abraham. For someone to be a Jew they must not only be a son of Abraham but a son of Isaac,

and Jacob as well. Also, it is important to recognize that the word “seed” is used four different ways in Scripture. These uses include natural seed (Gen 12:1-3, 7), natural spiritual seed (Isa 41:8, Rom 9:6, 8), spiritual seed (Gal 3:6-9, 29) and the ultimate seed (Gal 3:16; Heb 2:16-17). The third sense is in view in this passage. See Constable, “[Notes on Galatians](#),” 32-33. It is also worth pointing out that the noun “promise” in verse 29 is singular. Thus, the promise is the singular blessing of justification by faith alone rather than a taking over of all of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant.

**Warren Wiersbe** - 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). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Donald Campbell** - Third, believers in Christ are Abraham’s seed. As Paul previously stated, Christ is the Seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16, 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. Ro 9:6, 8-note). 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 [amillennialists](#) 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. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#)) (See related article - [Are Israel and the Church the Same Thing?](#))

**Dr Thomas Constable** - A third change is that those joined to Christ by faith become spiritual descendants of Abraham and beneficiaries of some of God’s promises to him. This does not mean Christians become Jews. Christians are Christians; we are in Christ, the Seed of Abraham (cf. v. 16). God promised some things to all the physical descendants of Abraham (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3, 7). He promised other things to the believers within that group (e.g., Rom. 9:6, 8). He promised still other things to the spiritual seed of Abraham who are not Jews (e.g., Gal. 3:6–9). Failure to distinguish these groups and the promises given to each has resulted in much confusion. (E.g., the amillennialist conclusion that Gentile believers inherit the promises of the believing remnant within Israel, thus eliminating any future for Israel as a nation.) Note one example of this error.

“Throughout the whole vast earth the Lord recognizes one, and only one, nation as His own, namely, the nation of believers (1 Peter 2:9).” (William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary*; cf. Ridderbos)

Why can the amillennialist position represented above not be correct? The reason is that Scripture speaks of the church as a nation distinct from Israel (Eph. 2:11–22). Jews, and Gentiles who had to become Jews to enter Israel, made up Israel. The church consists of Jews and Gentiles who enter it as Jews or Gentiles (Eph. 2:16; cf. 1 Cor. 10:32). Furthermore Paul called Jewish Gentile equality in the church a “mystery,” something unique, not previously revealed in Scripture (Eph. 3:5). The church began on the day of Pentecost, not in the Old Testament (Acts 1:5; 11:15–16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:18). Believers of all ages are all the people of God. Nevertheless God has dealt with different groups of them and has had different purposes for them as groups in various periods of human history. Does the church inherit the promises to Abraham? It only inherits some of them. The Jews will inherit those promises given to the physical descendants of Abraham. All believers will inherit those given to the spiritual descendants of Abraham. Saved Jews will inherit those given to the physical descendants who are also spiritual descendants. ([Galatians 3 Commentary](#))

**Heirs** (2818) ([Kleronomos](#) from **kleros** = a lot - lots were cast or drawn to divide property or select a winner or an heir + **nemomai** = to possess, to distribute among themselves), literally refers to one who obtains a lot or portion. It is one who receives something as a possession or a beneficiary (the person named as in an insurance policy to receive proceeds or benefits). It signifies more than one who inherits and it includes the idea of taking into possession. The New Testament usage of **kleronomos** applies primarily to the realm of spiritual inheritance.

**Promise** (1860) ([epaggelia/epangelia](#) from **epí** = intensifies verbal meaning + **aggéllo** = to tell, declare) literally means to “tell at or upon” and originally referred to an announcement or declaration (especially of a favorable message) (see Acts 23:21). In other words the first sense of **epaggelia** is that of a . declaration to do something which came to be associated with the implication of obligation to carry out what is stated and thus the meaning of a promise, pledge or offer. In Scripture, **epaggelia** refers primarily to God’s pronouncements that provide assurance of what He intends to do.

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**J Vernon McGee** - How can we be Abraham’s descendants? Because of the fact that Abraham was saved by faith, and we are saved by faith. Abraham brought a little animal to sacrifice, which looked forward to the coming of the Son of God, the supreme sacrifice. In my day, Christ has already come, and I can look back in history and say, “Nineteen hundred years ago the Son of God came and died on the cross for me that I might have life, and I trust Him.” Some time ago I had the privilege of speaking to a group

of wonderful Jewish folk, and I started by saying, "Well, it is always a privilege for me to speak to the sons of Abraham." And they all smiled. Then I added, "Because I am a son of Abraham, too." They didn't all smile at that. In fact, some of them had a question mark on their faces, and rightly so. If I am in Christ and you are in Christ, then we belong to Abraham's seed, and we are heirs according to the promise. How wonderful this is!

## **Israel-Church Differences**

### **Andy Woods**

One of the rules of basic Bible interpretation is to recognize that the church and Israel represent separate programs of God. They are two trains running on separate railroad tracks. Theologian and founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, Lewis Sperry Chafer, noted twenty-four differences between Israel and the church.<sup>1</sup> Here are a few.

First, Israel is the wife of Jehovah (Isa 54) while the church is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33).

Second, Israel gave birth to Christ (Rev 12:1-5) whereas Christ gave birth to the church (Matt 16:18).

Third, Christ will return to rescue Israel upon her national conversion at the end of the Tribulation period (Matt 23:37-39). Conversely, He will return to rescue the church at the rapture (John 14:1-3).

Fourth, king-subject imagery is used to depict God's relationship to Israel (Isa 33:22) while head and groom imagery is used to depict Christ's relationship with His church (Eph 5:22-33).

Fifth, God's program through Israel began in Genesis 12, and His program through the church began in Acts 2 (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 12:13; Acts 1:5; 11:15-16).

Sixth, while four-fifths of the Bible pertains to Israel, only one-fifth of it deals with the church.

Seventh, although Israel was a direct party to the biblical covenants (Jer 31:31-32), the church was not a party to these covenants since the church was not yet in existence when these covenants were made. The church's relationship to these covenants can best be described as one of a third-party beneficiary rather than a direct party to them. Therefore, the church benefits from the covenants as opposed to being a direct party to them.

Eighth, Israel is a nation (Ps 147:20). As such, she is always biblically portrayed as an independent nation with borders and a capital. Even today Israel is among the nations of the earth, just like Japan, Argentina, Canada, or any other country. By contrast, the church is not a nation (Rom 10:19) but rather is comprised of people from all nations (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:11-22; 3:6, 15). Rather than taking her seat among the nations of the earth, the church is a mere pilgrim in the world system (1 Pet 2:11).

Ninth, while Israel fought physical wars with various enemies such as the Philistines, the church is engaged in spiritual warfare with angelic enemies (Eph 6:10-20).

Tenth, the Scripture assigns numerous a quo and ad quem statements to Israel (Gen 15:13-16; Jer 25:11; 29:10; Ezek 4:5-7; Dan 9:24-27). These are timing statements with a specific beginning and ending point for each period. One searches the New Testament in vain to find comparable timing statements for the church.

Eleventh, Israel had a priesthood with all her priests coming from the tribe of Levi and the line of Aaron. By contrast, the church does not have a priesthood because it is a priesthood (Rev 1:6). The New Testament teaches the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5, 9). Every Church Age believer is a priest with direct access to God the Father through God the Son.

Twelfth, while Israel will be resurrected at the beginning of the millennial kingdom (Da 12:2; Jn 11:23-24; Rev 20:4-5), Church-Age believers receive their resurrected bodies at the point of the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:50-58).

Thirteenth, Israel's judgment will take place on earth, at the end of the Tribulation period, in the wilderness (Ezek 20:33-44). By contrast, the only judgment the New Testament reveals for the church is the Bema Seat judgment of rewards in heaven following the rapture (Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10).

Fourteenth, although the gates of the New Jerusalem are named after the twelve tribes (Rev 21:12), who were the foundations of Israel, the foundations of the eternal city are named after the twelve apostles (Rev 21:14) who are the foundations of the church (Eph 2:20).

Fifteenth, people become members of the commonwealth of Israel through physical birth. By contrast, membership in the church is

only attained by spiritual birth (John 3:1-9; Titus 3:5).

Sixteenth, Israel was directly governed by the Mosaic Law (Ps 147:19-20). By contrast, the controlling authority for the church is New Testament revelation. While all Scripture is for the church (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4), only the New Testament's epistolary literature is directly about the church.

Seventeenth, the Holy Spirit indwelt and filled Old Testament Jews selectively (Joel 2:28), temporarily (1 Sam 16:14; Ps 51:11), and subsequent to salvation to enable for a special purpose (Exod 31:3). By contrast, the Holy Spirit indwells all Church-Age believers (1 Cor 12:13) permanently (John 14:16) and at the point of salvation (Rom 8:9). Thus, the Spirit's work in and through Israel cannot be used as a pattern to depict the believer's normative experience with the Holy Spirit in the present age (John 7:37-39; 14:16-17; Acts 1:5).

Eighteenth, while Christ's farewell address to Israel (Matt 24:15; 20) is recorded in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:25), His farewell address to the church (John 16:12-13) is found in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13:17).

Nineteenth, although Israel is referred to as God's first-born son (Exod 4:22), the church is never given this same designation or title. Twentieth, while Israel's program is revealed in the Old Testament, the church's program was unknown in Old Testament times. Because the church is a New Testament mystery (Eph 3:3-6), or something previously hidden and now unveiled (Rom 16:25-26), Church Age doctrine comes exclusively from the New Testament (Matt 16:18; John 13:17) rather than the Old Testament. Noting such differences should caution us against taking prophecies and promises that are specifically aimed at Israel and misapplying them to the present dispensation of the Church Age.

[1] Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1948; reprint, [8 vols. in 4], Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1993), 4:47-53.

Source: [Spiritandtruth.org](http://Spiritandtruth.org) - [Israel-Church Differences - Any Woods](http://Spiritandtruth.org)

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## **Romans 6:14 Already: Decisively and Irrevocably Free, Not Yet: Finally and Perfectly Free**

August 28, 2001 | by John Piper | Topic: Identity in Christ

What we have learned from Romans 6 and 7 is that when we trusted in Christ as our Savior and Lord (as our Treasure!), we were united to Christ (Romans 6:5; 7:4). In this union with Christ we died (Romans 6:8; Colossians 2:20; 3:3) and rose again (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 2:6). Therefore a decisive and irrevocable new creation came into being (2 Corinthians 5:17), and a decisive and irrevocable liberation happened (Romans 6:14, 18). We passed from death to (eternal!) life. Our decisive judgment is behind us - at Golgotha (John 5:24). We have moved from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son (Colossians 1:13).

But we also learned that our liberation from sin is not yet final and perfect. Decisive and irrevocable, Yes! But final and perfect, No! Sin still dwells within us (Romans 7:17, 20). Evil is present in us (Romans 7:21). The "flesh" is a daily troubler of our souls (Romans 7:25). We are not yet perfect nor have we already obtained our crown and prize (Philippians 3:12). We are liars if we say we have no sin (1 John 1:8, 10).

How then does the apostle Paul teach us to live? Will he say: "You are decisively and irrevocably new, so you can coast through life with no fight to become new"? Or will he say: "You are not decisively and irrevocably new and must fight to get to that place in Christ"? No, neither of these. He will say: "By faith, embrace all that God is for your good in Christ and all you are for his glory in Christ. Believe that. And now, with that confidence, fight to take possession of the territory that Christ has conquered for you. **Fight to become in practice what you are in Christ.**" (Editorial note: But "fight" enabled by the Spirit, not your own natural, fleshly power!) Eight illustrations of this truth:

### **1. Statement of newness:**

Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

### **Command to become new:**

Romans 6:12, "**Do not let sin reign** in your mortal body."

### **2. Statement of newness:**

Romans 6:18, "Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

### **Command to become new:**

Romans 6:19, "**Present** your members as slaves to righteousness."

**3. Statement of newness:**

Romans 6:6, "Our old self was crucified with Him."

**Command to become new:**

Romans 6:11, "**Consider** yourselves to be dead to sin."

**4. Statement of newness:**

Colossians 3:9, "You laid aside the old self with its evil practices."

**Command to become new:**

Ephesians 4:22, "**Lay aside** the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit."

**5. Statement of newness:**

Colossians 3:10 You have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.

**Command to become new:**

Ephesians 4:24, "**Put on** the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

**6. Statement of newness:**

Galatians 3:27, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

**Command to become new:**

Romans 13:14, "But **put on** the Lord Jesus Christ."

**7. Statement of newness:**

Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

**Command to become new:**

Romans 13:14b, "**Make no provision** for the flesh in regard to its lusts."

**8. Command to become new:**

1 Corinthians 5:7a, "**Clean out** the old leaven so that you may be a new lump [of dough]."

**Statement of newness:**

1 Corinthians 5:7b, ". . . just as you are in fact unleavened."

Fixed in newness and fighting to become new - with you,

Pastor John