

Pt 11-Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New

PREVIOUS
STUDY

NEXT STUDY

(1) Abrahamic Covenant

Summary: Was given to Abraham, to his seed (descendents), and was the promise of a Seed, a Nation and a Land. It was unconditional and everlasting. For more detail see discussion of **Abrahamic Covenant versus Mosaic Covenant** and [discussion below of Abrahamic Covenant in Galatians](#).

(2) Old Covenant

Review: The Old Covenant (Law) was given by God to the Nation of Israel for the purpose of setting them apart (Ex 19:6), to enable them to "possess their possessions" (Dt 4:1), it was conditional ("Thou shall" [or "if... then"], if they would obey = blessing, disobey = curse; contrast "I will" - six times in Heb 8:7). The Law and the sanctuary were a **shadow, a copy** (Heb 8:5-note, He 9:24-note, He 10:1-note) and a **symbol** (Heb 9:9-note), and the priest's work never finished (they could never sit down, contrast He 8:1-note, He 10:12-note, He 1:3-note, He 12:2-note) (He 9:6, 7-note, He 10:11-note). Under the Old Covenant the people could just go so far (they could approach through the one door into the area of the brazen altar) but could never go into the Holy of holies (contrast the NC - Heb 10:19, 20, 21-note). Only the High Priest could enter the presence of the LORD, but only once per year and not without taking blood for himself and the people () Although it was true that without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness (He 9:22-note), the blood from the animal sacrifices could **never** take away sin (He 10:4-note) and thus could never give **lasting forgiveness** or a **clear conscience** (He 9:9-note, He 10:2-note, He 10:4-note). The first covenant was **not faultless** because of the inability of the people to keep it (Heb 8:9-note) Finally, the Old Covenant was a temporary covenant (He 8:13-note, He 9:10-note, He 10:9-note) (**For more complete discussion see notes on Abrahamic vs Old**)

OLD COVENANT	NEW COVENANT
Given to Israel Ex 19:7, 8	Given to Israel Jer 31:31, 32
Conditional If you do this... then eg Ex 19:5	Unconditional "I Will" He 8:8, 10, 12
Tabernacle on earth Shadow, copy, symbol He 8:5, He 9:9, 9:24, 10:1	Tabernacle in heaven True one, Greater, More Perfect He 8:2, 5, He 9:11 He 9:23, 24
Sacrifices - Continually He 9:24, 25	Sacrifice - Once for all time He 9:26, He 10:10
Blood of bulls and goats He 9:7, He 9:12,13, 21	Blood of Christ - He 9:12, 14, 1Peter 1:18 Offered Himself/Body - He 9:14, 26, 10:10
Inaugurated with blood He 9:18 Ex 24:3, 7, 8	Inaugurated with blood and with body He 10:10, 1Pe 2:24, 2Co 5:21
HP Enters Holy Place only Once/Year He 9:7, He 9:25	Enters Holy Place (in heaven) once - He 9:12 Gives believer confidence to enter Holy Place - He 10:19

Cannot make worshipper perfect in conscience - He 9:9, 10 Sanctify for cleansing of flesh (external) - He 9:13 Cannot remove consciousness of sins - He 10:2 Reminder of sins year after year - He 10:3 Does not take away sins (only "covers" sins) - He 10:4, 11	Provides mercy for sins - He 8:12 Provides forgiveness for sins - He 10:18 Sanctifies the believer - He 10:10, 14 Provides Eternal Redemption - He 9:12 Provides Eternal Inheritance - He 9:15 Cleanses conscience - He 9:14 Puts away sin - He 9:26
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SIMPLE COMPARISON OF THE OLD COVENANT vs THE NEW COVENANT

THE OLD COVENANT	THE NEW COVENANT
LAW	GRACE
WORKS	FAITH
WORK	REST
FOCUS IS ON EXTERNALS	FOCUS IS ON INTERNALS
LAW IS EXTERNAL	LAW IS INTERNAL
FLESH EMPOWERED	SPIRIT EMPOWERED
LIVING UNDER THE LAW BEARS FRUIT FOR DEATH E.G., STEALS JOY	LIVING BY THE SPIRIT BEARS FRUIT FOR LIFE E.G., PRODUCES JOY
DEMANDS WORKS OF THE FLESH	FULFILLS DEMAND IN FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST
PRACTICAL EFFECT ON LIVING... BONDAGE SLAVERY	PRACTICAL EFFECT ON LIVING... LIBERTY FREEDOM
BRINGS SPIRITUAL DEATH	BRINGS SPIRITUAL LIFE
MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION	MINISTRY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
PICTURE OF CHRIST	PERSON OF CHRIST
A PALE SHADOW (Shadow)	THE EXACT IMAGE (Substance)
INAUGURATED AT MT. SINAI	CONSUMMATED (RATIFIED) AT MT. ZION
MOSES MEDIATED	CHRIST MEDIATES
SEPARATE & DISTINCT FROM ABRAHAMIC COVENANT	EXTENSION & AMPLIFICATION OF ABRAHAMIC COVENANT
TEMPORARY	EVERLASTING
EARTHLY TENT TEMPORAL	HEAVENLY TABERNACLE ETERNAL

SINS COVERED (Yom Kippur once a year)	SINS FORGIVEN (Sent away forever)
CONTINUAL SACRIFICES CAN NEVER TAKE AWAY SINS (Blood of animals)	ONE SACRIFICE TAKES AWAY SINS FOR ALL TIME (Body and blood of Christ)
CANNOT CONVEY A CLEAR CONSCIENCE	CONVEYS A CLEAR CONSCIENCE
CONDITIONAL COVENANT	UNCONDITIONAL COVENANT
<u>GOAL OF LAW</u> REMINDER OF SIN DISCOVERS SIN CONDEMNS SINNER TUTOR LEADS TO SAVIOR	<u>GOAL OF NEW COVENANT</u> REMISSION OF SIN DEFEATS SIN CONDEMNS SIN TUTOR NO LONGER NECESSARY
LAW WRITTEN ON STONE "I WILL DO"	LAW WRITTEN ON HEART "I WILL DO BY HIS SPIRIT"
DESIRE TO OBEY BUT NO INTERNAL POWER	DESIRE TO OBEY RESURRECTION POWER WITHIN
DON'T COME TOO CLOSE	DRAW NEAR WITH CONFIDENCE
NO HOPE TO HOLD US	A SURE HOPE TO HOLD FAST & TO HOLD US FAST

APPLICATION: Have you entered the New Covenant by grace through faith in the Good News of Jesus Christ? If you have not, then do so "post haste", without delay, today, even while it is still called "**Today**"! (Jas 4:13, 14, Pr 27:1, Isa 1:18, 2Cor 6:2, He 3:7, 8, He 3:13, Jn 8:24, Acts 4:12, Acts 16:31, Isa 45:22) If you have entered the New Covenant in His blood (Mt 26:28, Lk 22:20), then hallelujah! And if you have considered the above contrasts between the Old and New, why would you ever want to put yourself (or allow anyone else to put you) under the burden of the Law (contrast 1Jn 5:3,4). You may answer "***I would never allow myself to be placed under the law!***" I pray that is true, but some forms of legalism are disguised in attractive, subtle garb.

And thus to be sure you have not fallen into the snare of legalism in any '*shape, form or fashion*', you might considering reading or listening to Ray Stedman's insightful message entitled "[Legalism](#)" (Sermon on Gal 5:13-26) (See also [Note by John MacArthur](#))

Now lest you accuse me of promoting anti-nomianism (against the Law, lawless living, license) in the preceding table of contrasts, remember that while faith alone saves, the faith that truly saves is not alone; i.e., genuine faith is accompanied by obedience and "Good (God) Deeds"! (Eph 2:8, 9-note, Ep 2:10-note, Jas 2:14-26-see notes, See also Obedience of faith and Relationship of faith and obedience)

2CORINTHIANS 3

2Corinthians 3:6 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. 7 But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, 8 how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.

What is Paul contrasting in chapter 3 and how does it help us understand why the Old Covenant ("the first" He 8:13-note, He 9:1-note, He 9:15-note, He 9:18-note, He 10:9-note) **had been made obsolete, growing old ready to disappear?**

Various descriptions/effects of the New Covenant versus the Old Covenant (see chart below)

2Cor 3:6, 7, 8, 9 What is the effect of the Old Covenant?

2Co 3:6 Kills

2Co 3:7 Ministry of death (engraved on stones) (3000 died at Sinai Ex 32:28)

2Co 3:9 Ministry of condemnation (cannot produce righteousness that pleases God)

2Cor 3:7, 8, 9, 10 What does he teach about the OC and Moses?

Old Covenant had **glory** - they could not look intently at Moses' face

Note: But the Israelites could not stare at Moses' face for too long because the reflective glory of God was like staring into the sun and was too bright.

2Cor 3:14, 15 What happens to Jews today when the OC is read?

A veil covers their heart and mind and they cannot understand the truth

Note: The Israelites' inability to see the glory shining from Moses' face, fading though that glory was, is used to picture their descendants' present inability to realize the transitory character of the OC and to recognize the unfading glory of the NC. Note that this is always the result of refusing and suppressing the revelation of divine truth. A veil of intellectual darkness hides the glory which has been deliberately rejected.

2Cor 3:16 How is the veil removed?

Whenever a man is turns to the Lord = converted

Note that the image of turning to God in the Old Testament always implies turning away from false gods.

Richards concludes that

The old covenant administered by Moses offered **no inner transformation**. This is illustrated by Moses himself, for after leaving God's presence he put a veil over his face so the people would not see the splendor, which God's presence had imparted, fade away. In contrast, because God's Spirit now lives within the believer a process of transformation is taking place. That transformation, marked by increasingly clear reflection through the believer's life of the splendor of Christ Himself, is the mark of New Covenant ministry. (Richards, L. The Bible Reader's Companion)

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-18	
THE OLD COVENANT	THE NEW COVENANT
Written with ink on tablets of stone 2Cor 3:3	Written with the Spirit on tablets of human hearts 2Cor 3:3
Adequacy from Self 2Cor 3:5	Adequacy from God 2Cor 3:5
The Letter (law) Kills (3000 @ Sinai – Ex 32:28) 2Cor 3:6	The Spirit gives Life (3000 @ Pentecost – Acts 2:41) 2Cor 3:6
Ministry of Death (glory...fading) 2Cor 3:8	Ministry of the Spirit (more glory) 2Cor 3:8
Ministry of Condemnation 2Cor 3:9	Ministry of Righteousness 2Cor 3:9
No glory (~glory of moon) 2Cor 3:10	Glory that surpasses (~glory of sun) 2Cor 3:10

Fading Glory: Temporary 2Cor 3:11	Remains in Glory: Permanent 2Cor 3:11
Reading of Old Covenant hearts veiled 2Cor 3:14,15	Turn to the Lord Veil is removed in Christ 2Cor 3:16
(By implication Bondage)	Where Spirit of the Lord is Liberty 2Cor 3:17
Glory fading on Moses' face No Internal Transformation 2Co 3:13	Glory going to glory on saints' faces Continual Internal transformation by the Spirit 2Cor 3:18

(3)

New Covenant

Review: NC ("Second"), made the Old Covenant (OC) obsolete (He 8:13-note) because it was a better covenant (He 8:6-note), with better promises (sanctified for all time, clean conscience, complete forgiveness of sins, see table above), better sacrifices (Jesus - once for all time), better priest (Jesus), better sanctuary (in heaven, presence of God) (**See related resources:** New Covenant in Old Testament ; See notes on why new better Heb 8-10)

2 Corinthians 3

2 Cor 3:3 What is the truth regarding the New Covenant as seen in the converts?

It's like an actual letter (cf Acts 18:27)

The New Covenant produces a "new life", a transformed life for all to see (and "read")

It is written by the Spirit of the living God and not with ink

It is written on tablets of human hearts (not stone)

Note: Every believer is an "open letter" from Christ, because their changed life will show God's work within their heart. The Corinthian believers were themselves "letters" attesting to the validity of Paul's ministry and call. More than just writing His law on stone, God was writing His law on the hearts of those people He transformed (cf. Jer 31:31, 32, 33, 34)

Ezekiel 11:19NLT "And I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their hearts of stone and give them tender hearts instead").

The false teachers claimed **external adherence to the Mosaic law as the basis of salvation**, but the transformed lives of the Corinthians proved that salvation was an internal change wrought by the Spirit in one's **heart** (word study), the "control center" in each person's life. (see [The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word Pub](#))

2 Cor 3:6 What is the spiritual effect of the New Covenant?

It is a covenant **of the Spirit** and it **gives life** (3000 at Pentecost Acts 2:41)

2 Cor 3:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 How did Paul contrast the glory of the OC with that of the NC?

Glory of the OC was fading and no glory compared to the NC (called **ministry of the Spirit, ministry of righteousness**) which was greater, surpassing glory that **remained** (implying the OC was temporary and the NC was permanent)

Note: In 2Cor 3:7,11, 13 the verb the NAS translates "fade" is **katargeo** which means to render inoperative or ineffective. The glory of Moses' face was rendered ineffective by the veil Moses wore.

2 Cor 3:12 What did Paul have that we also have?

We have such a hope (elpis [word study] = not hope so, but absolute assurance of future good)

New Covenant produces increasing glory (cp 2Cor 3:18)

We have nothing to hide - in fact Jesus said for us to let our light shine before men in such a way that they see our good works and glorify our Father Who is in heaven (Mt 5:16-note, Php 2:14-note).

2 Cor 3:17 What does Paul teach about the Spirit and His effect on our life?

The Lord is the Spirit (Spirit is God) (See [Trinity](#), [Trinity, 1](#), [Trinity, 2](#))

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit brings **freedom** (**eleutheria** [word study] = emancipation from bondage) - we are set free from the ministry of death and condemnation which was in effect while we were still under the law

The word **freedom** is related to the verb form Jesus used in John 8:36, when He declared that

"If therefore the Son shall **make you free**, [eleutheroo {word study}] you shall be free indeed."

Real freedom wrought for us in Christ on the Cross is liberty but not license (to sin) for the New Covenant with the promise of the Spirit's empowering us to be truly free - to do as we ought (our new nature in Christ) and not as we want (our old flesh) The Spirit gives us the power to live as we should and not as we please. Stated another way, freedom from a New Covenant perspective is not the right to do as you please, but the power to do as you should.

2 Cor 3:18 What is the mark of the New Covenant, a mark which leaves no doubt that the veil has been removed?

As we behold the Truth, the Spirit **transforms** (**metamorphoo** [word study] same word in Ro12:2-note) us from glory to glory (doxa [word study]). The "letter of Christ" becomes more legible and visible to everyone we encounter

TRANSFORMED LIVES

Note: Transformed lives are the unmistakable mark of the New Covenant. It's not what we are, but **what we are becoming**, that communicates Christ. Under the New Covenant believers (**justified** = dikaios, cp Heb 10:10-note) can experience this daily transformation as they contemplate the glory of God revealed in the mirror of His Word, His Spirit producing progressive moral transformation (**sanctification**), cp He 10:14-note) as we obey the truth intellectually seen and respond to His leading (Gal 5:18-note, cp Gal 5:25-note), a process that results in increasing Christlikeness and a greater reflection of His glory (**in our face** and especially in our **changed conduct** and **character**, the fruit of the Spirit, Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note). Unlike the glory of the OC which fades, the glory of the NC produced by the Spirit will not fade but will increase and one day soon will be brought to fruition and final fulfillment when our old bodies are raptured (harpazo) and/or resurrected (**glorification**; cp He 9:28-note where "salvation" = "future tense salvation") (See related study of **Three Tenses of Salvation**)

Application: Beloved, does the letter written on your heart by the Spirit give others a more accurate message of Christ this year than at the same time last year?

GALATIANS

As It Relates to The Three Covenants

Context of Galatians: Why did Paul write? Some were teaching the Galatians that Paul was not a true Apostle and that his doctrine was not true. Specifically, they said that Paul was wrong in saying that salvation was by faith alone. They claimed you are saved by faith, but are brought to perfection by keeping the Law. They mixed **faith** and **law** and also taught that **circumcision** was necessary for a Gentile to enter the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal 2:3 5:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 5:11 6:12, 13, 14, 15). The purpose of the letter to the Galatians was to counteract this "**different gospel**" (Gal 1:6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11).

The Galatian believers were in danger of following a distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:7) that taught **salvation** was by faith and that **sanctification** was by law, thus mixing grace and law the result being a false gospel of **faith plus works** representing **a co-mingling** or amalgamation of teachings from the **Old Covenant** and the **New Covenant**. Paul sought to counter this "life and liberty stealing" **false gospel** by showing his readers the relationship of the Abrahamic, Old and New covenants each of which God used to bring men to faith in Christ. Remember that the recipients of this letter were predominantly **Gentile** and a "different gospel" was being promoted by Jews who **professed** to believe in Christ and who were seeking to get Gentile converts **under** (in subjection to) the Law and circumcision (Gal 2:4).

GALATIANS THREE DIVISIONS

Galatians breaks out roughly into three divisions:

1) [Galatians 1-2](#):

Paul addresses the danger of the accursed "gospel" and its promoters (Gal 1:7 "[the gospel] *is really not another [gospel]*; *only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to **distort** [metastrepho] the gospel of Christ.*" Gal 2:4 "*the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our **liberty** [eleutheria - word study] which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into **bondage** [katadouloo = kata = intensifies meaning of douloo [word study] = strong verb = utterly, absolutely enslave]*"). The apostle defends his apostleship to establish the credibility of his teaching.

2) [Galatians 3-4](#):

Paul's doctrinal arguments refuting the false teaching. Why sound doctrine? Because your **behavior** is intimately linked to what you **believe**.

3) [Galatians 5-6](#):

Paul's description of the life of liberty that belongs to those who, under the New Covenant, have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

How do Christians "co-mingle" the covenants today? Ask yourself...

Am I living under grace or under law? Have I accepted the grace of God for my salvation but continue to put myself under the law for daily living? Or asked another way have I begun to place myself under the Old Covenant of Law by basing my relationship with Christ on my performance (even "good" things like morning prayer time, memorization, regular church attendance, etc)? In what are you boasting (your works, your accomplishments, your ministry, etc) or the Cross? (Gal 6:14-note)

See Related Discussion

- Purpose of the Law

GALATIANS 3 & 4

GALATIANS When faith in the Cross of Christ sets you free, you are free indeed (Contrast Jn 8:34 and Jn 8:36)					
Gal 1:1-24	Gal 2:1-21	Gal 3:1-29	Gal 4:1-31	Gal 5:1-26	Gal 6:1-18
Defense of Gospel of Grace		Explanation of Gospel of Grace		Application of Gospel of Grace	
Gospel From God		Gospel Superior to Law		Gospel of Spirit	
Testimonial Apologetical		Doctrinal Argumentation		Practical Exhortational	
Biographical Explanation		Doctrinal Exposition		Practical Exhortation	

Key Verses: Gal 2:4, Gal 2:20, Gal 5:1, Gal 5:16, Gal 6:14

Key Words:

Faith - Gal 1:23; 2:16, 20; 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23, 24; 5:5, 6; 6:10

Law - Gal 2:16, 19, 21; 3:2, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:3, 4, 14, 18, 23; 6:2, 13

Works - Gal 2:8 2:16 3:2 3:5 3:10 5:6 6:4

Gospel - Gal 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:11 2:2 2:5 2:7 2:14 3:8 4:13

Grace - Gal 1:3 1:6 1:15 2:9 2:21 5:4 6:18

Spirit - Gal 3:2 3:3 3:5 3:14 4:6 4:29 5:5 5:16 5:17 5:18 5:22 5:25 6:1 6:8 6:18

Freedom - Gal 2:4 3:28 4:22 4:23 4:26 4:30 4:31 5:1 5:13

Christ Jesus - Gal 2:4 2:16 3:14 3:26 3:28 4:14 5:6 5:24 (Jesus = Gal 6:17)

Christ - Gal 2:3 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:12 5:2 5:3 5:6 5:11 6:12 6:13 6:15

Promise - Gal 3:14 3:16 3:17 3:18 3:19 3:21 3:22 3:29 4:23 4:28

Covenant - Gal 3:15 3:17 4:24

Circumcision - Gal 2:3 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:12 5:2 5:3 5:6 5:11 6:12 6:13 6:15

Adapted from "Jensen's Survey of the NT" & Wilkinson's "Talk Thru the Bible"

Galatians 3: What two major subjects were Paul's opening questions addressing?

Salvation and (progressive) Sanctification (growth in holiness/Christ-likeness, cp 2Pe 3:18-note)

- See Related Resource: **Three Tenses of Salvation** - I have been saved (justification, I am being saved (progressive sanctification), I will be saved (glorification)
- See verse by verse commentary on Galatians 3

John MacArthur explains that...

Throughout the history of the church some believers have begun well but later have been pulled away from the truths they first believed and followed. They receive the gospel of salvation by grace and live for the Lord in humble faith, but then fall prey to some system of legalism and works righteousness that promises more but produces much less. Some fall into formalism, substituting external ceremonies and rites for the internal reality of personal growth in the Lord. Others fall into legalistic systems of do's and don'ts, proudly hoping to improve their standing before God by doing or not doing certain things... The defecting believers had not lost their salvation, but they had lost the joy and freedom of it and had returned, deceived, to the uncertainty and bondage of a self-imposed legalism. They were still **in Christ (see study)** and right with God positionally, but they were not practically (**Ed**: experientially) living in conformity to the truth by which they had been made righteous. They substituted a form of religion that had no power or joy for the fullness of life in Christ they once enjoyed... Having received new life in Christ by faith, they had been persuaded to live out their new lives by the old way of works. They had turned back from grace to law from faith to works, from Calvary to ceremony, from freedom to bondage. ([MacArthur, J. Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

(1)

**Galatians and
The Abrahamic Covenant**

- **Note:** See Verse by Verse Commentary on Galatians 3

Gal 3:1 Why were the Galatians foolish? What had they allowed to occur? Who had bewitched them?

Remember that the problem among the Galatian believers is that false teachers (apparently predominantly Jewish false teachers who have been referred to as "Judaizers" although that term is not used in the Bible) were adding to the Gospel which is by faith alone in Christ alone. See Gal 1:6, 7, 8, Gal 2:4, 5:1 (note word for "**sneaked in**" in Gal 2:4 is *pareisaktos* [from *pareisago* = smuggle in = bring in along side of] means brought in secretly - the idea would be to bring in error alongside of truth which is what

makes them especially dangerous!) See similar "*modus operandi*" of false teachers in 2Pe 2:1, 2-note, cp Mt 13:25, Acts 15:24 Acts 20:28, 29, 30, 31, Ep 4:14-note Jude 1:4. If you think that false teachers surely are not present in your church, you need to reread the preceding Scriptures. And remember the best (only) defense against the subtle, deceptive, enslaving errors of these individuals is the Word of Truth (2Ti 2:15, 2Co 6:7, Titus 1:9-note). In short, "*Thus saith the Lord!*" is (or should be) the end of every argument. In light of that truth it is interesting to note that Paul resorts frequently to Old Testament quotations (especially from Gal 3:6 to Gal 4:31) to refute the Galatian errors.

Publicly portrayed is like a modern message on a billboard - easy to see, clear and understandable. That is what the presentation of the Gospel of Christ and the Cross of Christ, the finished work (Jn 19:30-note), the centrality of this foundational Biblical truth had become "fuzzy". False teachers were throwing "smoke screens" over this Truth. Instead of **Jesus Only** the message was **Jesus Plus** -- plus works of the Law, especially [circumcision](#) (Gal 2:3 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:12 5:2 5:3 5:6 5:11 6:12 6:13 6:15).

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 17:9,10, 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. (See related discussions - Scriptures on Circumcision; Excursus on Circumcision Of the Heart) 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 Je17:10, Rev 2:23). Right **external** behavior only pleases Him when it corresponds to right **internal** attitudes and motives (cp 1Co4:4,5).

Foolish (used twice to get their attention = Gal 3:1, 3) (*anoetos* from *a* = without + *noieo* = clear perception, full understanding, careful consideration) is not referring to mental deficiency but to the mental laziness and carelessness of the believers in Galatia (cp Jesus use of *anoetos* in Lk 24:25) were not stupid; they simply failed to use their spiritual intelligence when faced by the unscriptural, gospel-destroying teaching of the Judaizers. They were not using their heads.

Bewitch - (*baskaino*, used only in Gal 3:1) in secular Greek meant first to hurt by words (slander) and then to subject a person to an occult evil influence. It 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 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). As an aside, **NIDNTT** has an interesting note on *baskaino*

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*").

Hendriksen explains that...

And 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 ([Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. New Testament Commentary Set, 12 Volumes. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House](#))

What made the yielding of the Galatians to the Judaizers inexcusable?

They had been clearly taught Christ crucified (1Cor 1:23, 1Cor 2:2) - they understood the meaning of the Cross. The official notice of His death had been posted ([prographo](#)) for all to clearly see (figuratively speaking - see notes above)

Gal 3:2, 5 What is the contrast Paul makes?

Salvation by **works** versus salvation by **faith**

Works (energeo) miracles (dunamis) - The **present tense** indicates that "**miracles**" were the Spirit's ongoing **ministry** (recall in Heb 8:6-note the New Covenant brought a "**more excellent ministry**" and "miracles" would be clear testimony to the supremacy of the New to the Old Covenant). 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!

Gal 3:3 What else does Paul ask them to help them remember how what they should have known?

Having begun is in the **aorist tense** which signifies in context a past tense event at a point in time -- i.e., the day of their salvation by grace through faith. Are you **being perfected (epiteleo** in the **present tense** which is tantamount to being sanctified, being made holy, growing in Christ likeness, so called "present tense" salvation - the process of sanctification - see study on Three Tenses of Salvation) by works (including performing physical circumcision) or by the Spirit? Implied answer is by the Spirit. The false teachers were promoting a "faith" (in Christ) "plus" doctrine, implying that faith in Christ was not enough to save a person.

Marvin Vincent comments on the verb "**having begun**" (also used in Php 1:6-note) which is also coupled with **epiteleo** - Having commenced your Christian life. The verb is common in Class. in the sense of beginning a sacrifice or other religious ceremony; but it is not likely that any such figurative suggestion is attached to it here, as Lightfoot.

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** (epiteleisthe) is used here because the spiritual process is to be wrought by them upon themselves." (**Ed**: And yet we now that such would not be possible with out divine enablement of the Spirit!) (The Expositor's Greek Testament)

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.

Paul's argument is powerful: If a person has received salvation thru trust in the crucified Christ, received the fullness of the Spirit the moment he believed & has the Father's Spirit-endowed power working within, why would he now seek fleshly efforts (works, circumcision) in an attempt to please God or to merit His favor?

What does Paul resort to in order to emphasize that we are justified by faith and not by keeping the law?

Old Testament Scriptures. In other words, in the doctrinal section, Galatians 3-4, Paul begins his argument against the false teachers by "illustrating" what it means to hear with faith.

Note: From Galatians 3:6 to the end of Galatians 4 Paul resorts to the Old Testament to refute the false teaching of the need to keep the works of the law.

Gal 3:6 How did Abraham become righteous?

Believed God (cp Ge 15:6, Ro 4:3-note, Jas 2:23-note)

Why bring up Abraham at this juncture? Jews revered Abraham as their spiritual father (see Jn 8:31, 32, 33, 34, 39 contrast Jn 8:44). As far as the Jews were concerned, if you were a **physical** descendant of Abraham, then you were in good standing with God. As long as you could find "father Abraham" somewhere in your family tree, then you didn't really need anything else. It was a matter of **lineage**, of **heritage**, of **tracing** your family tree. If you could find Abraham back there somewhere, you were in God's family. Paul is saying, it's a matter of faith, not genetics! What a rebuke to the Jewish false teachers.

Gal 3:7 How were the spiritual children of Abraham saved?

By faith they became sons of Abraham

Gal 3:8 What did Abraham believe?

The Gospel and likewise the Gentiles believed the Gospel. Salvation has always been by faith.

Comment: In this passage Paul addresses the false assumption of the Judaizers that inasmuch as it is in Abraham that all nations were to be blessed, they would have to be incorporated in his descendants by the rite of circumcision. The good news announced to Abraham was that some day the Saviour would arise out of his Seed (Gal 3:16) & that the Gentiles would be saved by faith through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, even as was Abraham. Thus, Abraham rejoiced to see the coming of that day (Jn 8:56).

Guzik: Paul observes that even back in Abraham's day it was clear that this blessing of righteousness by faith was intended for every nation, for Gentiles as well as Jews, because God pronounced that in you all the nations shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3).. The intention is to destroy the idea that a Gentile must first become a Jew before they can become a Christian. If that were necessary, God would never have said this blessing would extend to every nation, because Gentiles would have had to become part of the Israelite nation to be saved. The idea is that the gospel goes out to the nations, not that the nations come and assimilate into Israel.

Gal 3:9 What was the promise to those of faith?

Blessed with Abraham the believer (**not law keeper**)

So after the truth about Abraham is presented, Paul in the next section begins to discuss the **Old Covenant** and it's inability to save anyone, establishing this fact by quoting from the Old Testament (which would directly refute the Judaizers). Then he makes the point that the Law which can't save came 430 yr after the Abrahamic Covenant and did not invalidate that covenant which was entered by faith. Then he notes that the New Covenant which is also entered into by faith alone is in a sense an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant but with additional promises especially the Spirit. This detailed argument from Scripture should have been sufficient reason for any Gentile who was being "bewitched" by the "other gospel" (faith plus works or grace plus law) to turn from that lie and back to the truth of saved by faith and being sanctified by faith. **Are doing things in an attempt to gain God's favor?** If so you have become "bewitched" by the subtle trap of the Judaizers, adding works to your faith. Yes, true **faith** births **works**, but now out of a changed heart, with His Spirit's initiation and power (cp Jn 15:5, Ep 2:10-note, Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note; see study on **Good Deeds**)

(2)

Galatians and The Old Covenant

- **Note:** See Verse by Verse Commentary on Galatians 3

Ryrie explains...

Having shattered the Jews' confidence in their physical relation to Abraham, Paul now shows that the law brings a curse. He quotes Dt. 27:26 (from the Septuagint = LXX) and argues that man cannot possibly keep all the laws, hence his bondage (cf. Jas 2:10).

Gal 3:10-note How does Paul contrast the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant with the Law?

Explains that those who are depending on the Law to save them are under a curse. All things written in the Law would have to be performed perfectly.

Bartlett: In Dt 27:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, we have the basis for Paul's statement that to be under the works of the **Law** is to be under the curse of the **Law** (see esp Dt 27:26). The **Law** knows no mercy.

- it tolerates not the slightest deviation from its unyielding demands.
- it exacts the full penalty for every tiny transgression.
- it ever condemns and never condones.
- it confronts men like a sheer perpendicular cliff towering thousands of feet into the air, with the demand that men scale it or die in the attempt. Trapped on a ledge, as all men will be sooner or later, there is no way of deliverance save through the grace of GOD.

That no man can possibly keep the whole law is self-evident from experience and observation; moreover, it is clearly taught in Scripture. He that breaks the law at even one point is guilty of all (James 2:10). A chain, however long it may be, needs to

have but one link break to be rendered useless. Even though a man live right on the border line, he is still under the laws of the state in which his house stands, "So near, and yet so far!" he might well say, if the state just across the street from his house were tax-free, while he himself was being taxed beyond all endurance. Need we make the application?

Gal 3:11-note With the above requirement in mind, who can be justified by the Law?

No one

Bartlett: Man might live by the law if he could perfectly keep the law; but the point is, no man ever has met, and no man ever can meet, these conditions. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23); consequently, if man is to live and not die, he must find life through the grace of GOD. The only escape from the penalty of the law - referring to the illustration at the close of the preceding paragraph - is for him to step across the line into the state of grace. Once that step of faith is taken, the law has absolutely no more claim upon him (Romans 8:1).

Gal 3:11-note What is the point of Paul's quotation of Habakkuk 2:4-note?

The way to be a righteous man in the OT was not by Law but by faith (cp Ge 15:6-note, Abrahamic the "prototype" for having righteousness imputed or placed on one's account by grace through faith)

Gal 3:12a-note What does Paul mean stating that "the Law is not of faith" (NLT "How different from this way of faith is the way of law")?

Justification by faith and justification by keeping the law are mutually exclusive. They are diametrically opposed to each other. 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.

Gal 3:12b-note Why does Paul quote Leviticus 18:5-note (NLT "If you wish to find life by obeying the law, you must obey all of its commands")?

This describes "justification" by works if such were possible (it is impossible)

Gal 3:13-note What is Christ's relation to the Law?

He redeemed us from the curse of the Law (death)

The word redeemed is from **exagorazo (word study)**, the general significance of which is "to redeem from slavery." It means "to buy up." It conveys the idea that deliverance involves cost of some kind, effort suffering, or loss to the one who effects the deliverance. It conveys the figure of a ransom. Men needed a ransom, for the law had left them prisoners under sentence of death. The price paid was the only one that God would accept, the only one that was sufficient to redeem all of mankind (potentially), the "precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." (1Pet 1:19).

See Related Resource: The Kinsman Redeemer (Goel) in the Old and New Testaments

Gal 3:14-note Why did Christ redeem us from the curse of the Law?

So that (1) the blessing of Abraham, justification by faith and (2) the Holy Spirit, might be given to both Jew and Gentile ("we" = Paul + Gentiles)

Gal 3:14 Who is the promise?

The Holy Spirit (He makes us grieve over sin and desire righteousness), Who was first promised by Jesus in Luke 24:49 (fulfilled in Acts 1:4, 8, cp OT promise Ezek 36:27, 37:14)

Gal 3:15-note What general principle is Paul establishing?

Gal 3:15NLT: "Dear friends, 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"

Paul asserts that it is common knowledge that when men make a 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. He will use this logic to show that the Law given centuries later cannot modify God's irrevocable covenant with Abraham.

Gal 3:16-note Who were the promises spoken to?

Abraham and His Seed, Christ (Ge 13:15, 17:8, 22:18 - in all three verses the Hebrew noun for descendant is masculine singular, perfectly compatible with the Messiah). Notice also how this passage links the Abrahamic Covenant with the New Covenant (as does Gal 3:14), for it was in Jesus that the promises made to Abraham became a reality. Thus we see that in a sense the New Covenant was an "amplified" extension of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Boles offers this summary: To this point, then, Paul has introduced arguments based on: (1) the coming of the Holy Spirit (proven by the experience of the Christian community) (Gal 3:1, 2, 3, 4); (2) the example of Abraham (proven by Scripture); and (3) the curse of the law (proven by Scriptures). Now a fourth argument will be used, one drawn from everyday life.

Vincent: There can be no disannulling by the law of a promise made not only to Abraham, but to his seed.

Wuest comments: 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. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans or Logos or Wordsearch](#))

Donald Campbell writes: Even if Paul's opponents admitted that Abraham was justified by faith, those Judaizers might have argued that the Law, coming at a later time, entirely changed the basis for achieving salvation. To refute this, Paul declared that just as a properly executed Roman covenant (or will) cannot arbitrarily be set aside or changed... so the promises of God are immutable... The blessing of justification by faith is therefore permanent and could not be changed by the Law. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

Gal 3:17-note What effect then can a Law written 430 years later have on such a covenant?

The Law does not **invalidate** (disannul, make of no effect, cancel out) the covenant God made with Abraham and thus do away with or **nullify** (katargeo) the promise. Paul's point is that if men won't set a covenant aside (Gal 3:15), God won't set aside His solemn binding covenant with Abraham ("**everlasting**" Ge 17:7, 19, 1Chr 16:16, 17, 18, Ps 105:9, 10) even though the Law followed it by 430 years. During those 430 years, God justified men only by faith (cp Hab 2:4).

The Judaizers were telling the Galatian believers to forget the Abrahamic Covenant because the Old Covenant came after it and wiped it out so you are saved by keeping the Law rather than by faith.

Paul has just said that in human covenants men do not add conditions to their covenants (Gal 3:15). By the same token the coming of the Law does not add conditions to the Abrahamic Covenant. An individual is not now saved by believing plus keeping the Law.

Boles comments: Having established who the beneficiaries of the covenant were to be, Paul now examines the validity of the covenant itself. Has anything happened to make the original promise null and void? Or to put it more bluntly, did the covenant at Sinai cancel the promises made to Abraham? Following the same principles as common legal systems among men, Paul has to conclude that the Sinai law was 430 years too late to cancel the Abrahamic covenant. ([College Press NIV NT Commentary](#))

Wuest sums up Paul's argument 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. (Ibid)

Gal 3:18-note What is Paul's argument?

The inheritance cannot be based both on God's promise and the keeping of the Law. They do not co-mingle and cannot be combined. And he states that it was given as a promise.

Amplified Version - 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.

Granted (perfect tense = speaks of permanence, lasting effect = God not only granted the inheritance to Abraham in the past but continues to make it valid to Abraham's spiritual descendants) is the Greek verb **charizomai** from **charis** = grace, undeserved merit or favor) basically means to grant as a favor, giving gratuitously, generously and in kindness. To show grace by providing undeserved help to someone unworthy. **Vine** adds **charizomai** means "to bestow a favor unconditionally... primarily... to show a favor (**charis**)... the idea of a free, unconditioned act is involved, and... is the dominant thought."

MacArthur: Paul again emphasized that there is no middle ground between law (works) and promise (grace); the two principles

are mutually exclusive ways of salvation (cf. Ro 4:14). An "inheritance" by definition is something granted, not worked for, as proven in the case of Abraham. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

Was the Old Covenant given to nullify the Abrahamic Covenant (AC)?

No... the law did not invalidate the **AC** The promise is still valid. The **AC** is still in effect on the basis of the promise

Vincent comments: In the analogy of Gal 3:15 there was contemplated the double possibility of invalidation or addition. With relation to God's promise, the Judaizers insisted on addition; since, while they preached faith in the promise and in its fulfillment in Christ, they made the inheritance of the promise dependent upon the fulfilling of the law. Paul, on the other hand, holds that the Judaistic addition involves invalidation. Salvation must rest either upon the promise or upon the law. The Judaizers said, upon the promise and the law. For God gave the inheritance to Abraham by promise. It has been shown that the law did not abrogate the promise. Hence, if the inheritance be of the law it is no more of the promise. Cp Ro 4:14-note.

Did the LAW have any promise?

No... the LAW said "Do this or die."

The Law only had conditions, ultimately conditions which were impossible to meet in our own strength.

Kenneth Boles: The "inheritance" of which Paul speaks is what has been naturally implied by the situation of the human last will and testament. When a man makes a will, it is to designate his heirs and to specify the inheritance which each will receive. When a child inherits something from his or her parent, it is not because the child has somehow "earned" the inheritance as "wages." The child receives the stated property or assets simply because the deceased parent has declared it to be so. The bequest cannot be both a wage and an inheritance at the same time. ([College Press NIV NT Commentary](#))

Those Galatians who had accepted Christ were the heirs of the promise of grace which God had made to Abraham. As he had received the promise strictly in grace, the Galatians as his spiritual heirs had received it also in grace. The claim of the Judaizers that all had to be circumcised and live as Jews was without any scriptural support. Their "gospel" was false.

Expositor's Bible Commentary: Promise and law are antithetical by nature. They can be neither mingled together nor combined. This point is a restatement in a slightly different context of the point made in Gal 3:12. In the last phrase the words "**to Abraham**" are emphasized, thereby once again driving all discussion of how men and women enter into a right relationship with God to its original source. The word "gave" (*kecharistai*) is important, because it emphasizes that salvation is both a free gift (*kecharistai* is based on the word for grace) and permanent (the perfect tense). Whatever may be said about the law, this much is certain: God saved Abraham through promise, not law, and the original way of salvation is still operative. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament. Zondervan Publishing](#) or [Logos version](#) or [Wordsearch version](#))

Jewish New Testament Commentary: If, contrary to fact, the inheritance (there is a punning connection in meaning with the word translated "oath" in vv. 15, 17, because that word, "diatheke" can also be rendered "will"; see vv. 15-17—inheritances come through wills) comes from (is promised in) the legal part of the Torah, the halakhic part (see Gal 3:17), which sets up conditions to be met, then it no longer comes from an unconditional promise. But the fact is that God gave it not to Moshe but, earlier, to Avraham through an unconditional promise which affects Gentiles as well as Jews, and not through a legal code intended for Jews only.

Galatians 3:19-25

The Purpose of the Law

- **Note:** See Verse by Verse Commentary on Galatians 3
- See also more detailed discussion of the Purpose of the Law (some duplication)

Gal 3:19-note **Why the Law?**

Because of transgression (= **parabasis** [word study] = a stepping over)

[See below for more discussion on Paul's question -- "Why the Law?"](#)

What does ADD imply about the Abrahamic Covenant?

Old Covenant did not replace the Abrahamic Covenant.

What does "UNTIL (up to that time)" imply? (see expressions of time)

The Law was temporary (while the Abrahamic Covenant was everlasting)

What does "because of transgressions" mean from a practical standpoint? Why was the Law added?

Some other translations...

to show men how guilty they are of breaking God's laws (The Living Bible)

to make wrongdoing a legal offense (NEB)

to show what wrongdoing is (TEV)

to underline the existence and extent of sins (Phillips)

It was given to show people how guilty they are" (NLT)

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" (Amplified)

In Gal 3:19 the purpose of the Law was to expose all man's sinfulness, to define **transgressions** for what they were... sin (cp similar truth in Ro 7:8-note, Ro 3:20-note, Ro 5:20-note). The Law made one knowledgeable of the fact that he had stepped over a line drawn by God (**Transgression** = **parabasis** [word study] = a stepping over) which resulted in a sense of guilt. **Guilt** drove the man to despair and hopefully to seek a Savior.

Kenneth Boles adds that

the law even functions in a way that aggravates and enlarges the problem. It not only exposes everything we have done wrong, it also provides a handy list of all the other things we could do wrong if we want to. ([College Press NIV NT Commentary](#))

In short, one of the main (if not the main) reason for the **Law** was to **drive men to Christ**. For a moment, consider the shadow which was presented by the Old Testament Tabernacle complex. For the majority of Israel (those who were not of the priestly line) the only pieces of "furniture" that were in open view to all the people were the **altar** and **laver** in front of the Tabernacle. These items were a constant reminder of their **need for forgiveness** (cp He 9:22-note). Behind the altar and laver stood the Tabernacle proper providing a shadow or symbol (He 9:9-note) of the way one could approach a Holy God, and ultimately pointed to Jesus Christ, the one Way, the ultimate Truth, the abundant Life (Jn 14:6)!

Gal 3:19-note How long did God intend for the Law to be a temporary measure?

Until (see expressions of time -- "*until*" indicates end of one thing and beginning of another and in itself implies the law was only temporary) the Child, the Seed (Ge 3:15, 22:18), Jesus, came to Whom God had made the promise of the blessing (cp Ge 12:3 the phrase "in him" which ultimately spoke of the Seed, the Messiah). God never intended the Law to be permanent, but instead to prepare men for the coming of the Messiah by pointing out how sinful their sin was!

Gal 3:20-note Who was the mediator Paul was referring to in the previous verse and what is his point that God is a party of "one"?

In Gal 3:19 Moses was the mediator of the Law but God acted on His own (as "One") when He made His promise to Abraham. It should be noted that commentators have offered many interpretations of this difficult passage.

Gal 3:21-note What is the conflict between God's Law and God's promises -- was the Law ever intended to make man righteous?

There is absolutely no conflict because the "*Law was not intended to make man righteous*". It was not meant to be the source of new life but as clearly shown in the surrounding passages to herd us like sheep (cf Isaiah 53:6) toward the one and only Door (John 10:9 Christ) of sheepfold which Alone could provide eternal Life, in this life and the one to come.

The law and the promises are not in conflict because **each has a distinct function**. The Law has a **ministry of condemnation** (2Cor 3:9) whereas the promises are a ministry of righteousness.

MacArthur adds that

Since God gave them both (Abrahamic and Old Covenants) and does not work against Himself, law and promise work in

harmony; the **law reveals** man's sinfulness and need for the salvation freely offered in the promise. If the law could have provided righteousness and eternal life, there would be no gracious promise. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word Pub](#))

Gal 3:22-note **What is the function of the Law in this verse?**

The Law has "**shut up** (sugkleio) all men under sin". The Law securely locks one up on all sides with no way of **escape from sin** (and also no way of access into the presence of God), so that the person realizes that the only way to receive God's promise of a New Covenant is to believe in the promised Seed, that is, Christ.

Practical Application:

The law shows the world to be under sin so that people will realize that works cannot save, only Christ can. **How** does it feel to be closed in a tight space w/ no escape? Maybe that's where God has allowed us as we continue in some seemingly inescapable sin... to bring us to the end of our self-strength, of trying to be good enough to please Him and in our state of utter despair to cause us to see the Promised Power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ as our only Source of release from bondage as we simply learn to trust in His Promise walking out in obedience.

MacArthur comments on "**shut up**" writing that this verb "**sugkleio**, a strong term meaning to lock up securely, to enclose on all sides with no way of escape. "I was once alive apart from the Law," Paul said; "but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died" (Ro 7:9), 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. ([MacArthur, J. Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press](#)) (Bolding added)

Gal 3:23-note **Before faith in Christ was shown to you as the way of becoming right with God, what function did the Law carry out?**

The Law was like a garrison of soldiers standing around us as a sentinel to protect us from hostile invasion, so to speak. The Law functioned as a guard to prevent (or at least to impede) the people from escaping into unrighteous living. It also protected Israel from outsiders coming in to pollute them with heathen vices. Unfortunately, Israel did not keep God's law but intermarried with outsiders and became contaminated and then led astray into idolatry.

Gal 3:24, 25-note **What other reason does Paul give for the Law and how does this show the relationship of the three covenants?**

The law functioned as a guardian and teacher to lead one to Christ and justification by faith (either via the Abrahamic Covenant looking forward in faith to Christ or the New Covenant after He came). Once we believe in Christ we no longer need the Law as our guardian. ([See also note below by Kay Arthur](#))

Wuest comments that "**tutor**" (KJV "**schoolmaster**") "designated a slave employed in Greek and Roman families who had general charge over a boy in the years from about 6-16. He watched over his outward behavior, and took charge over him whenever he went from home, as for instance, to school. This slave was entrusted with the moral supervision of the child. His duties were therefore quite distinct from those of a schoolmaster." ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

SUMMARY

WHY THE LAW?

(Gal 3:19-25) ([See note](#))

THE LAW FULFILLS 4 PURPOSES...

- (1) Reveals sin
- (2) Shuts up all under sin
- (3) Keeps men in custody
- (4) Serves as a tutor to lead us to Christ

1). **Reveals** sin for what it was... until the **Seed (Christ)** should come (Gal 3:19-note)

The NLT paraphrases this passage stating that the Law (Old Covenant, Mosaic Law, "10 Commandments") "was given to show people how guilty they were". It is not that before the Law men did not know they were sinners, for their conscience convicted them of that truth. What they did not fully know or understand was that they were willfully breaking the standards of a Holy God. The conscience told men they did wrong, but the Law told men they did wrong against God's Laws and were guilty before a Holy God. And so the phrase "added because of transgressions" means that the Law was like a line in the sand and it allowed men to see that they crossed over (transgressed) this "holy" line. It let man see that he was violating God's Laws, His Holy standards. The Law thereby served to awaken the sense of guilt in our hearts, the sense that we were guilty before the Holy God as our Righteous Judge. Can you see the value? The Law helps us see our guilt as sinners and thus discloses our need for a Savior.

Notice Paul says "**added**" which means the Old Covenant ("think Law") at Mt Sinai was not given to **replace** the previous unconditional covenant cut with Abraham ("think Grace").

Plumb lines are not meant to straighten the building but to tell one how crooked it is and where change is needed. The Law was given as a plumb line to show us our need for a "divine reconstruction". In a nutshell then what Paul is saying is that the purpose of the Law is not to **bestow** salvation upon people but to **convince** men of their need for salvation.

Bartlett explains that Gal 3:19 "marks the **Law** as supplementary and hence subordinate to the **Promise** (the promise in Abrahamic Covenant). Weymouth (translation) tells us that the law was "imposed later on for the sake of defining sin." The law magnified Israel's sin and pressed upon them the need of a Savior (**Ed**: This was the primary purpose of all the daily blood sacrifices, the annual Day of Atonement, the Feast days, the Sabbath, etc - all were like "fingers" pointing to the Messiah, all the while the Law serving to stir up in Israel a great sense of their need for a Savior). The **Law** was given to reveal sin, not to remove it. As someone has put it, the mirror which shows one that his face is dirty does not wash it for him.

Kay Arthur adds that "The **Abrahamic Covenant** came way before the Cross and the New Covenant wasn't coming for many years so what would happen until the New Covenant comes? Israel had a problem. They were sinners and needed something to keep them in line until the New Covenant came. Also, what if they didn't see their need to get rid of their sin? They might have compared themselves with others and thought they are ok. God wanted to give us a standard of holiness so that we could see how far we fall short. Sin means to fall short. The gap between my goodness and God's goodness shows me my sin. The law was given to define and to reveal that sin. ([Our Covenant God](#))

PARALLEL PASSAGES ON THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW IN ROMANS

In parallel passages in Romans 3 and Romans 7 Paul reiterates his teaching on the purpose of the Law

ROMANS 3:20b

Through the Law comes the knowledge of sin (Ro 3:20-note) or as the **NLT** renders it "the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it"!

So the Law makes sin known to sinners but it cannot save sinners. That was never meant to be the purpose of the Law. Are you saved and still trying to keep the Law to gain favor with God? Can you see how such attempts are futile, for that was never meant to be the purpose of the Law (before salvation or AFTER salvation!)?

ROMANS 7:7-9

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, **I would not have come to know sin except through the Law**; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died (Romans 7:7, 8, 9 -**notes**)

What is Paul's point? He is saying that though the law is not itself sinful [Ro 7:12-note], the Law arouses sin in the sinner!

Matthew Henry - There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to repentance, and therefore to peace and pardon, but by trying our hearts and lives by the Law.

Bartlett - In a day when there is much foggy thinking on the relation between **Law** and **Grace**, we need to understand clearly

that the **Law** and the **Promise** are not in conflict because they have entirely different functions to fulfill. Sin necessitated the **Law**; **Grace** precipitated the Cross. The **Law** was a supplement to, not a contradiction of, the covenant (The Abrahamic Covenant and its "extension", the New Covenant). - the **Law** revealed the need, and the Cross produced the way (of salvation). The **Law** was a plowing for the seed, not a planting of the seed. Conviction of sin by the **Law** is a far different thing from the production of life through the CHRIST in Whom alone we can be made children of GOD and heirs of the Promise.

2). Shuts up all men under sin... (until they enter)

"by faith (into) **Christ** Jesus" (Gal 3:22)

3). Keeps men in custody under the Law (Gal 3:23)

"until we could put our faith in the coming **Savior**" (Gal 3:23NLT)

4). Tutors and leads us to Christ (Gal 3:24)

"until **Christ** came" (Gal 3:24NLT)

Comment: **Did you notice the words in Red?** The point is that in outlining these four uses of the Law, Paul is emphasizes that they are all meant to **point us to** and **lead us to** the Seed, the Redeemer and Savior Christ Jesus.

Related Resources

1) John Piper in his message on Galatians 3:19, 20, 21, 22 that the Law (the Mosaic Law, the Old Covenant, the "Ten Commandments") was given (1) To reveal sin as sin and (2) to stir up more sin. (Read or listen to the Mp3 on [Why Then the Law](#)).

2) John Piper's message [If You Are Christ's, You Are Heirs of the Promise](#) on Gal 3:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 for his discussion of the additional function of the Law (as a custodian, a tutor, a schoolmaster = providing direction and restraint, prescribing the way a mature child should behave)

3) How do believers now relate to the Law? See **Law as it applies to believers - from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount**

4) [Thinking About the Law and the Commandments - from Middletown Bible Church](#)

5) C H Spurgeon's sermon [The Uses of the Law](#). The following notes are brief extracts from his sermon which is recommended reading!

(1) The first use of the law is to manifest to man his guilt.

When God intends to save a man, the first thing he does with him is to send the law to him, to show him how guilty, how vile, how ruined he is, and in how dangerous a position. You see that man lying there on the edge of the precipice; he is sound asleep, and just on the perilous verge of the cliff. One single movement, and he will roll over and be broken in pieces on the jagged rocks beneath, and nothing more shall be heard of him. How is he to be saved? What shall be done for him—what shall be done! It is our position; we, too, are lying on the brink of ruin, but we are insensible of it. God, when he begins to save us from such an imminent danger, sendeth his law, which, with a stout kick, rouses us up, makes us open our eyes, we look down on our terrible danger, discover our miseries, and then it is we are in a right position to cry out for salvation, and our salvation comes to us. The law acts with man as the physician does when he takes the film from the eye of the blind. Self-righteous men are blind men, though they think themselves good and excellent. The law takes that film away, and lets them discover how vile they are, and how utterly ruined and condemned if they are to abide under the sentence of the law... Mark this, moreover, my dear hearers, one breach of this law is enough to condemn us for ever. He that breaketh the law in one point is guilty of the whole...

(2) Now, the second. The law serves to slay all hope of salvation of a reformed life.

Most men when they discover themselves to be guilty, avow that they will reform. They say, "I have been guilty and have deserved God's wrath, but for the future I will seek to win a stock of merits which shall counterbalance all my old sins." In steps the law, puts its hand on the sinner's mouth, and says, "Stop, you cannot do that, it is impossible."...

(3) And now, a step further. You that know the grace of God can follow me in this next step. The law is intended to show man the misery which will, fall upon him through his sin...

(4) "Wherefore then serveth the law." It was sent into the world to shew the value of a Saviour.

Just as foils set off jewels, and as dark spots make bright tints more bright, so doth the law make Christ appear the fairer and more heavenly. I hear the law of God curse, but how harsh its voice. Jesus says, "come unto me;" oh, what music! all the more musical after the discord of the law. I see the law condemns; I behold Christ obeying it. Oh! how ponderous that price—when I know how weighty was the demand! I read the commandments, and I find them strict and awfully severe—oh! how holy must Christ have been to obey all these for me! Nothing makes me value my Savior more than seeing the law condemn me. When I know this law stands in my way, and like a flaming cherubim will not let me enter paradise, then I can tell how sweetly precious must Jesus Christ's righteousness be, which is a passport to heaven, and gives me grace to enter there...

(5) And, lastly, "Wherefore serveth the law." It was sent into the world to keep Christian men from self-righteousness.

Christian men—do they ever get self-righteous? Yes, that they do. The best Christian man in the world will find it hard work to keep himself from boasting, and from being self-righteous. John Knox on his death-bed was attacked with self-righteousness. The last night of his life on earth, he slept some hours together, during which he uttered many deep and heavy moans...

As you contemplate the purpose of the Law as outlined by Paul in the preceding verses, what fact is inescapable? What was the consummate purpose of the Law?

To lead all men and women to see their desperate need for the Savior, Christ Jesus. Every "effect" of the Law (in the list above) points to and ends in **Christ**! This helps understand Jesus' declaration...

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." (Mt 5:17note)

SUMMARY: WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THESE TRUTHS ABOUT THE "LAW"?

(1) Paul shows us that under the 3 covenants that related to salvation (Abrahamic, Mosaic, New), the **Abrahamic** has not been invalidated (everlasting and unconditional) and that it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In that sense the **New Covenant** represents an "extension" of the **Abrahamic Covenant**, but brings additional spiritual promises, especially the promise of the Holy Spirit. (cp Ga 3:14)

(2) The **Old Covenant** has been taken away because we don't need to approach God through the Tabernacle, the priesthood or the sacrifices of bulls and goats... this is taken care of by the once for all sacrifice of the spotless, unblemished Lamb of God, Christ Jesus.

(3) The **Law** is no longer written on stone but is written on the tables of the hearts of all believers. In short, Judaizers who say "Believe Christ" but add the requirement "Obey the Law" (eg, obtain circumcision or obey the Law or do good works) are **"dead wrong"** (pun intended)! The "Judaizers" are still present in the modern day church which is why we need to **hold fast to sound doctrine** regarding the Law, for only then will that truth **hold us fast** when the winds of (aberrant) doctrinal teaching begin to blow!

(3)

Galatians and The New Covenant

Galatians 3:26-29-note **What happens as a result of faith in Christ?**

1) OUR PRESENT PRIVILEGED POSITION:

We are all sons of God in Christ Jesus... the Law could not justify us and bring us into God's family (**In Christ** speaks of that mystical and vital union which exists between the Lord Jesus and the believer) (See discussion of **in Christ** and **in Christ Jesus**) ([Click](#) the 93 NT passages using "[in Christ](#)" to encourage and renew your mind about who you are "in Christ" and consider making a list of the truth you glean from these NT passages) (See discussion of **in Christ** and **in Christ Jesus**)

2) HOW WE BECAME UNITED WITH CHRIST:

We are **baptized** (introduced or placed) into (vital union with) Christ (His death, burial and resurrection), clothed with Christ... the Law could never give us this identity and oneness with Christ. (The Law separated us from God... Picture the **fence** around the

Tabernacle and the **veil** between the inner sanctuary, the presence of God).

We enter into covenant with Christ, exchanging our filthy rags (Isa 64:6) for Christ's robe of righteousness. When a Roman child became an adult he put on the TOGA... the "toga virilis" or coming of age!

Wuest has this note on "**clothed**" (see word study on this great verb **enduo**)

The latter is used in the LXX, of the act of clothing one's self with strength, righteousness, glory, salvation. 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, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

3) WHO ELSE WE ARE UNITED WITH:

Jews and Gentiles believers are one in Christ (We Gentiles now enjoy the privileges that before we were separated from Christ, etc - see Ephesians 2:11-note ; Ephesians 2:12-note)

Wuest writes that

"The individual differences between Jew and Greek, between slave and free, between male and female, are merged in that higher unity into which all believers are raised by the fact that they all have a common life in Christ Jesus. One heart now beats in all. The pulsating life of the Lord Jesus is the motive power. One mind guides all, the mind of Christ. One life is lived by all, the life of the Lord Jesus produced by the Holy Spirit in the various circumstances and relations of each individual believer's experience." ([Ibid](#))

4) WHAT PROMISES ARE NOW OURS:

Since (the if = first class conditional which assumes that what follows is true) we have placed our trust in the Seed, Jesus Christ and therefore belong to Him, then we are partakers of the Abrahamic Covenant, offspring of Abraham and heirs of the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham.

Wuest comments 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. ([Ibid](#))

GALATIANS 4

Introduction to Galatians 4:

Paul is arguing with those who want to go back to Judaism and take Jesus with them. He is addressing people who want a hybrid religion that is part Jewish and part Christian. They intend to believe in Jesus plus they want to live under the law as a means of pleasing God and winning His favor. Everything in this passage is aimed at these confused believers who were sorely tempted to go back to the Law of Moses. His point is, Have you considered the implications of what you are about to do?

What figure of speech does Paul use in this chapter to enlighten the Galatian believers as to their potentially dangerous spiritual condition?

Allegory

Warren Wiersbe writes that

"An allegory is a narrative in which people and events teach deeper lessons. John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is a classic example. Paul used Genesis 16 to illustrate your freedom in Christ. Hagar is the law, while Sarah stands for God's grace. Ishmael was born after the flesh (your first birth), while Isaac was born by the power of God (the new birth). Abraham represents

faith, so Isaac was born "by grace [Sarah] ... through faith [Abraham]" (see Ephesians 2:8-note). The Judaizers wanted to bring Hagar back again, but she was sent away because law and grace cannot coexist. Like Hagar, the law was a servant that had a temporary ministry. Once the Son arrived, that ministry was fulfilled." (Wiersbe, W. W. [With the Word : The Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook](#) Nashville: Thomas Nelson)

Gal 4:21 How does Paul introduce the allegory?

if you want to be under the Law, you need to listen to the Law.

Paul words "you who want to be under the law" suggest that the Galatians had yet fully accepted the Judaizers false teaching concerning the law but were on the "edge". The NLT says "Do you know what the law really says?"

What are the two mothers and sons who are contrasted?

Hagar and Ishmael

Sarah and Isaac

How are the mothers described in a spiritual sense?

Hagar a bondswoman

Sarah the free woman

How were sons born, figuratively speaking?

Ishmael born according to the flesh

Isaac born according to the promise or according to the Spirit

Gal 4:24 What is the allegory clearly contrasting?

Old Covenant and New Covenant

Gal 4:25 Where does each proceed from figuratively speaking (mountain and city)?

Ishmael from Mt Sinai,

the present Jerusalem.

Isaac from Mt Calvary,

the Jerusalem above

What is the spiritual status of the two offspring in this allegory?

Ishmael is enslaved

Isaac in free

Gal 4:28 Who were his recipients like?

Isaac, children of promise

John MacArthur comments that

"Paul tells (the believers in Galatia) that, **like Isaac**, they are **children of promise**. Every believer, like Isaac, is supernaturally conceived, miraculously born, and the offspring of God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ. Those who have begun to sink back into the trap of legalistic Judaism must remember that they are children of promise, who owe their life not to their own effort but to the miraculous power of God, just as Isaac did in the physical realm. God's sovereign power of grace gave them life, and to fall back under law was to deny that divine work and to dishonor God. ([MacArthur, J. Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Gal 4:29 How do the two children interact which represents the interaction of the Old and New Covenant?

One born according to flesh persecutes the one born according to the Spirit. Message = expect persecution from "Ishmael's". Those who hold to salvation by works, trusting in their own performance of the law hate those who proclaim salvation by grace without works.

MacArthur notes that

"Whether within Judaism or Christianity, legalists have always been persecutors. Those who trust in God have always been persecuted by those who trust in themselves. True believers have always been more mistreated and oppressed by religionists than by atheists. ([Ibid](#))

SUMMARY:

1. Two women—Hagar and Sarah
2. Two sons—Ishmael and Isaac
3. Two covenants—law and grace
4. Two mountains—Sinai and Calvary
5. Two cities—earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem

Gal 4:30 What does the Scripture say one must do in light of continual persecution by the one born according to the flesh?

Cast out ([ekballo](#)) - throw him out and do so with force or violence. The Greek tense indicates "Do this now!" (**aoist imperative**, which even implies a sense of urgency.) (Quoting Ge 21:10) What God is saying to us is "Get rid of your legalistic tendencies. Focus on Christ and Him crucified, for the word of the Cross is those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God, the power to live supernaturally and abundantly. Law and grace cannot be mixed; it is impossible to inherit God's blessings on the basis of human merit or fleshly effort. ([See note](#))

Constable has an interesting application

"Christians should exclude legalists from their midst since legalists have no inheritance with the legitimate sons of God. As Abraham cast Ishmael out of his household, so the Galatians should cast the Judaizers out of the church. This does not mean church leaders should excommunicate all legalistic Christians. However, it might be wise to exclude promoters of legalism and nomism if they do not change their teaching. Paul's point was that nomists will not inherit as much blessing from God as those who live by the Spirit." (Tom Constable's Expository Notes)

C. H. Mackintosh says,

"The law demands strength from one who has none, and curses him if he cannot display it. The gospel gives strength to one who has none, and blesses him in the exhibition of it."

"Run, John, and live," the law commands,
But gives me neither legs nor hands;
Far better news the Gospel brings,
It bids me fly and gives me wings.

What does this allegory teach us about what happens when there were competing heirs in Abraham's household?

- 1). We can try to change them-the Law & the flesh cannot be changed.
- 2). We can try to compromise-it will only lead to bondage. False teachers today say 'Don't abandon Christ; simply move into a deeper Christian life by practicing the Law w/ your faith.'
- 3). We can cast them out - flesh loves the Law because it gives flesh a chance to look good

Who is your mother? Hagar or Sarah? Are you born of the flesh only or are you also born of the Spirit? Do you still think there is some way you can help God out by the things you do?

Galatians 5-6

([See note](#))

Ezekiel 36:27 What was the secret God had promised in the OT?

The Holy Spirit

"I will put My **Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes (**God's part**) and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (**Man's part** - it is NOT just 'Let go and let God!')."

Gal 5:16-note **Because we have a new heart and a new spirit, what are we to do?**

Gal 5:16 **Walk** (present imperative) by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Click here more detailed exposition of Galatians 5:16)

NLT *So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves*

Ray Pritchard comments that

"Paul's point is that what the law could not do, the Holy Spirit does. Our hope is not in rules, but in the Person of the Holy Spirit indwelling every believer. By His power we can obey God in the midst of our ongoing struggle with sin.

The Greek word for "**walk**" is very ordinary. It means to walk from one place to another. It's in the present tense, which means "keep on walking." To walk means "to take a series of small steps in the same direction over a long period of time." Walking implies steady progress in one direction by means of deliberate choices over a long period of time. To walk in the Spirit means something like "let your conduct be directed by the Holy Spirit" or "make progress in your life by relying on the Holy Spirit." It has the idea of allowing the Holy Spirit to guide every part of your life on a daily basis. Walking is slow compared with driving a car or flying in a plane. It's not flashy at all. And sometimes walking can be tedious, slow, dull, drab, and downright boring. And yet if you've got to get from Point A to Point B, walking will get you there eventually. All you have to do is just start walking and don't stop until you get there." He goes on to explain walking either to the light or the darkness "Every day all of us make thousands of decisions. Most of them seem tiny and inconsequential... There is no such thing as a truly neutral decision. Because every choice we make is intricately linked with every other choice before it and every choice we will make later, all our "little" choices are not really little at all. Every choice we make either takes us a step toward the light or a tiny step toward the darkness. And even the "meaningless" choices lead us in one way or the other. The fact that we can't always see the implications of a decision don't mean they aren't there... Let me say it very clearly. Walking in the Spirit is not some mystical experience reserved for a few special Christians. It's God's design for normal Christian living. It's nothing more than choosing (by God's grace) to take tiny steps toward the light day after day after day. Those tiny steps do not remove the struggle but they allow you to walk in the light even while you feel the pull to go in another direction. The pull of the darkness is always with us in one form or another. By the Spirit's power, we can choose to walk in the light every day.

What should we do in light of the struggle?

- 1) Stay humble.
- 2) Watch and pray.
- 3) Keep your eyes on Jesus.
- 4) Take little steps in the right direction every day.
- 5) When you fall, get up and move forward for God.

Remember that our struggle is not sinful. God allows it so that we will look to him for daily solutions instead of instant miracles. The struggle itself is evidence that you belong to God. We groan even as we wait for a better day. And we hope in God because where sin abounded, grace superabounded. Grace now reigns through righteousness. Through the struggle with sin your soul is made strong and you are being made fit for heaven. Stand and fight, child of God. The Lord is on your side. Amen. " ([Galatians 5:16-18](#))

Gal 5:17 **Why is it imperative that we continually seek to walk in the Spirit?**(Click here more detailed exposition of Galatians 5:17)

Paul teaches us something each of knows all too well, that the flesh and the Spirit are continually (present tense) opposed (antikeimai) (click word study)

Note that "**flesh**" (Click in depth analysis of "flesh") in this context is not the body of flesh (and blood) which by the way is itself "morally neutral". The problems is what's still resident in these bodies and which Paul often terms "**flesh**" in a moral sense which makes the point that you need to be very attentive to the context when doing "word studies" as the same word can have several different meanings. In the present context Paul uses "**flesh**" to describe what remains of the "old man" (which every human being

inherits from our father Adam - see Romans 5:12-note) which still exists even after a person is saved (we can now say "no" to it). "**Flesh**" is that unredeemed humanness, the part of a believer that awaits future redemption at the time of his glorification (see Romans 8:23-note). **Flesh** relates to the moral and spiritual weakness and helplessness of human nature still clinging to redeemed souls. The **flesh** of Christians is their propensity to sin. Until then every believer has a redeemed self living in a mortal body that is dying and that creates great conflict. Although I commonly hear believers state I was "**in the flesh**" (see Romans 7:5-note), strictly speaking that term applies to an unregenerate individual.

Gal 5:18 What is the liberating truth? (Click here more detailed exposition of Galatians 5:18)

When you are continually (present tense) being (passive voice) directed or lead along by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject ([hupo](#) = under the power of) to the Law.

Paul emphasizes here that a **holy** life is NOT lived under the rules of the Law but is a life orchestrated and directed by the **Holy** Spirit. Take your choice (before you received a new heart [Ezekiel 36:27] you had no choice) these are mutually exclusive. Now, either you live by the power of the Holy Spirit which results in righteous behavior and spiritual attitudes (see Romans 8:13 note) or by the law which can only **arouse** the Sin dormant (rendered otherwise powerless by the Cross) in you & produce unrighteous behavior and attitudes (see list Gal 5:19-note, Gal 5:20-note, Gal 5:21-note). The Spirit, not the LAW, (keeping a set of rules or a list of do's & don'ts thinking they will "make" one holy) sanctifies us (see 1Peter 1:2-note). The minute you try to defeat the flesh by keeping some rules or regulations, what have you just done? You've just put yourself back up under the authority and power of the Law, the ministry of death and condemnation which cannot produce life. You cannot experience victory over the flesh in this manner. You must yield moment by moment to the leading of the Spirit, choosing by an act of your will to set your mind on the things of the Spirit.

Alexander Maclaren offers some wise advice reminding us that

"We all know it as a familiar experience that the surest way to conquer any strong desire or emotion is to bring some other into operation. To concentrate attention on any overmastering thought or purpose, even if our object is to destroy it, is but too apt to strengthen it. And so to fix our minds on our own desires of the flesh, even though we may be honestly wishing to suppress them, is a sure way to invest them with new force; therefore the wise counsels of sages and moralists are, for the most part, destined to lead those who listen to them astray. Many a man has, in good faith, set himself to conquer his own evil lusts and has found that the net result of his struggles has been to make the lusts more conspicuous and correspondingly more powerful." (Galatians 5:16 'Walk in the Spirit')

Galatians 5:25 What does Paul exhort believers to do? (Click here more detailed exposition of Galatians 5:25)

First notice that "**If**" is first class condition which means it is a fulfilled condition. It could be phrased

"in view of the fact that you Galatians have (present tense) a new life principle operating in your beings, then walk by the Spirit" (See note)

Walk ([stoicheo](#) in the present tense) continually, the idea being that we should now follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us make our steps by the help and guidance of the Spirit. The NIV translates it "*keep in step with the Spirit*" giving the idea that we are not to run ahead or lag behind.

Wuest summarizes Paul's intent in **Galatians 5:25** writing that

"the exhortation is to the Galatians who have divine life resident in their beings, to conduct themselves under the guidance, impulses, and energy of that life. Here we have the free will of the Christian and his responsibility to live the highest type of Christian life, and the grace of God which will make that possible. The responsibility of the saint is to desire to live a Christlike life, to depend upon the Holy Spirit for the power to live that life, and to step out on faith and live that life. This fulfilled, will bring all the infinite resources of grace to the aid of the saint, and put in operation all the activities of the Spirit in his behalf." ([Wuest. K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

In the Covenant study ([Precept Ministries International](#)) there are a series of questions you might ponder in light of the truth of the New Covenant you have now entered by faith...

On what basis do you live your Christian life?

Do you seek to please God by your flesh or by living according to some sort of code of law?

Do you feel as if God is angry with you if you fail to have a daily quiet time, pray, witness, study my Bible, etc?

Do you feel that you are saved by faith but perfected by your works?

Do I know what it is to live by the Spirit?

This is the New Covenant cut for you in Christ. Change robes. Put Him on. Take on His enemies. Be a friend of God. Walk through the pieces knowing you are in the New Covenant and you have forever forgiveness, a new heart, and new life in the Spirit. The sacrifice has been made. The veil is rent. Now, cast out the bondwoman. You can't please God by keeping the Law. You please God now by walking by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

The New Covenant tells you that righteousness is the normal lifestyle of those in the New Covenant because the Holy Spirit is within. Take what you know and don't let it be just knowledge, but holiness and righteousness and let it bring God glory! Walk by faith under the New Covenant!

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT

by William Newell

(Related Resource: In Depth Commentary on Gal 5:16 - Walk by the Spirit)

When we announce that the Scripture teaching is that walking by the Holy Spirit has taken the place of walking under the rule of the Mosaic law, there remains to be examined, and that most carefully, just what **walking by the Spirit** means.

1. It does not mean to desert the use of our faculties of moral perception or of moral judgment.

Although there doubtless are occasions in which the believer, being filled with the Spirit, acts in a wholly unanticipated way; and although there may be times when he will be carried quite out of himself in ecstasies of joy or love; and although the believer walking by the Spirit will normally be conscious of the almighty power within, of triumph over the world and the flesh: nevertheless the feet of the believer will never be swept from the path of conscious moral determination. He will always know that so far as decisions of moral matters are concerned, he has still the sense of moral accountability, or, perhaps better, responsibility. The believer's own conscience will protest against any such letting go of himself as has been unfortunately found throughout Church history when people have submitted themselves to such ecstatic states that moral judgment and self-control were cast to the winds.

We do indeed read of most remarkable experiences) and that in deeply approved saints, in which their spirits were over-whelmed by the vision of Divine things, and we must adduce that in such experiences they were rapt and ecstatic; but never to the losing of that self-control which, we read in Galatians 5:22 (note), is a fruit of the Spirit. Even in the- exercise of the gifts spoken of by the apostle in 1Corinthians 12-14, it is definitely declared, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets."

It is in the abandonment of the sense of moral responsibility into unscriptural surrender of the mental and spiritual faculties, -into other control than self-control directed by the Holy Spirit, that such awful extravagances have occurred in Church history.

2. To be led by the Spirit does indeed involve the surrender of our wills to God. But God, on His side, does not crush into fatalistic abandon those very faculties with which He has endowed men. On the contrary, the surrendered saint immediately finds His faculties marvelously quickened, -his faculties both of mind and of sensibility. All the powers of his soul-life (which include his intellect, tastes, feelings, emotions, and recollective memory) are renewed. His will being yielded to God, God now "works in Him to will" as well as "to do of His good pleasure, "-in which the surrendered saint rejoices.

But while it is indeed God who works in us even to will, yet it is true that walking in the Spirit is still our own choice: "If ye by the Spirit put to death the doings of the body"- we read. The Holy Spirit is infinitely ready, but God leads rather than compels.

There is deep mystery, no doubt, in the great double fact of God is working in us to will, and on the other hand, of our choosing His will, moment by moment. We can only affirm that both are taught in Scripture, and we ourselves know both to be blessedly true. ([Newell, William: Romans 8: Expository Notes Verse by Verse](#))

More Resources Related To Walking in the Spirit

Paul Apple

- [Galatians Pdf](#)

Albert Barnes

- [Galatians 5](#)

C Norman Bartlett

- [Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#)

Brian Bell

- [Galatians 5:1-18](#)

John Calvin

- [Galatians 5](#)

Rich Cathers

- [Galatians 5:16-18](#)

Adam Clarke

- [Galatians 5](#)

Thomas Constable

- [Galatians \(PDF\)](#)

Ron Daniels

- [Galatians 5:13-26 Walk by the Spirit](#)

Bob Deffinbaugh

- [Galatians 5:13-26 War Without & War Within 1](#)
- [Galatians 5:13-26 War Without & War Within 2](#)

Dan Duncan

- [Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh and The Spirit - 18 pages](#)
- [Galatians 5:13-15 Liberty Not License](#)

Theodore Epp

- [Galatians 5:13-26: Cast Your Vote for Victory!](#)
- [Galatians 5:16-26: Constant Grace](#)
- [Galatians 5:16 Spirit-Controlled or Carnal - scroll down](#)
- [Galatians 5:16-17: Flesh and Spirit in Conflict - scroll down](#)

Explore the Bible

- [Galatians 5:16-26: Let the Spirit Lead](#)

David Guzik

- [Galatians 5](#)

Matthew Henry

- [Galatians 5](#)

IVP Commentary

- [Galatians 5](#)

Jamieson, F, Brown

- [Galatians 5](#)

S Lewis Johnson

- [Galatians 5:13-26 Life by the Spirit](#)

Steve Lewis

- [Galatians 5 13-23 Freedom in Christ...](#)

Martin Luther

- [Galatians 5](#)

John MacArthur

- [Galatians 5:16-18: Walking by the Spirit - 1](#)

John MacArthur

- [Galatians 5:13-16: What is Christian Liberty?](#)

John MacArthur

- [Galatians 5:16-25: Walking by the Holy Spirit](#)

Alexander Maclaren

- Galatians 5:16 Walk in the Spirit

J Vernon McGee

- [Galatians Notes and Outline Pdf](#)

J Vernon McGee

- [Galatians 5:16 Intro - Audio](#); [5:16 - Audio](#)

F B Meyer

- Galatians 5:16: Walking in the Spirit

Andrew Murray

- [Galatians 5:16, 24, 25 Walking by the Spirit](#)

Phil Newton

- [Galatians 5:16-18 A Different Walk](#)

John Piper

- [Galatians 5:16-18: The War Within: Flesh Vs Spirit](#)

Ray Pritchard

- [Galatians 5:16-18 How You Can Walk in the Spirit](#)

Grant Richison

- [Galatians 5:16; 16b, 17; 5:17b; 5:17c](#)

A T Robertson

- [Galatians 5](#)

C H Spurgeon

- Galatians 5 Exposition

Ray Stedman

- [Galatians 5:13-26 Legalism](#)

Marvin Vincent

- [Galatians 5](#)

Today in the Word

- [Galatians 5:16-18 5:16-26 5:16-26 5:16-21](#)

Drew Worthen

- [Galatians 5:16-18 Led By the Spirit](#)

Kenneth Wuest

- [Galatians 5:16 Reckon on Christ](#)

Steve Zeisler

- [Galatians 5:13-24: Fight the Good Fight](#)

C H Spurgeon's Devotional entitled "Live in the Spirit "on Galatians 5:25-note

The two most important things in our holy religion are the life of faith and the walk of faith. He who shall rightly understand these is not far from being a master in experimental theology, for they are vital points to a Christian. You will never find true faith

unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you will never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There are some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in condemnation, for they hold the truth in unrighteousness; and there are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith, like the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "whitewashed sepulchers." We must have faith, for this is the foundation; we must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what service is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself therein? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation for that house. Even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock. Let faith and life be put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they will make our piety enduring. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive trees watered by heavenly care. O Lord, give us this day life within, and it will reveal itself without to thy glory.

William Kelly presents a Biblically balanced position on the purpose of the Law in a believer's life...

There are vast numbers who think that the Lord Jesus, besides bringing pardon, is simply a means to strengthen them to keep the law. But this is sad and fundamental ignorance of Christianity. Is a believer then at liberty to break the law? God forbid! It is one thing to be a debtor to do the whole law, and another that God can make light of any breach of the law. Is there nothing possible between these two conditions--debt to the law and freedom to break it? Neither consists with a Christian. He who is free to do his own will is a lawless, wicked man. He who is under the law to do it, describes the proper condition of the Jew and nobody else.

The Christian stands on entirely new ground. He is saved by grace and is called to walk in grace (cp Col 2:6-note, 2Co 5:7). The character of righteousness that God looks for in him is of another sort altogether; as it is said in Philippians, 'being filled with the fruits of righteousness'--not which are by the law, but 'by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God' (Phil. 1:11-note)--by the Lord Jesus under grace and not under law. And this is not a question solely of justification. This has to do with the responsibility of the believer to do the will of God (and now the desire and power to do His will - Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note, Heb 13:21-note); and the Lord Jesus, not the law, is the measure and source of the Christian life and walk, which makes all the difference possible (Gal 2:20-note).

Related Resources

Audio & Transcripts by Dr S Lewis Johnson

- [Titus 1:1-4; Ro 9:1-15 Covenants - Everlasting & Historical](#)
- [Genesis 2:8-17 The Edenic Covenant](#)
- [Genesis 6:18, 9:8-17 The Noahic Covenant](#)
- [Isaiah 42 The Servant of Jehovah - Covenant of the People & Light of the Gentiles](#)

Abrahamic Covenant

- [Genesis 12:1-3, 15:7-21 The Abrahamic Covenant - Pt 1](#)
- [Romans 11:1-10 The Abrahamic Covenant - Pt 2](#)
- [Romans 11:11-27 The Abrahamic Covenant - Pt 3](#)
- [Genesis 9:1-17 The Universal Covenant](#)
- [Genesis 12:1-3 Abrahamic: Fundamental Covenant](#)
- [Genesis 15:7-21 Ratification of Abrahamic Covenant](#)
- [Genesis 17:9-27 Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant](#)
- [Genesis 17:1-8 The Sealing of the Covenant](#)

Mosaic Covenant

- [Exodus 19:1-8, 24:1-8 The Mosaic Covenant](#)

Palestinian Covenant

- [Deuteronomy 29, 30 The Palestinian Covenant](#)

Davidic Covenant

- [2 Samuel 7:1-11 The Davidic Covenant - Pt 1](#)
- [2 Samuel 7:12-17 The Davidic Covenant - Pt 2](#)

New Covenant

- [Jeremiah 31:31-34 New Covenant and Prophecy - Pt 1](#)
- [Matthew 26:26-29 New Covenant and Prophecy - Pt 2](#)
- [Hebrews 8:1-13 New Covenant and Prophecy - Pt 3](#)
- [Romans 11 New Covenant and Prophecy - Pt 4](#)
- [Hebrews and the New Covenant](#)
- [Mediation of the New Covenant](#)
- [Revelation 19:11-16 The Covenants Consummated](#)

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON COVENANT OLD vs NEW

THE LAW AS OUR TUTOR

Kay Arthur in Our Covenant God explains the role of the Law as a "tutor" in Galatians 3:24 writing that...

The Law serves as our tutor. Through it we gain both the knowledge of what we need to do and the realization that we can't do it in our own strength. And this, beloved, is what brings us to faith in Christ Jesus, Through our tutor we learn to desire the righteousness of the Law and we realize that we can't get it on our own; it comes only through faith. After our "tutor" has done its work, we come to the place where we throw up our hands in surrender and say, "I can't achieve righteousness. I'm a sinner, a transgressor of the Law; there's no hope!" And we hear Jesus say, I can. Will you believe Me and let Me in?" When we believe, we throw open the door so our Lord and Savior -Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, the Mediator of the New Covenant may graciously enter in. And then God looks at you and says, "Justified" -declared righteous by faith. For He sees "Christ in you, the hope of glory!"

The Old Covenant exposed our sin and our need.

The New Covenant provides the solution: the Holy Spirit.

The Old Covenant enlightened.

The New Covenant empowers.

The Old Covenant revealed our sin.

The New Covenant releases us from sin's power.

What the Old Covenant revealed, the New takes care of. The Old guarded from sin, but couldn't keep from sin because of our flesh. The New gives us the Holy Spirit to give us power over sin.

You can't live under faith and the law. We think the way to please God is by keeping the law, but it's not. We please Him by faith! But, that doesn't make us lawless because the New Covenant puts the Holy Spirit within us and He changes our "*wanter*" so we no longer want to sin, but in fact are grieved over sin and instead desire to be holy and righteous.

God puts the Holy Spirit within and then the power to keep His ordinances will come from within. So when I come into the New Covenant I am not lawless nor am I under the law, but I will keep His commandments because the Spirit of God within me is the same Holy Spirit that was in Jesus that caused Him to keep the law. When Jesus lived on this earth in the flesh, He Was an example of how man was intended to live. Jesus walked by the Spirit. We are to walk by the Spirit.

GALATIANS 5-6

SUMMARY

Note: More in depth exposition found in the following links: Galatians 5:16; Galatians 5:17; Galatians 5:18; Galatians 5:19; Galatians 5:20; Galatians 5:21; Galatians 5:22; Galatians 5:23; Galatians 5:24; Galatians 5:25; Galatians 5:26

Kenneth Wuest has a very well worded, accurate summary of Galatians 5-6. Introducing his comments on the Practical Section (Galatians 5-6) of this letter, Wuest writes that...

In Gal 5:1-6:10 the inspired apostle presents **practical teaching and exhortation** designed to correct the havoc which the teaching of the Judaizers was causing in the personal lives of the Galatian Christians. In Gal 4:19 Paul expresses the wish that the Lord Jesus might again be outwardly expressed in their lives. The Galatians had lost His beauty which before the coming of the Judaizers had been so prominent in their experience. The Lord Jesus was not being expressed in their lives as heretofore. This was the direct result of the Judaizer's legalistic teachings. The Galatian Christians, instead of depending upon the indwelling Spirit to produce in their lives the beauty of the Lord Jesus, now were depending upon self-effort in an attempt to obey law. Accordingly, Paul's practical teaching emphasizes the ministry of the Spirit, and the Galatians are exhorted to put themselves again under His control. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans](#))

The secret of a successful, God-glorifying, powerful, sweet, courageous, victorious Christian life is in this correct adjustment to the Holy Spirit on the part of the Christian.

I. Gal 5:1-12: Paul exhorts the Galatians to hold fast to the freedom from law which the Lord Jesus had procured for them by the blood of His Cross, and not to become entangled again in a legalistic system

II. Gal 5:13-26: You have been liberated from the law by the blood of Christ. But do not think that this freedom gives you the liberty to sin. The reason why you have been liberated from such an elementary method of controlling the conduct of an individual, is that you might be free to live your life on a new principle, namely, under the control of the Holy Spirit

1. Gal 5:13-15: He warns them not to use their freedom from the law as a pretext for sinning, thus turning liberty into license. He exhorts them instead, to govern their lives by the motivating impulse of a Spirit-produced divine love

2. Gal 5:16-26: The subjection of the saint to the personal control of the indwelling Holy Spirit, is the secret of victory over sin and of the living of a life in which divine love is the motivating impulse.

a. Gal 5:16-21: The Holy Spirit will suppress the activities of the evil nature as the saint trusts Him to do so, and cooperates with Him in His work of sanctification

b. Gal 5:22-26: The Holy Spirit will produce His own fruit in the life of the saint as the latter trusts Him to do that, and cooperates with Him in His work of sanctification .

III. Gal 6:1-5: The Galatian saints who have not been enticed away from grace by the wiles of the Judaizers, and who therefore are still living Spirit-controlled lives, are exhorted to restore their brethren who have been led astray, back to the life under grace

IV. Gal 6:6-10: The Galatian saints who have deserted grace for law, are exhorted to put themselves under the ministry of the teachers who led them into grace, and are warned that if they do not, they will reap a harvest of corruption

V. Gal 6:11-18: Paul's final warning against the Judaizers and his closing words

CONTRAST OF GRACE AND LAW

LAW	GRACE
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.

Adapted and modified from work by Dr M R De Haan - Studies in Galatians. Kregel Publications

Run, John, Run! The Law commands
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
Far grander news the Gospel brings
It bids me fly and gives me wings!

Galatians 3:19: ILLUSTRATION OF HOW THE LAW EXPOSES SIN

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 – Guess what happened? The fishing stopped!

- 1) To define transgressions for what they were... sin. The Law made one knowledgeable of the fact that he had stepped over a line drawn by God (Transgression = parabasis = a stepping over) which resulted in a sense of guilt. (NLT v19 "It was given to show people how guilty they are")
- 2). Guilt drove the man to despair and hopefully to seek a Savior.

In short, one reason for the Law was to drive, lead and impel men to see their desperate need for a Savior, Christ Jesus. Think about the Tabernacle for a moment. This structure representing access into the very presence of the Almighty, Holy God, was always meant to be a shadow (of the real) and a symbol. The only pieces of "furniture" that were in open view to all the people of Israel were the **altar** and **laver** in front of the Tabernacle. These items were a constant reminder of their need for forgiveness. Behind the altar and laver stood the Tabernacle providing a shadow or symbol of the way one could approach a Holy God, pointing ultimately to Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, the life!

Paul teaches this same truth in **Romans 7:5** (note) - The sinful passions which were **aroused** BY THE LAW (**what effect does the law have on our old nature?**) were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

Galatians 4:31

Dr M R De Haan comments

Free from the Law - Notice the last word of the doctrinal section of Galatians, FREE! FREE! The believer is free, set at liberty, delivered. Salvation by grace means deliverance and freedom. There is no bondage for those who are in Christ. Now as we shall see, liberty does not mean license to sin; freedom does not mean we are not accountable for our conduct. This Paul makes clear in Galatians 5:13. We are free indeed—not free to sin—but free to serve the Lord without fear and compulsion. This we have seen in Galatians 2:19, where we are said to be DEAD to the law, but ALIVE unto God. Someone asked a certain preacher of grace, "Do you mean to say that if I am saved by grace, I can do as I want to?" The servant of God replied, "Yes, if you are saved you can do as you want to, but remember, if you are saved, really saved, God gave you a different 'want to'—you WANT TO serve God." (De Haan, M. R. Studies in Galatians. Kregel Publications)

Galatians 5:17

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

Paul is referring to the **flesh** remaining in a believer. **Flesh** is that entity which continually functions apart from and against the Spirit. The flesh stands against the work of the Spirit in the believer's new heart. The unsaved person often regrets the sinful things he does because of guilt and/or painful consequences, but he has no spiritual warfare going on within, because he has only a nature of flesh (he is "in the flesh"), being devoid of the Holy Spirit. The sinful things he does, though often disappointing and disgusting to him, are nevertheless consistent with his basic nature as an enemy of God, by nature a child of His wrath. He

therefore has no real internal conflict beyond whatever **conscience** may remain in his sinful state. (Click here for in depth exposition of Galatians 5:17)

It is only in the lives of believers that the Spirit can fight against the flesh because it is only in believers that the Spirit dwells. Only in believers are the unredeemed flesh and the Spirit living in the redeemed self in opposition to one another, so that believers may not do the things that they please (motivated by the old flesh nature). Believers do not always do what they wish to do. There are those moments in every Christian's experience when the wishing is present but the doing is not. The Spirit seeks to halt (by giving us the desire not to do evil - "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" Ezek 36:27, "God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" Philippians 2:13 - note) what our flesh desires, and unfortunately the believer makes a choice of his or her will to allow the flesh to "override" the will that comes from the Spirit. Believers are not at the mercy of the flesh -- the body of sin has been rendered inoperative (Ro 6:6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17-see **notes** on Ro 6:6-7, 6:12-14, 6:15-17) and we now are no longer subject to the power Sin formerly exercised over us. And yet Sin can still exert power if we put ourselves in "harm's way" exposing ourselves to situations that make us vulnerable to the old SIN nature (see discussion Romans 13 13-14, [Ps 101:3 Job 31:1](#)).

Although the Christian life is warfare it is warfare in which victory is always possible. Every believer has the indwelling power of God's own Spirit to do battle with his (crucified) sinful flesh, in order that he may not do the things that please his flesh. In Ro 8:2 (see note), the apostle wrote: "the law of the Spirit ... has **set you free** (freedom to do as you ought, not to do as you please) from the law of sin and of death." In other words, a third party is key to the conflict: between the new creation and the flesh -- the Holy Spirit Who energizes the new inner man for victory over his flesh.

Ray Pritchard explains the struggle in **Galatians 5:17** this way...

Many Christians prefer not to hear this truth because they want a Christianity that proclaims "all victory all the time." They want a guarantee that all their problems will be solved if they will follow the right formula. But that is not realistic nor is it biblical. We are to fight the good fight of faith, putting on the whole armor of God, standing in the evil day, and enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Verse 17 is abundantly clear in this regard. Two principles are at war within us. One is called "flesh." The other is called "the Spirit." These two principles are in constant, unrelenting, unremitting antagonism to each other. They are constantly at war with each other. The flesh is Paul's term for the depraved nature inside all of us by virtue of our physical descent from Adam. That depraved nature is hostile to God, selfish, and utterly evil. When we come to Christ, we become new creations by virtue of the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us. Even though the dominating power of the flesh is broken, the pull of evil remains with us. As one writer put it, evil desires arise from the flesh like smoke from a chimney. To say it another way, flesh is what we are by natural birth; the Spirit comes to us by our spiritual birth.

I draw several conclusions from this:

- a) Flesh and the Spirit are fundamentally opposite. They do not and cannot cooperate.
- b) The conflict between our flesh and the Spirit is continual and inevitable.
- c) That conflict produces conflicting desires in the believer...

As a lost person, you sin because that's your nature. As a Christian, you have a new nature that pulls you toward God while the flesh remains with you until you die. In one sense, Christians have conflicts the unsaved never know about. Our rewards are great but so are our struggles. We ought to praise God for the war within. The deadly feud between flesh and Spirit is one sign that we are the children of God. Do you desire to be holy? Do you want to please the Lord? Is there a hunger in your heart to know Jesus and to love him? Do you desire to live a higher and better life even though you cannot seem to attain it? If you answer yes, that is strong evidence you are born again. Despite your personal failings, do you truly want to do what God wants you to do? Then you may rest in the knowledge that you are a child of God. Your struggle with sin is proof of your divine heritage. If sin is a burden, at least it is a burden and not a joy. If you can swear and hate and steal and mock and lust and think all sorts of foul thoughts and speak harsh words, if you can do that and feel nothing, then you are truly without hope in the world...

No one escapes the conflict.

No one can avoid the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.

No one gets a Christian life free from outward pressure and inward turmoil.

And there is no second blessing or spiritual experience that can magically propel you to a state where you no

longer struggle with sin. That won't happen until we finally get to heaven. Between now and then, we walk the hard road to glory, fighting every day to stay on the right path.

It's crucial to remember that God allows the struggle as part of our ongoing spiritual growth. Strange as it may seem, we need to struggle because that's the only way we can grow in grace. Here are a few benefits to consider:

- It reveals to us our inherent weakness.
- It kills our pride and arrogance.
- It humbles us again and again.
- It forces us to cry out to God for help.
- It reveals the uselessness of human effort apart from God's strength.
- It teaches us to rely on the Lord alone.
- It causes us to love the Savior who delivers us from sin.
- It leads us to a life of continual repentance.
- It makes us more watchful against the encroachment of sin.
- It makes us long for the rest of heaven.
- It prods us to use all the means of divine grace.
- It encourages us to develop habits of holiness.
- It forces us to lean on our brothers and sisters to help us out.
- It leads us to look for daily solutions instead of instant miracles.

[\(Galatians 5:16-18 Full Speed Ahead One Step at a Time: How You Can Walk in the Spirit\)](#)

Galatians 5:25

Galatians 5:25-note "Keep in Step with the Spirit" (NIV)

J Vernon McGee has an excellent practical note on what it means to **'keep in step with the Spirit'** writing that...

A professor in a theological seminary called my attention to the word walk in this verse several years ago, and it has meant a great deal to me. As you recall, back in verse 16 a "walk in the Spirit" is peripateo (click word study), but here "walk" is a different Greek word. It is stoichomen, which is basic and elemental, meaning "to proceed or step in order." In Gal 5:16 we were given the principle of walk; here in Gal 5:25 it means to learn to walk. Just as we learned to walk physically by the trial and error method, so are we to begin to walk by the Spirit—it is a learning process.

Let me illustrate this principle with a ridiculous illustration. What is walking? Walking is putting one foot in front of the other. You may have heard about the knock-kneed girl. One knee said to the other, "If you let me by this time, I will let you by next time." That is walking, putting one foot in front of the other. This means to learn to walk. How did you learn to walk? Were you given a lecture on the subject? Did you go to a school and take a course in learning to walk? One summer my grandson, who was about twelve months old at the time, stayed with us for a time. He was just standing and wobbling along. I did not put him in his high chair and tell him about the physical mechanism of the foot. I did not give him a lecture on the psychology of walking or the sociological implications of walking. If I had explained all of these things to my grandson, could he have lifted the tray of his high chair and walked off? No, my friend, that is not the way you learn to walk. You learn to walk by trial and error. One time my grandson fell down hard, and he had a big knot on his forehead. He fell many times, but before long he was walking and running and climbing as surefooted as a mountain goat. He learned to do it by just doing it, by trial and error.

This is the way we are to learn to walk in the Spirit—by trial and error. I know people who have attended Keswick conferences, spiritual life conferences, and Bible conferences; they have their notebooks filled with notes on how to live the Christian life. Still they are not living it. What is the problem?

You have to learn to walk in the Spirit, which means you are to start out. Why not start now? Say, "I am going to walk in the Spirit. I am going to depend upon the Holy Spirit to produce the fruits in my life." Perhaps you are thinking that you might fall down. I have news for you—you are going to fall. It will hurt. You say, "How many times will I fall?" I don't know. I am still falling. But that is the way you are going to walk in the Spirit, and that's the only way. My friend, you need to step out today and begin leaning upon the Spirit of God. Yield yourself to Him; it is an act of the will.

Every day I start my day by saying, "Lord, I can't live today in a way that pleases You, and I want You to do it through me." I find there are times when I don't get but a few blocks from home when something happens. One morning a woman in a Volkswagen cut in front of me. I had been so nice and sweet up to then, but I drove up beside her car and I told her what she had done. And she told me a thing or two right back. When she drove off, I thought, My, I sure fell on my face! When I do that, I just get up and start over again." ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson or Logos](#)) (Or listen to the Mp3 on [Galatians 5:24-26 Thru the Bible Audio - Mp3](#))