

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

GALATIANS 3:15-25



LESSON: THE GOSPEL: FAITH IN CHRIST — May 12, 2019

INTRODUCTION:

Paul boldly declares that instead of blessings, living under the works of the law puts them under the curse. Abraham received a blessing, not a curse, and it was because of faith and not law. Faith brings me into a blessing and all blessings are through God's grace. No man is justified by the law in the sight of God. The apostle proves that since the law, no matter how good in itself, can only bring a curse upon every soul who takes this ground or stand in its dealings with God. If you choose to live under the law, then you must live by their perfect norms. The conclusion of the law, for such, accordingly, was a curse. What the law could not do, Christ did (Rom.8:3-4). Christ became the ransom; the sum of the payoff from which released us from the curse of the law. Jesus Christ bearing the curse of the law was to open the door of blessings to all men. God's purpose is plain: *"that the blessings of Abraham might reach the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith"* (3:10-14).

I. THE LAW AND THE COVENANT GALATIANS 3:15-22

3:15 Brethren, — Notice that ¹Paul calls them "**brethren**," which is kind of softening the tone a little bit. He opened Chapter 3 by calling them "*idiots; foolish Galatians.*" That was pretty strong. But now he's just trying to get them to think with him, and he affectionately calls them "*brethren*" regarding them as the sons of Abraham.

3:15b ...I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto — means he's using "*a human analogy*," he likens God's promise to Abraham to the "will" that people make; when a man writes his last will and testament. The word "**testament**," in fact, is from the same Greek word that is translated "**covenant**" in this verse. Paul notes here that even in the case of a human "**Will**," once it has been confirmed or validated, the terms therein cannot be altered. The point is that once a covenant has been made and executed, it stands: it cannot be annulled or added to. By law the promises of the covenant are sealed; both parties are bound to keep their word, their promise. They would have concluded that the blessing, which was given to Abraham by God, was received by Abraham by faith as he believed in the promises of God.

3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Notice, the promise was not given to Abraham alone, but it was also given to the seed, the descendants and offspring of Abraham. The word "**seed**" is singular, not plural, therefore, who is meant by the "*seed of Abraham?*" – Scripture declares that God's promise points first to one single person, and that person is Jesus Christ, then the promises of the gospel by Him to those who are by faith engrafted into Christ. ²Fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant does not depend on the nation of Israel, but on the person of Christ. God's salvation is always through the finished work of Christ on the cross. Legalism is lethal because it will undermine that finished work of Christ, making it unfinished.

3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. This verse is saying: "*this is what I mean*," by what I said in Gal. 3:15. ³Paul now brings back this idea of human

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¹ http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/galatians/3_15-18.htm

² <http://versebyversecommentary.com/galatians/galatians-316/>

³ <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/48%20Gal/1995/48GAL03C.htm>

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agreements (from verse 15), and says that just because there was a new agreement with Moses, doesn't mean that God's original contract with Abraham was null and void. The original contract with Abraham was yet to be fulfilled! It would be fulfilled in Jesus.

- When the law was given, the promise to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled; therefore, the law could not void or change the covenant of faith with Abraham. The promises of God to Abraham and his descendent, Jesus Christ, still stood. Since Jesus Christ, who is eternal existed before Abraham, the covenant of faith was given to Christ even before it was given to Abraham (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians, p.45*).

3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. If the inheritance is based on law, then it is conditional and is not a promise. But, God gave the inheritance to Abraham as a promise - therefore it is unconditional. Notice the "if" and "but." You see the inheritance was not given to Abraham by law, that is, Abraham could not earn, win, or merit it; but as Scripture declares— "God gave it [the inheritance] to Abraham as a promise." The same promise is given to believers, that is, to all those who walk in the faith of Abraham.

3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. What was the object then of the law? It was added in order to restrain transgressions of men, and especially among the fleshly race of Abraham, only until the Promised Seed, to whom the promise was made, that is, Christ, should come. This was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. He would mediate between Israel and God; that is, to Moses.

3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one. A mediator implies two parties between whom he acts. Because of the transgression of men, the law was the contract to which both parties agreed to the condition. God said "If ye will obey", and Israel said "We will do" (Ex.19:5, 8). The law was valid so long as both parties fulfilled the terms of the contract. Israel defaulted and did not live up to her part of the bargain. So then God was no longer obligated to keep His part. And a mediator was needed for there was separation. The conditions were not kept, and the blessings were not received.

3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. No, the law is not against the promises of God. The law isn't the promise of God and does not give life at all. If it did, and could impart righteousness, then it might be said to be opposed to the promises of righteousness by faith.

3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. None became righteous by the law, therefore, in Scripture, the law placed all under sin (See Rom.11:32), but, the promise based on faith in Christ should be to them only who believe. All hope is in the gospel.

II. THE LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN GALATIANS 3:23-25

3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Before the faith was revealed we were **kept under the law** — meant under its power; confined under the law, as in prison, in a state of preparation for the faith that was to be revealed. The law was "added" (3:19) in order to do a work of preparation until the gospel was revealed.

3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. In

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Roman families a trusted slave, a pedagogue, had charge of children, preserved them from harm, and took them to school. **The law was our schoolmaster**— revised as *"tutor."* The law was like a tutor, a guide to lead us to the school of Christ where we could be **justified by faith**.

3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. Once brought to Christ we do not need the tutor any longer. We are no longer under the law being our schoolmaster.

SUMMARY:

Paul takes an illustration from everyday life by speaking after the way of men using a human analogy. Even though it's a man covenant, once its been duly executed, no one can annul or change it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and his offspring. The promises of the gospel, points first to Christ, then by Him to those who are by faith engrafted into Christ. The promises of God to Abraham and his descendent still stood. An agreement already confirmed by God cannot be cancelled by the Law which came four hundred and thirty years later. If the inheritance is based on law, then it is conditional and is not a promise. But God gave the inheritance to Abraham as a promise - therefore it is unconditional. Therefore, if the inheritance is of the law, then it's not of the promise, but we have to remember that God gave it to Abraham by promise (**3:15-18**).⁴What was the purpose of the Law then? Paul answers that it was added because of transgressions of men, until the Seed (Christ) should come. It was not against the promises of God, but because it could not provide life itself, it only served the purpose of confining all under sin until the promise by faith in Jesus could be given to those who believe. All hope is in the gospel (**3:19-22**).

Before the faith was revealed we were confined under the law, as it were in prison, in a state of preparation for the faith. The law was *"added"* (3:19) in order to do a work of preparation until the gospel was revealed. Thus, we were *"kept under the law"* and kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. To put it another way, the law was our schoolmaster, it was like a tutor, a guide to lead to Christ where we could be justified by faith. When once brought to Christ, and faith had arrived, we do not need the tutor; we are no longer under the law of a schoolmaster any longer (**3:23-25**).