



Galatians: Law & Promise

June 21

INTRODUCTION: To counter the false teachers Paul has just gone to great pains to define the Gospel by showing how we are justified by faith in Christ and not through works of the Law. That raises questions then about the Law...

KEY POINT: justification, law & promise, purpose, faith & works

A.M. SERMON RECAP (Gal 3:1–9)

- Why had the Galatians been foolishly bewitched (especially since they knew Christ crucified before them)?
- Paul exposes their foolishness by appealing to their conversion and the OT story of Abraham. How do these teach faith vs. works?
- What does this passage teach about the content, offer and requirement of the Gospel?

P.M. SERMON RECAP (Gal 3:10–14)

- What is the central question of religion? (Acts 16:30)
- What 2 alternatives are there?
- What is works and what is faith?
- What is the end of works and of faith?

READ: Gal 2:15–29

KEY THOUGHT: The “Law” can refer to Scripture, God’s Covenant with Israel through Moses, or simply the moral law. Paul is even speaking of the Law, or Covenant, because the Judaizers were saying we were justified through faith + keeping the Law. Paul’s general argument is that the Law was never meant to save but to convict and instruct. We are saved by God’s promise (Gospel), through Abraham, of the Messiah. Though He fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant (Mt 5:17–20), because Paul alludes to a continued use of the Law, it means the law remains morally instructive (though not ceremonially or judicially). Yet even moral works cannot save us but only condemn and instruct!

QUESTIONS:

1. *In our passage Paul shows a helpful master and interpreter of 2000 years of salvation history. God dealt with Abraham through promise (I will, I will), and Moses through the Law (You shall, you shall). “God is one” may refer to His united purpose. The Law does not set aside the Promises, vv. 15–18*
2. **When you die can anyone change your will? What does this human example say about God’s promises?**
3. *Paul knew God’s promise to Abraham (Gen 12) was not chiefly physical but spiritual. **How do we know? What do these blessings mean under the New Covenant/today?***
4. *V. 16- Because offspring/descendant is singular it means Christ and therefore all those who are in Christ according to the promise (past and present). Paul isn’t asking whether people could be saved under the Old Covenant but whether the Old Covenant saved. (See [blog](#)).*
5. *Vv. 17-18- The Judaizers said the Law trumped the promise because it came after. Paul is saying the promise remained in effect even as the Law was given. The Law illuminates the Promise and makes it essential, vv. 19–22 On the ‘Harmony of Law and Gospel’ read an excerpt (s. 12) from a leading Ontario Baptist confession from 1833.*
6. Why then the Law the Judaizers would ask?, Vv. 19–20
 - a. **V. 19 and read Ro 3:20, 4:17, 7:7 for answer. How does the Law remove human respectability?**
 - b. **Discuss:** “Satan would have us prove ourselves holy by the Law, which God gave to prove us sinners.”
 - c. *V. 19- the Law looked to Christ, through whom we’d find forgiveness.*
 - d. *19b-20- the Law is inferior to the Promise.*
7. Is the Law opposed to the promises?, vv. 21–22
 - a. *The Law cannot save but makes the Promise indispensable, so “what was promised...might be given to those who believe.”*
 - b. *The Law, Luther said, doesn’t make us “better but worse” so we might be “driven to seek grace.”*
 - c. **How is it harmful to the proclamation of the Gospel if we soft pedal sin and judgement/law?**
8. **Discuss:**

- a. John Bunyan (d. 1688): “Run, John, run, the law commands, but gives us neither feet nor hands. Far better news the Gospel brings; it bids us fly and gives us wings.”
- b. With the Holy Spirit the Law is no longer a threat but a promise saying, ‘I will get you there.’

Under the Law and in Christ, vv. 23–29

9. *Paul wants us to see we are either “under the Law” or “in Christ” depending on what/who we trust. How do some want one without the other? Why do we need both but in their proper order?*
10. What we were under the Law, vv. 23–24
 - a. *V. 23, 25- “Before faith, etc”, meaning a faith that rested on the finished vs. future work of Christ, for Abraham had faith. Both vs. 23 and 24 end in this faith.*
 - b. *V. 23- imprisoned. How does the Law imprison?*
 - c. *V. 24- under guardianship (a slave who superintended a youth’s conduct to and from school). How was the Law like a guardian?*
11. *The Law expressed the will of God for obedience but could only condemn thus making the Promise more desirable. Only Christ can rescue from the Law’s curse (v. 13).*
12. What we are in Christ, vv. 25–29
 - a. **How many times in Christ mentioned?**
 - b. *“Cloth yourself with Christ” (v. 27b) may refer to a toga a boy would put on upon entering manhood.*
 - c. *Vv. 26–27-[Grown up] Children of God, spiritually adopted by faith, visibly adopted through baptism. What does it mean to have God as Father?*
 - d. V. 28- One in Christ. **What does this mean, what does it not mean?**
 - e. V. 29- Abraham’s Seed. What does it mean to stand in the long line of Abraham (Heb 11)?
13. *“In Christ” we have height (friendship with God in heaven as children) and breadth (society/fellowship with the saints around the world) and length (history/part of a larger story, that will continue into eternity). Ponder.*
14. **How does our culture view meaning in these terms? How can “in Christ” speak hope to their lostness?**

15. *This is a dense passage. Remember why Paul was writing it (i.e. , answering the objections of the Judaizers and convincing the Galatians of justification by faith). Can you summarize this long passage in your own words?*

NEXT: June 28- Gal 4:1–7, Heirs