



A Study of  
*Galatians* 3  
Living by Faith  
Part 1 – Gal 3:1-18

## Galatians 3 Covers:

### Christians, Law, & Living by Faith:

1. Paul confronts the Galatians (Galatians 3:1)
2. The Galatians Departure from Faith (Galatians 3:2-3)
3. Have the Galatians suffered in Vain? (Galatians 3:4)
4. Examining the Source of the Spirit's Work (Galatians 3:5)

### Abraham Our Example:

1. How Abraham was made righteous before God (Galatians 3:6)
2. The True Sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)
3. Righteousness by Faith for All Nations (Galatians 3:8-9)

For more information, see Blue Letter Study Guide

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-3.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-3.cfm)

## Galatians 3 Covers:

### Law in the Old and New Testaments:

1. Law of Moses brings a curse (Galatians 3:10)
2. Right Standing before God comes by Faith (Galatians 3:11)
3. The Law requires Perfect Obedience (Galatians 3:12)
4. Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law  
(Galatians 3:13-14)
5. The unchanging nature of God's covenant with Abraham  
(Galatians 3:15-18)

For more information, see Blue Letter Study Guide

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-3.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-3.cfm)

## Galatians 3

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

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

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

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.

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

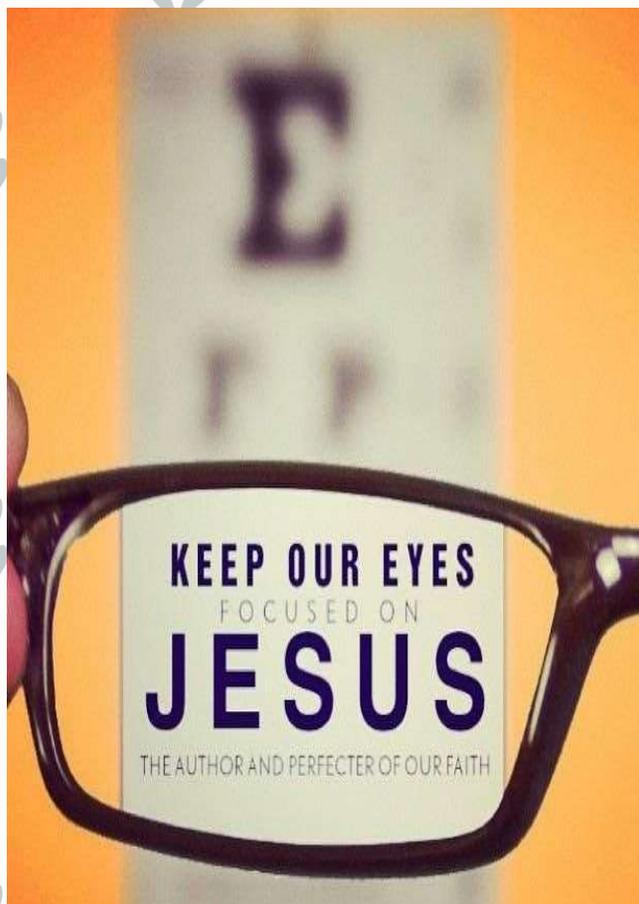
# The Christian, Law & Living by Faith

## Paul Confronts the blurred vision of Jesus and His work for the Galatians:

***O foolish Galatians!*** The strong words were well deserved. Phillips even translated this, "O you dear idiots of Galatia." Paul uses the Greek word anoetos, which had the idea of someone who can think but fails to use their power of perception.

***Who has bewitched you:*** Bewitched has the idea that the Galatians were under some type of spell. Paul didn't mean this literally, but their thinking was so clouded – and so unbiblical – that it seemed that some kind of spell had been cast over them.

It is wonderful to have a soft, tender heart before God. But some people have softer heads than hearts. Their minds are accommodating to wrong, unbiblical ideas, and don't check to see if they really are true or not according to the Bible. This is a sign of spiritual immaturity, even as a baby will stick anything into its mouth.



# The Christian, Law & Living by Faith

## Paul Confronts their Departure from Faith:

**Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified:** Paul wondered how the Galatians could have missed the message because he certainly made it clear enough to them. When we see Jesus clearly before us, we won't be deceived.

"If anything contrary to this comes before him, he does not timidly say, 'Everybody has a right to his opinion'; but he says, 'Yes, they may have a right to their opinion, and so have I to mine; and my opinion is that any opinion which takes away from the glory of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice is a detestable opinion.' Get the real atonement of Christ thoroughly into your soul, and you will not be bewitched." (Spurgeon)

**Before whose eyes:** Paul didn't mean that they literally saw the crucifixion of Jesus or even that they had a spiritual vision of it. He meant that the truth of Jesus and Him crucified and the greatness of His work for them was clearly laid out for them so clearly that they could see it.

**Did you receive the Spirit through the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?** Obviously, the Galatians received the Holy Spirit through simple faith. The Holy Spirit is not a prize earned through the **works of the law.**

# The Christian, Law & Living by Faith

## Paul Confronts their Departure from Faith:

*Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?* The Galatians were deceived into thinking that spiritual growth or maturity could be achieved through the works of the flesh, instead of a continued simple faith and abiding in Jesus.

This lays out one of the fundamental differences between the principle of law and the principle of grace. Under law, we are blessed and grow spiritually by **earning** and **deserving**. Under grace, we are blessed and grow spiritually by **believing** and **receiving**. God deals with us under the covenant of grace; we should not respond on the principle of law.

*Are you so foolish?* This was indeed foolishness. This deception was cultivated by Satan to set our Christian life off-track. If he cannot stop us from being saved by faith, then he will attempt to hinder our blessing and growth and maturity by faith.

# The Christian, Law & Living by Faith

## A Question about the Past, Was it all for nothing?:

*Have you suffered so many things in vain:* Apparently, the Galatians had (perhaps when Paul was among them) suffered for the principle of faith (probably at the hands of legalistic Christians). Would their departure from the principle of faith mean that this past suffering was in vain?

## Examine the Source of the Spirit's Work:

*He who supplies the Spirit to you:* Who supplied the Holy Spirit? Obviously, the Spirit was given as a gift from God.

*Does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* God supplied the Holy Spirit in response to **faith**. Miracles are wrought by **faith**. Yet the Galatians were deceived into thinking that real spiritual riches lay in pursuing God through a *works* relationship. Paul wanted to emphasize there was a choice to be made. Which will it be? Do you believe you will be blessed by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Will you earn and deserve your blessing from God, or will you believe and receive it?

## Galatians 3

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

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

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

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

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

# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## How Abraham was made righteous before God:

*Just as Abraham:* Among the Galatian Christians, the push towards a works-based relationship with God came from certain other Christians who were born as Jews and who claimed Abraham as their spiritual ancestor. Therefore, Paul used Abraham as an example of being right before God by faith and not by faith plus works.

*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness:* Paul here quoted from Genesis 15:6. It simply shows that righteousness was accounted to Abraham because he believed God. It was not because he performed some work and certainly not because he was circumcised, because the covenant of circumcision had not yet been given.

There are essentially two types of righteousness: righteousness we accomplish by our own efforts and righteousness accounted to us by the work of God when we believe. Since none of us can be good enough to accomplish perfect righteousness, we must have God's righteousness accounted to us by doing just what Abram did: Abraham believed God.

# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## How Abraham was made righteous before God:

*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness:* This quotation from Genesis 15:6 is one of the clearest expressions in the Bible of the truth of salvation by grace, through faith. It is the gospel in the Old Testament, quoted four times in the New Testament (Romans 4:3, Romans 4:9-10, Romans 4:22 and here in Galatians 3:6).

Abraham's experience shows that God accounts us as righteous, because of what Jesus did for us, as we receive what He did for us by faith.

Morris on accounted: "It has a meaning like 'reckon, calculate', and may be used of placing something to someone's account, here of placing righteousness to Abraham's account."

If God accounted Abraham as righteous, then that is how Abraham should account himself. That was his standing before God, and God's accounting is not pretending. God does not account to us a pretended righteousness, but a real one in Jesus Christ.

# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## How Abraham was made righteous before God:

***Believed God:*** It wasn't that Abraham believed IN God (as we usually speak of believing in God). Instead, it was that Abraham BELIEVED GOD. Those who only believe IN God, in the sense that they believe He exists, are only as spiritual as demons are (James 2:19).

"Believed, of course, means more than that he accepted what God said as true (though, of course, he did that); it means that he trusted God." (Morris)

"Faith in God constitutes the highest worship, the prime duty, the first obedience, and the foremost sacrifice. Without faith God forfeits His glory, wisdom, truth, and mercy in us. The first duty of man is to believe God and to honor Him with his faith. Faith is truly the height of wisdom, the right kind of righteousness, the only real religion... Faith says to God: 'I believe what you say.' " (Luther)

# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## The true sons of Abraham:

*Only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham:* Since Abraham was made righteous by faith and not by works, Abraham was therefore the father of everyone who believes God and is accounted righteous. This was a strong rebuke to the Jewish Christians who tried to bring Gentile Christians under the law. They believed they were superior because they descended from Abraham and observed the law. Paul said that the most important link to Abraham was not the link of genetics and not the link of works, but it is the link of faith.

At that time, some Jewish Rabbis taught that Abraham stood at the gates of Hell just to make sure that none of his descendants accidentally slipped by. John the Baptist dealt with this same thinking when he said, Do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones (Matthew 3:9). Paul knocked down their blind reliance on genetic relation to Abraham and showed that what really mattered was faith in Jesus. It's the same today when people believe God accepts them because they come from a Christian family. God is a Father, not a grandfather; everyone must have their own faith in God.

# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## The true sons of Abraham:

*Are sons of Abraham*: This was a great comfort to the Gentile Christians who were regarded as "second class Christians" by others. Now they could know that they had a real, important link to Abraham and could consider themselves sons of Abraham.

Sadly, Christians have taken this glorious truth and misapplied it through the centuries. This has been a verse that many claim in support of replacement theology – the idea that God is finished with the people of Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group, and that the Church spiritually inherits all the promises made to Israel.

For example, Romans 11:25 (*hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*) states clearly that God is not finished with Israel as a nation or a distinct ethnic group. Even though God has turned the focus of His saving mercies away from Israel on to the Gentiles, He will turn it back again. This simple passage refutes those who insist that God is forever done with Israel as Israel, and that the Church is the New Israel and inherits every promise ever made to national and ethnic Israel of the Old Testament.

## Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

### The blessing of righteousness by faith for all nations:

*The Scripture, foreseeing... preached... saying:* Remarkably, Paul referred to the Scriptures virtually as a person who foresees, preaches, and says. This shows just how strongly Paul regarded the Bible as God's word. Paul believed that when the Scriptures spoke, God spoke.

*Foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith:* Paul observed 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 was to destroy the idea that a Gentile must first become a Jew before they could 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.

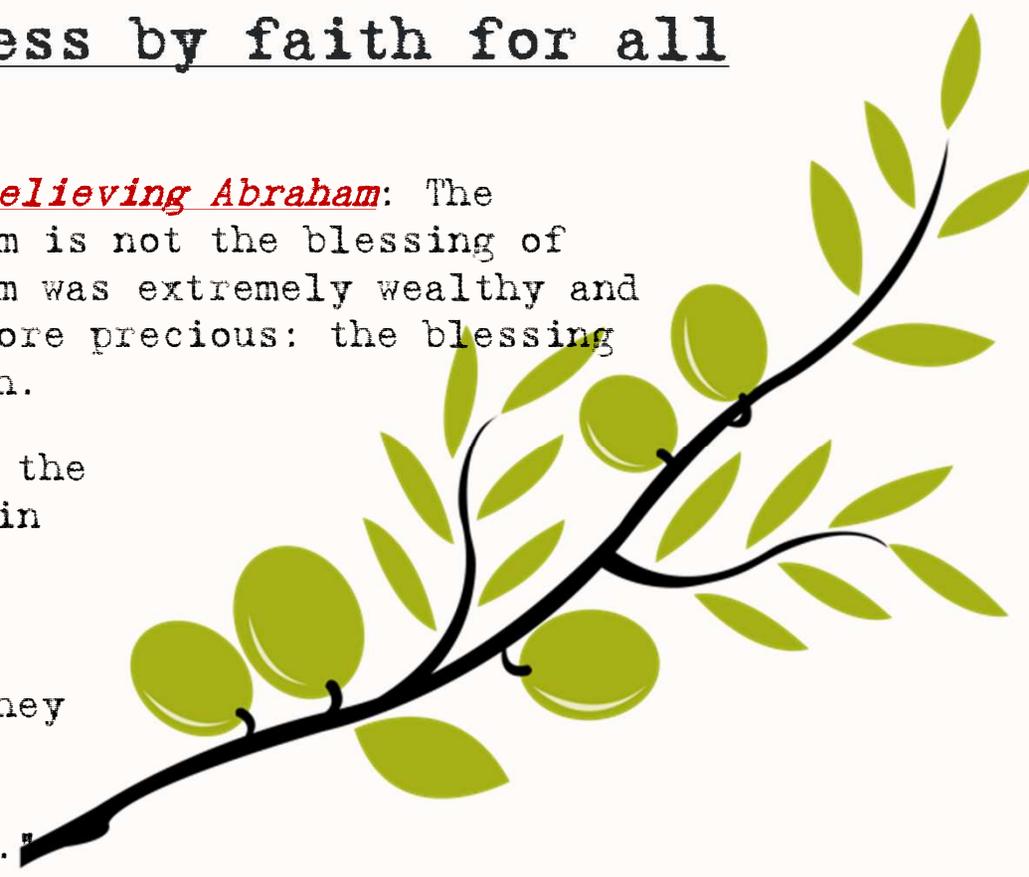
# Abraham: an example of those justified and walking by faith

## The blessing of righteousness by faith for all nations:

*Those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham:* The blessing we receive with believing Abraham is not the blessing of fantastic wealth and power, though Abraham was extremely wealthy and powerful. The blessing is something far more precious: the blessing of a right standing with God through faith.

"The faith of the fathers was directed at the Christ who was to come, while ours rests in the Christ who has come." (Luther)

"They who are of faith are those whose characteristic is faith; it is not that they sometimes have an impulse to believe, but rather that believing is their constant attitude; faith is characteristic of them."  
(Morris)



# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us that the Law of Moses brings a curse:

***For as many as are of the works of the law:*** Paul here addressed those who thought that their law-performance could give them a right standing before God.

"The hypocritical doers of the Law are those who seek to obtain a righteousness by a mechanical performance of good works while their hearts are far removed from God. They act like the foolish carpenter who starts with the roof when he builds a house." (Luther)

***For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:*** The Christians from a Jewish background who believed Gentiles should still live under the Law of Moses thought that it was a path to blessing. Paul boldly declared that instead of blessing, living under the works of the law put them under the curse.

## The Old Testament tells us that the Law of Moses brings a curse:

We must understand *how* the Law can bring blessing. First, we see that the word law is used in two senses in the Bible. Sometimes it means "The Law of Moses, with all its commands, which a man must obey to be approved by God." Sometimes it means "God's Word" in a very general sense. Many times when the Old Testament speaks of the law, it speaks of it in the general sense of God's Word to us. When Psalm 119:97 says *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day*, the Psalmist meant more than just the Law of Moses; he meant all of God's Word. Seeing this, we understand how the Bible is filled with praise for the law. Secondly, we are blessed when we keep the law because we are living according to the "instruction manual" for life. There is an inherent, built-in blessing in living the way God says we should live, in fulfilling the "manufacturer's recommendation."

When Paul said that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, he didn't mean that the law was bad or the Word of God is wrong. He simply meant that *God never intended the law to be the way we find our approval before Him*. He knew we could never keep the law, and so God instituted the system of atoning sacrifice along with the law. And the entire sacrificial system looked forward to what Jesus would accomplish on the cross for us.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us that the Law of Moses brings a curse:

*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them:* To prove his point Scripturally Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26. The Old Testament itself shows us that if we do not keep all things in the law and actually do them, then we are under a curse.

The important words are all and do. For God to approve you on the basis of the law, you first have to do it. Not simply know it, not simply love it, not simply teach it, not simply want it, you must do it. Secondly, you have to do it all. Not some. Not just when you are over 18 or over 40. Not just more good than bad. Deuteronomy 27:26 specifically says that to be justified by the law, you must do it, and do it in all things.

All means a lot. It means that while some sins are worse than others are, there are no small sins before such a great God. "Jewish keepers of the law would overlook small transgressions. Paul would not." (Morris)

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us that the Law of Moses brings a curse:

*Cursed is everyone: Paul's point is heavy*; it weighs us down with a curse. If you are under the works of the law, the only way you can stand approved and blessed before God by the law is to do it, and to do it all. If you don't, you are cursed.

Cursed is a word that sounds strange in our ears. Yet in the Bible, the idea of being cursed is important, and frightening – because it means being cursed by God. Not only cursed by our own bad choices, not only cursed by this wicked world, not only cursed by the Devil – but especially cursed by God. He is the one Person you don't want to be cursed by.



## Galatians 3

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

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us that a right standing before God comes by faith, not by the law:

***But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident:*** Paul had already proven this point in the Scriptures by examining the life of Abraham (Galatians 3:5-9). Now he brought in another passage from the Old Testament, Habakkuk 2:4, which reminds us that the just live by faith and not by law.

The Jews themselves sensed that because none could keep the law perfectly, salvation could not come through keeping the law. This is why they placed such emphasis on their descent from Abraham, essentially trusting in Abraham's merits to save them because they sensed that their own merits could not.

***The just shall live by faith:*** This brief statement from the prophet Habakkuk is one of the most important and most quoted Old Testament statements in the New Testament. Paul used it here to show that the just live by faith, not by law. Being under the law isn't the way to be found just before God; only living by faith is.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament tells us that approval by God through the law must be earned by actually living in obedience to the law, not just trying:

***Yet the law is not of faith:*** Some might come back to Paul and say, "Look, I'll do the best I can under the law and let faith cover the rest. God will look at my performance, my effort, and my good intentions and credit to me as righteousness. The important thing is that I am really trying." Paul proved from the Old Testament itself that this simply isn't good enough. No; the paths of approval by the law and faith don't run together, because the law is not of faith.

***The man who does them shall live by them:*** The quote from Leviticus 18:5 is clear. If you want to live by the law, you must do all of it.

The effect of Paul's use of Scripture in Galatians 3:10-12 is overwhelming. We understand that we don't actually do the law. We understand that we don't actually do all the law. And we understand that this put us under a curse. Galatians 3:10-12 is the bad news; now Paul begins to explain the good news.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law:

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law:* Because we didn't actually do it and do it all, the law put us under a curse. But now Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law. Redeemed has the idea of "buying back" or "purchasing out of." It isn't just rescuing; it is paying a price to rescue. Jesus bought us out from under the curse of the law.

Redemption is an important idea. "Redemption points to the payment of a price that sets sinners free." (Morris) Redemption came from the practices of ancient warfare. After a battle the victors would capture some of the defeated. Among the defeated, the poorer ones would usually be sold as slaves, but the wealthy and important men, were held to ransom. When the people in their homeland had raised the required price, they would pay it to the victors and the captives would be set free. The process was called redemption, and the price was called the ransom.

Most importantly, Jesus bought us out of defeat, out of slavery, and out of a death sentence to reign as kings and priests with Him forever.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law:

***Having become a curse for us:*** This explains how Jesus paid the price to rescue us. Jesus became cursed on our behalf; He stood in our place and took the curse we deserved.

It stops us in our tracks to understand that the price He paid to buy us out from under the curse of the law was the price of Himself. It didn't just cost Jesus something, even something great – it cost Jesus Himself. We know that men cursed Jesus as He hung on the cross; but that compares nothing to how He was cursed by God the Father. He made Himself the target of the curse, and set those who believe outside the target.

"Paul does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself. The accent is on the two words, 'for us.' Christ is personally innocent. Personally, He did not deserve to be hanged for any crime of His own doing. But because Christ took the place of others who were sinners, He was hanged like any other transgressor." (Luther)

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law:

*For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."* When did Jesus pay this price? The principle of Deuteronomy 21:23 shows that Jesus received this curse upon Himself as He hung on the cross, fulfilling the Deuteronomy 21:23 promise of a curse to all who are not only executed but have their bodies publicly exposed to shame.

*Hangs on a tree:* In the thinking of ancient Israel, there was something worse than being put to death: to have your corpse left in the open, exposed to shame, humiliation, and scavenging animals and birds. When it says hangs on a tree, it does not have the idea of being executed by strangulation; but of having the corpse "mounted" on a tree or other prominent place, to expose the executed one to the elements and supreme disgrace.

However, if anyone was executed and deemed worthy of such disgrace, the humiliation to his memory and his family must not be excessive. Deuteronomy 21:23 also says "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree." This was a way of tempering even the most severe judgment with mercy. Significantly, Jesus fulfilled this also, being taken down from the cross before night had fully come (John 19:31-33).

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus redeems us from the curse of the law:

***That the blessing of Abraham might come:*** Jesus received this curse, which we deserved and He did not, so that we could receive the blessing of Abraham, which He deserved and we did not. It would be enough if Jesus simply took away the curse we deserved. But He did far more than that; He also gave a blessing that we didn't deserve. The blessing of Abraham is what Paul already described in Galatians 3:8-9: the blessing of being justified before God by faith instead of works.

***The Gentiles in Christ Jesus:*** This tells us to whom the blessing of Abraham comes. Paul didn't mean that it only comes upon Gentiles, as if Jews were excluded, but that it comes also upon those Gentiles in Christ Jesus. The phrase in Christ Jesus is important. The blessing doesn't come because they are Gentiles, any more than the blessing of being right with God comes to Jewish people because they are Jews. It comes to all, Jew and Gentile alike, who are identified in Christ Jesus and not by their own attempts to justify themselves.

***Receive the promise of the Spirit through faith:*** This means that this blessing is ours in Jesus on faith and not the principle of law. The promise is received, not earned.

## Galatians 3

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

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.

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.

18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

## The unchanging nature of God's covenant with Abraham:

*Brethren, I speak in the manner of men:* Paul first establishes the principle that even with a covenant among men, the covenant stands firm once it is made – no one annuls or adds to it. Paul's point isn't really about covenants among men, but to say "How much more certain is a covenant God makes."

But we shouldn't miss the first word of Galatians 3:15: Brethren. As difficult and dangerous as Paul's opponents in Galatia were, they were also his brothers. He confronts them and persuades them as brothers

*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made:* In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham that in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Paul observes that the singular for seed is used, not the plural. The point is clear: "And to your Seed," who is Christ. God is referring to one specific descendant of Abraham, not all his descendants in general

# The Law in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The unchanging nature of God's covenant with Abraham:

*For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise:* If the inheritance offered to Abraham was on the basis of law, it might not be permanent – because it would depend, at least in part, on Abraham's keeping of the law. But since the inheritance was offered on the basis of promise, God's promise, it stands sure.

*God gave it to Abraham by promise:* The word gave here is the ancient Greek word *kecharistai*, which is based on the Greek word *charis* – grace. God's giving to Abraham was the free giving of grace. The word is also in the perfect tense, showing that the gift is permanent.

"Judaizers might quote Moses; Paul will quote Abraham. Let them quote law; he will quote promise. If they appeal to the centuries of tradition and the proud history of the law of Moses, he will appeal to the grander 'covenant with Abraham', older by centuries still." (Cole)

[www.purewordministries.com](http://www.purewordministries.com)



Pure Word  
Ministries

[Facebook.com/purestwordministries](https://www.facebook.com/purestwordministries)

[Twitter.com/word\\_pure](https://twitter.com/word_pure)

[Pinterest.com/purewordministries/](https://www.pinterest.com/purewordministries/)