

The Promises to Abraham Galatians 3:15-18

In the book of Galatians Paul is dealing with the issue of Judaizers who had come in behind Paul and were adding requirements to the gospel. Specifically, they were telling the Galatians that they must be circumcised to be saved. And in order to establish their message, they tried to undermine Paul's apostleship. I am sure they suggested that he was not one of the original apostles and that he was somehow a lesser apostle. And since he was a lesser apostle, he could not be completely trusted. Furthermore, they must have questioned the source of his message.

So, in the early part of the book Paul tries to establish two things - the validity of his apostleship and the validity of his message. He will establish that both came from Jesus.

Paul's proof that salvation is by faith alone

1. Paul states that the whole matter of circumcision had been settled in Jerusalem at the Jerusalem Council Meeting. (Acts 15) Paul had taken Titus with him as a test case and after much disputing, the other Apostles had to agree that God had visited the Gentiles and that circumcision was not required.

2. Paul had to deal with Peter's hypocrisy. (Gal.2:11-21) Peter came to Antioch and freely associated with the Gentiles and ate with them. The implication is that he ate their foods. This was consistent with Peter's knowledge of the gospel. God had given him a vision in Acts 10 that all foods were now acceptable for eating. However, when Peter's Jewish friends came down from Jerusalem Peter refused to eat with the Gentiles. In confronting Peter, Paul argued that the whole Judaistic system has been destroyed and it is a sin to build it again. (v.18) Furthermore, Paul asserts that he is dead to the law. (v.19) and the whole concept of grace is opposed to the idea of righteousness by the law. (v.21)

3. Paul proves his point by asking four rhetorical questions in Chapter 3:1-5. The answer to each of these questions is obvious and indisputable, but they prove that the Galatians were

saved by faith without the works of the Law.

4. Paul proves his point by the example of Abraham's faith. (3:6-14)

5. Paul proves his point by demonstrating the glaring contrast between the law and the gospel. (3:9, 10)

Those under the gospel are called "they which be of faith." Those who are under the law are called "as many as are of the works of the law." These are two separate groups and each group has a different end result. Those of the works of the law are cursed. (v.10) Those of faith are blessed. (v.9) The law came through Moses but the promise came through Abraham. (v.8) Moses represents the Covenant of Law, but Abraham represents the Covenant of Promise (grace).

A little history of mankind.

Adam sinned and a curse came upon mankind. In Gen.3:15 we have the first promise of the gospel. This is sometimes called the "protoevangelium." It is the first promise of the gospel. Interestingly, this first promise of a Savior was preached to Satan. (See Gen.3:14)

The first recorded promise of the gospel to man was the promise to Abraham in Gen. 12. God told Abraham to get out of Babylon, out of idolatry, away from his family. So, when Abraham got to Canaan, God gave him promises. He promised Abraham a land and he promised that a nation would arise from him.

In Genesis 15, Abraham was 86 years old and God repeats his promise of descendants. Abraham believed God and God counted it to him for righteousness.

In Genesis 17, Abraham was circumcised: This shows that circumcision was not a requirement of salvation, but rather a sign or seal of it.

In Genesis 21, Isaac was finally born to Abraham and Sarah and God renewed his promise through Isaac. (v.18)

This promise to Abraham, that he would have a descendant through whom the whole world would be blessed is described in Gal.3:8. It is called the preaching of the gospel. So, way back then, 2000 years before Christ actually came, God spoke to Abraham and said, "The whole world is going to be blessed through your seed." This is the protogospel. It is the gospel promise. Now, the gospel was realized when Christ actually came.

The promise of the gospel was preached to Abraham and the promise was that all families of the earth would be blessed. The fulfillment of the gospel promise was when Christ came and died and rose again and then the Holy Spirit was given to apply salvation to the hearts of men.

This promise of Jesus Christ that was preached to Abraham is mentioned in the New Testament.

But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again;

Acts 13:30-33

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

Romans 1:1, 2

Now this gospel promise to Abraham was in the nature of a covenant. It was a one-sided covenant. God made the promises and Abraham promised nothing in return. God had Abraham divide animals in half. Then God put Abraham to sleep and God walked through the divided halves of the animals and ratified the covenant.

Even in man's covenants, when it is confirmed it cannot be undone (Gal.3:15)

Parties can't disavow a contract after it is signed. Contracts don't work that way. So, even a man's contract cannot

be altered.

Example: What if someone buys a house and he agrees to pay \$2000.00 a month to the mortgage company. Then after a few months he decides that he really can't afford \$2,000 per month. So he writes a letter to the mortgage company and informs that he will be reducing his payment to \$1000.00 per month starting with the next payment.

God's Covenant was made to Abraham's seed (v.16)

Some of the promises that were made to Abraham were made to him and his collective seed. He told Abraham to look up at the stars and that God would give him a seed as numerous as the stars.

But the gospel promise was that God would give Abraham a seed – Jesus Christ. And through that one seed all families of the earth would be blessed.

So, the history of man starts with a curse and then, with Abraham, we have a covenant of promise. It is a promise of the gospel blessing.

The Law came 430 years later and could not disannul the promise to Abraham

Remember that a valid covenant cannot be broken and when the Mosaic Law came along it had no power to break the promise to Abraham.

The Mosaic Law was never intended as a substitute for the promise to Abraham. In fact, by all appearances, the Law seemed to work at counter-purposes to the promise. God promised blessing through Abraham and then sent a system that worked a curse.

But the point of verse 17 is that the Law did not undo the Promise. The promise of the gospel ran right on through even though the Law was added temporarily for a short time.

The Law is not a system of inheritance. The Law is a

works system where you get what you earn. But the promise to Abraham is an inheritance. It is a pure gift that is given by the Testator to his heirs. The promise is not by law and the law is not by promise. They are two mutually exclusive systems.