

## Doctrinal: Defense of the Gospel

### *Galatians 3 - 4*

**Galatians 3-4.** The general subject of ch.3-4 is defense of the gospel, showing that justification is not by the law. Chapter 3 lays out the doctrinal side of things (our standing), and it presents the Christian's connection with Abraham and his seed. This is *paternal* side of things, and you will notice that fathers are mentioned. In ch.4 mothers are mentioned a number of times, and it presents the *maternal* side of things; the moral results of the Galatians' error, and Paul's appeals to their hearts.

**The Principles of Faith and Promise vs. the Law.** In the first half of ch.3 Paul looking at man's side of salvation. He shows that justification is by faith alone, in contrast to the law. The *principle of faith* is highlighted in the first half of the chapter. From v.15 and forward, Paul looks at God's side, and highlights the sovereign *principle of promise* in contrast to the law. Therefore, in vv.1-14 the subject is faith as opposed to law, and in vv.15-29 the subject is God's sovereignty as opposed to law.

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## Argument from the Galatians' Experience: Five Questions (3:1-5)

The first argument that Paul brings forward is that of the Galatians' past. They had been truly converted, and it was by faith that they were justified, not by law. They were Gentiles

worshipping dumb idols, and they were saved through the preaching of the gospel, called *“the report of faith”*. In total, five rhetorical questions are asked. In vv.1-2, the questions serve to show that justification is not by law-keeping. In vv.3-5, the questions serve to show that the Christian life is not lived through law-keeping.

### CHAPTER 3

¶ *O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you; to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified among you?* **v.1 Question #1.** This is some of the strongest language ever spoken to Christians. Paul calls them *“senseless”*. Someone had cast a spell on them... and that *“who”* is singular, possibly referring to Satan. They had been bewitched all the while having portrayed before their very eyes the crucified Christ. Not that Christ had been crucified in Galatia, but that Paul had so consistently preached Christ crucified that they were as good as eyewitnesses. It was an incredible thing (a dishonor to Christ, really) that, while in view of the cross, the Galatians had been persuaded that salvation is by works.

**2** *This only I wish to learn of you, Have ye received the Spirit on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith?* **v.2 Question #2.** Chapter 2 closed with the subject of life; the life of the Son of God given to the believer. But chapter 3 deals with the Spirit of God. It is important to distinguish the life itself (desires, motives, capacity) from the indwelling of the Spirit, which is the power of Divine life. The sealing of the Spirit occurs after a person believes the gospel (Eph. 1:13), *“the report of faith”*... it has nothing at all to do with works! Paul had brought them the gospel and he hadn't insisted on keeping the law. This proves that this error had been added afterwards. He is diagnosing when the problem started.

**3** *Are ye so senseless? having begun in Spirit, are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?* **v.3 Question #3.** The Judaizers were teaching that people needed to be saved through the gospel, but that they needed to keep the law in order to be *“perfected”*, or to reach full-growth. According to them, to *“believe”* was only Part A, and to be *“zealous of the law”* was Part B (Acts 21:20). This was totally contrary to scripture. Law-keeping is through the energy of the flesh, which is in complete opposition to the energy of the Spirit. It was *“senseless”* to think God would start the process of salvation through one energy (the Spirit), and switch mid-stream to another (the flesh). Spiritual growth is not accomplished through the efforts of the flesh.

**4** *Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if indeed also in vain?* **v.4 Question #4.** When the Galatians were converted they began to suffer persecution for the name of Christ. Chiefly this persecution came against them from Jews who were opposed to Christianity. If

the false doctrine they had slipped into was true, then they were essentially admitting that the Jews were right to persecute them, and all the Galatians had suffered was a waste (see Galatians 5:11).

**5** He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, *is it on the principle of works of law, or of the report of faith?* **v.5 Question #5.** Next Paul refers to himself, and his own ministry among the Galatians. Paul was the one who ministered the Spirit to them, and worked miracles among them. He could testify that his own work was not on the principle of the works of law. When he was Saul of Tarsus, as a Pharisee and an expert in the law, he never did a miracle. That ministry was only given to Paul consequent on his conversion, after he believed “*the report of faith*”. But though Paul speaks of himself, the principle applies to all Christian ministry. Our service for the Lord after conversion is not by law keeping, but by faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact, nothing in true Christianity is done on the principle of law. The Galatians had missed the mark.

## Argument from the Life of Abraham: His Justification (3:6-9)

**Abraham.** Frequently, when referring to justification, the Spirit uses the life of Abraham to explain or defend the truth of justification. We have this in Romans 4, Galatians 3, and James 2. In Romans and Galatians it is “*justification before God*” (Gal. 3:11), and in James it is before men. Abraham is a great example of justification because we have an express statement from God that he believed God, and it was declared righteous by God (Gen. 15:6). Here in Galatians, there are two primary questions that we must ask about Abraham’s justification. *How* was Abraham justified? The answer to this question shows that justification is by faith alone. *When* was Abraham justified? The answer to this question shows that justification has nothing to do with the Law or circumcision. A third question brings the issue down to the present time. *What* is the mode of justification for all of Abraham’s spiritual heirs? The answer to this question shows that justification is by faith according to the promise.

**6** Even as “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” [Gen. 15:6] **v.6** The Judaizers tended to appeal to Abraham, a prominent figure in Israel’s history, and the one who was first given the rite of circumcision. But Paul appeals to Abraham, not as the father of circumcision, but as the father of faith. In doing so, Paul takes the “star

witness" put forward by the legalists, and shows him to be a witness in defense of the gospel! When it comes to justification, faith is the vehicle. This was the case with Abraham. In the same verse that records Abraham's justification we are given the means of his justification; "*Abraham believed God*". It is faith alone through which man can be justified before God. What is faith? Faith is simply believing God from the heart (John 3:33). Justification is when God takes a man who is not righteous (none are) but has faith, and declares him righteous in His sight. [Read more...](#) The Judaizers claimed that the inward blessing (justification) had to come through the outward form (circumcision). Paul shows that the inward blessing came through a work of heart (faith), not of the flesh. The outward seal or sign of circumcision *followed* what was already an inward reality.

7 Know then that they that are on the principle of faith, these are Abraham's sons; 8 and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations on the principle of faith, announced beforehand the glad tidings to Abraham: "In thee all the nations shall be blessed." [Gen. 12:3] vv.7-8 Paul then shows that God promised Abraham that the nations would be blessed in association with him. When this promise was made, circumcision was totally unknown. Actually, Abraham was still in idolatry when God first spoke to him (Josh. 24). The mode of Abraham's justification therefore is the same as the Gentiles. It isn't that the Gentiles must become Jews, or be circumcised, in order to be justified. No, they would be justified as Gentiles on the principle of faith, just like Abraham. In that way, Gentiles today can become the sons of Abraham, even though they do not partake in Jewish ceremonies, and do not have Abraham's blood in their veins. Not all of the Judaizers could prove their genealogy (although Paul could, Phil. 3:5), and therefore they clung tightly to circumcision. But Paul shows here that "*faith*", not bloodline or circumcision is the believer's connection to Abraham. All those of faith are the spiritual heirs of Abraham, in this sense that they are justified by faith. Jewish believers as well as Gentiles believers are "*sons*" of Abraham. God has only ever had *one* principle of justification... that is the principle of faith. Furthermore, this promise reveals the gracious intention of God.

The grace of God is too great to be limited to just one nation. It goes out to "*all nations*".<sup>1</sup>

Also, when was Abraham justified? It was before the law was given. The scripture foresaw or anticipated (it surely is living) that God would bless the nations through faith, and ahead of time gave that good news to Abraham. God allowed 13 years of separation between Abraham's justification and the instructions for circumcision, and a space of 430 years before the giving of the law! The gospel of justification by faith was announced to Abraham, therefore it (and not the law) was God's purpose.

**9** So that they who are on the principle of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. **v.9** Paul gives a summary of the above argument. Justification is extended to the Christian on the same principle that it was to Abraham, by faith and not by law. The blessing of Abraham is sovereign grace, and the vehicle by which that blessing comes is faith in what God has spoken.

## Argument from the Very Nature of the Law (3:10-14)

**vv.10-14** Four arguments drawn from the Old Testament scriptures that show the folly of believing justification is by the law:

1. The law results in a *curse* (v.10)
2. The law isn't on the correct *principle* for justification (vv.11-12)
3. It took the *death of Christ* to deliver the believer from the law (v.13)
4. The *promise of the Spirit* can only be received through faith (v.14)

**10** For as many as are on the principle of works of law are under curse. For it is written, "Cursed is every one who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" [Deut. 27:26] **v.10 Law-keeping Results in a Curse.** The law requires complete obedience on even the smallest point of the law, under threat of curse. No man can keep the law, so everyone on the law principle is under its curse (James 2:10). But Paul states a broader principle: not 'as many as *break* the law' but "*as many as are on the principle of works of law*" are under the curse. The curse of the law is especially applicable to Israel, but any who attempt to stand on legal ground thereby fall under the curse. Why? because we have the flesh within us. Cain took the legal approach, coming to God on the basis of his own works. God did not accept Cain or his offering because he came on the wrong basis. Cain's approach led to anger, bitterness, murder, and finally a curse. Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and built a system in independence from God.

**11** but that by law no one is justified with God is evident, because "The just shall live on the principle of faith;" [Hab. 2:4] **12** but the law is not on the principle of faith; but, "He that shall have done these things shall live by them." [Lev. 18:5] **vv.11-12 Law-keeping is on the wrong principle.** The Old Testament proves that God has always justified on the principle of faith (v.11) and since the law is on the principle of works, not faith (v.12), it can

never be used to justify anyone. The law is not on the principle of faith because it doesn't require faith to follow a list of rules. The contrast is between life-through-faith and life-through-works. The quotation is from Hab. 2:4 (quoted also in Rom. 1:17 and Heb. 10:38) each with a different emphasis. This is the scripture that came home powerfully to Martin Luther on the steps of the [Scala Sancta](#), when God showed him that salvation was by grace through faith alone. Habakkuk lived in a day when all things were outwardly in ruins. The fact that Israel had not kept the law was evident. Then God told Habakkuk that the just really lived on the principle of faith, trusting in the mercy and wisdom of God. Faith is the only principle a soul can take, because the principle of law is a lost cause.

**Faith or Law: the Right Principle for Justification.** You cannot pick up a slip of paper with the largest magnet in the world because, for that material, magnetism is the wrong principle. You cannot pick up a steel paper clip with static electricity because, for that material, it is the wrong principle. But on the other hand, a magnet can pick up a paper clip and static electricity can pick up a slip of paper. Why? because those are the correct principles applied! The same is true of justification. Works of law will never succeed in justifying a person because God has told us that the law is the *wrong principle*. Instead faith - simple faith - is what justifies a person, because that is the principle on which God works. In Romans 4 Paul backs up this claim with the support of the Old Testament scriptures, showing that even in the Old Testament God has *always* justified by faith.

	Magnetism	Static Electricity
Slip of paper	wrong principle	right principle
Steel paper clip	right principle	wrong principle

**13** Christ has redeemed us [Jews] out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us [Jews], (for it is written, "Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree,") [Deut. 21:23] **v.13**  
**Law-keeping spurns the cross.** Finally, Paul shows that the curse of the broken law required the crucifixion and cursing of the Christ to deliver the believing Jews, both now and in the future, from under the curse of a broken law. To go back to law-keeping is to spurn that tremendous work. The greatest proof of the law's authority is when its sentence is carried out. God didn't "pull the plug", so to speak, on the law, when Israel failed to keep it. The law was still in force (Rom. 3:31). The only way to escape the law is through death; i.e. the law's ultimate penalty. Christ had to go into death to deliver those who were under the curse of a broken law. At the same time this shows the triumph of grace in spite of sin. Grace bore the curse that the law brought. The language is very strong: Christ was "*made a curse*"... similar wording to "*made sin for us*" (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ Himself was made to be



the object of God's wrath for three hours... how awful! The curse of the law had to be removed before the floodgates of blessing could be opened to Gentile as well as Jew (v.14).

**14** that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we [Jews + Gentiles] might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. **v.14 Conclusion.** Christ having taken the barrier of the curse and exhausted it at the cross, now the promise of blessing can flow through Christ as a channel, for the blessing of Jew and Gentile. The work of Christ is the basis of justification for both Jew and Gentile. Faith is the vehicle of justification for both as well. Now, both Jew and Gentile can receive "*the promise of the Spirit*". The Spirit of God is the subject of God's promises in the Old Testament (John 7:38). All the promises of blessing in the Old Testament (disease removed, famine eliminated, universal peace) were wrapped up with the Spirit being poured out. The Spirit was promised to "all flesh" in the Millennium (Joel 2:28), but believers of the present dispensation have "pre-trusted" (Eph. 1:12-13), and so have received the Spirit in a greater way even than the saints of the Millennial earth. Also, the Spirit was promised by Jesus (John 7:39, Acts 2:33, Matt. 3:11), and is called "*the promise of the Father*" (Acts 1:4-5). Those who pre-trust before the Millennial kingdom receive the earnest of the Spirit, which is the indwelling of the Spirit. In Ephesians and other places the results of the Spirit being given are expanded on. We don't read of "*one body*" by the Spirit in Galatians (collective blessing), but we do read that the Spirit becomes in us the "*Spirit of sonship*" (individual blessing). Note: the "*blessing of Abraham*" is sovereign grace through faith. This verse cannot rightly be used by Christians to claim Israel's earthly blessings for the Church, as Covenant Theologians do. How foolish for the Gentile Galatians to seek blessing on the ground of the law, which only brought a curse upon the Jews!

## Argument from God's Dispensational Ways (3:15 - 4:7)

**The Principle of Promise.** Up to this point in the chapter, Paul has been looking at man's side of salvation; i.e. showing that justification is by faith alone, in contrast to the law. From v.15 and forward, Paul looks at God's side, and highlights the sovereign *principle of promise* in contrast to the law. Promise has always been by grace. Law was never part of it. Very deep and questions are addressed in this section. How can we reconcile the law with the promises of God? Does the law set aside the sovereign promises of God? Why was the law originally given? How does the position and blessings of New Testament saints compare

with those of the Old?

## Four Reasons why the Law cannot set aside Promise (3:15-18)

**Paul's use of the Promises.** William Kelly remarked on the difficulty of catching the point of the Apostle's argument in Galatians 3. Numerous promises were addressed to Abraham and his family in Gen. 12:2,3,7; 13:13-17; 15:18-21; 17:1-14; 22:17,18. Some of these promises apply to the natural seed of Abraham (Israel). But the promise to Israel is not what forms the subject matter of Gal. 3. In Gal. 3:17 Paul uses only two verses:

- Promises to Abraham - Gen. 12:3 "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"
- Promises to Isaac/Christ - Gen. 22:18 "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"

**Gentile blessing.** Both Gen. 12:3 and Gen. 22:18 speak of the millennial blessing of the *Gentiles*, not the Jews. The *Jewish* blessing, as to the land, power over enemies, etc. is to a *numerous* seed (Gen. 22:17), as the stars and the sand. But in the blessing of the *nations*, not a word of a multiplied seed appears. The Spirit, in recording the promises of Gentile blessing, carefully restricted them to Abraham and to his seed *alone*, because His eye was really on Christ, the true and sole seed of promise.<sup>23</sup> It is good to remember that the promises concerning Gentile blessing are *millennial*, when the Gentiles in that day shall be the tail and not the head. But by our association with Christ at the *present time*, we are blessed with Abraham on the principle of faith, through which blessing accrues in all ages. Christian blessing rise far higher than Millennial blessings, but they are all on the principle of faith, though God's promise to Christ.

**Post-Resurrection.** When Isaac had been offered up (in figure) and raised from the dead (in figure), the promises made to Abraham and his seed were confirmed of God in (or, they settled on) Christ, the true "seed" of Gen. 22:18. It does not say "to thy seed" before Moriah, but after! Here is the significance: while Christ was upon the earth, He was under law Himself (Gal. 4:4). But having gone into death because of the law's curse, and having risen from the dead, Christ has nothing to do with law (Rom. 6:10). It is to a risen Christ that the promise is confirmed! As Christians, we are associated with a *risen* Christ. Christ's death and resurrection is our foundation, not His keeping the commandments. All our blessings are "in Christ" risen from the dead.

**Note:** Covenant theologians try to equate "Christ" here in Gal. 3 with "the Christ" (1 Cor.



12:12) because then they can say that the church existed in Gen. 22. William Kelly said regarding this: "I must decidedly adhere to the conviction that "Christ" is here to be understood personally, and not mystically."

¶ **15** Brethren, (I speak according to man,) even man's confirmed covenant no one sets aside, or adds other dispositions to. **v.15** Paul apologizes for even comparing God's ways with man's, see Rom. 6:19. Even a human Covenant, if confirmed, cannot be modified or cancelled. You cannot amend or add to the terms of a confirmed (signed) agreement after the fact. How much surer then is a Divine promise! No Jew would disagree. Jehovah is the God who cannot lie.

**16** But to Abraham were the promises addressed, and to his seed: he does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "And to thy seed"; [Gen. 22:18] which is Christ. **v.16** In Gen. 12:3 (quoted in v.8) we find the promise made to Abraham alone. But in Gen. 22:17-18 after Moriah, which represents Christ's death as a burnt offering and His resurrection, the promise was confirmed with an oath (the second of two immutable things, Heb. 6:14). But notice that Paul is looking at Gen. 22:18, not v.17. He sees that the promise of blessing to Gentiles was made in view of a resurrected Isaac - the seed (singular) - a type of Christ! The promised were really made to Christ alone. How could God negate a confirmed promise to Christ, especially after the sweet savor of the burnt offering was accepted, and the resurrection of Christ by the glory of the Father had taken place? In the English the word 'seed' could be singular or plural depending on how it is used. This makes it hard to catch Paul's point. But in Greek the word for 'seed' is singular only. Thus his point becomes clear.

**17** Now I say this, A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years after, does not annul, so as to make the promise of no effect. **v.17** The promise was confirmed 430 years before the law was given: therefore it cannot be annulled by conditions that followed. If I promised you today that I would gift you my car, but then added a condition later that you pay \$1000 for it, I cannot righteously go back on my word.<sup>4</sup> God allowed 430 years of separation between the unconditional promise and the conditions of law. The promises to Abraham were simply "I will bless thee...", but to Israel it was "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be..." (Exodus 19:5), etc. The words "in Christ" should not be in the text. Covenant theologians would like to say Abraham was part of the Church because he was "in Christ". This is a false assertion; Abraham was a Jew.

**18** For if the inheritance be on the principle of law, it is no longer on the principle of promise; but God gave it in grace to Abraham by promise. **v.18** Even if you could change the

date of the promise, and rescind God's confirmation to Christ, there is still another problem. If the law were allowed to modify the original promise, it would change the principle on which God was acting; an impossible thing! It would lower God's actions from the principle of sovereign, unconditional promise down to the principle of law. This simply cannot be. God's house is not divided; His principles are not set against each other. The promise was given "*in grace*" to Abraham. That is, the basis of God's promises is not man's faithfulness, but God's sovereign goodness. Promise has always been by grace. Law was never part of it. To bring in the law as a means of attaining God's promises is to despise grace. Like Jacob, we think we must do something to earn God's favor. Legality tries to make God *owe* us something out of debt, rather than accept His free *gift*. It comes down to pride. We are ignorant of our own *sinfulness*, and want to feel like we *deserve* the blessing of God.

**vv.15-18** Four reasons why the law with its conditional promises cannot amend or annul the unconditional promise:

1. The covenant was confirmed (by God).
2. The covenant was confirmed to Christ.
3. The confirming of the promise predates the law by 430 yrs.
4. The law and promise are totally different principles.

## **The Advantage of Promise over Law: It Depends on God Alone (3:19-20)**

**vv.19-22** Contrary to common belief, God did not give the law to improve the flesh or to restrain evil. God never wavered in his intention to fulfill the promises, but because Israel transgressed (v.19), to be righteous God had to ensure Israel and all men would understand it was not by *their* faithfulness but only *God's* grace. Man is so bold that he would claim the fulfillment of unconditional promises as earned through his own efforts. Sin was not imputed without law. So God proposed the law, that transgressions might be manifested. With the law, God started counting sins. At this time Israel ought to have seen their inability and the truth of v.21 and fallen back on the unconditional promises in God's sovereign grace. Instead they said, "we can do it all". In human pride, they totally misused point. Instead, they misused the law, and fell under its curse (v.10). In spite of this, the law has done its job (v.22a) and now those who inherit the blessing by faith (v.22b) do so on the ground of God's grace alone.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Moral Law**

- It is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12)
- God never put Gentiles under it (Rom. 2:14; Gal. 4:3-5)
- It was given to manifest man's sinful condition (Gal. 3:19, Rom. 5:20).
- It doesn't apply to the righteous, but the lawless (1 Tim. 1:9, 10).
- It could not give life, so righteousness could not come by it (Gal. 3:21)
- Being under the law brings a curse to man (Gal. 3:10)
- Righteousness of the law is on a totally different principle than the righteousness by faith (Rom. 10:5-10).
- Those once under it as Jews, were, if Christians, dead to it by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4).

**Three senses of "law".** It is important to distinguish between:

- *Law* (a principle) - God's intention was to manifest transgression and convict of sin. as a principle, it is a ministry of death and condemnation (II Cor. 3), useful only to manifest man's true moral condition.
- *The Law* (a dispensation) - it was a civil/religious system to repress grosser evils, in which God was king of the country and people, to separate the people from heathenism... a schoolmaster up to the time of Christ, also known as Judaism.
- *The Law* (a revelation from God) - the whole of the Old Testament writings is called "the law", although the term is often applied to just the Torah. The law as referring to the scriptures is distinguished from the law principle in Gal. 4:21; *"Tell me, ye who are desirous of being under law, do ye not listen to the law?"*

**19a Why then the law?** It was added for the sake of transgressions, until the seed came to whom the promise was made, **v.19a** This is the natural question of the Jewish mind. Since the law is useless for justification, and since the promises cannot be earned through keeping it, why ever would God give the law? Remember that Israel put themselves under the law (Ex. 19). But even still, why did God propose the law to them? The specific reason is: *"because of the transgressions"*. God gave the law to manifest man's true moral condition. The law was not given to *restrain* transgressions, but to *manifest* them. Before the law, sins were not imputed (Rom. 5:13). Sin against a known commandment is transgression, and therefore a law would convert sins into transgressions, and thereby bring man's state to an undeniable conclusion (Rom. 5:20). Note that God was not inducing man to sin more by giving the law... far be the thought! But He desired to make man more dependent on Him, rather than on the strength of the flesh. That is why the law was given; to show man how bad he really was. The specific duration of the dispensation of law was *"until the Seed came"*. God's purpose in giving the law has been fulfilled, and it is NOT His desire that Christians should put themselves under it. The Seed has come! Now we are under grace,

not law (Rom. 6:14). We can use the law in the gospel, for this is a “*lawful*” use of it (1 Tim. 1:8). But the law is NOT to be used as a rule of life. This is a great reason why understanding [dispensational truth](#) is important. If we do not see the purpose of the law, and that the purpose has been fulfilled, we might make a huge mistake by putting ourselves under law.

**19b** ordained through angels in *the* hand of a mediator. **20** But a mediator is not of one, but God is one. **vv.19b-20** The law implied a distance between man and God. *Angels* were Jehovah’s representation in the Old Testament (Acts 7:53). God used angels, who are really just servants (Heb. 1:14), to administer the law. (When we come to ch.4, we find that God sent *His Son* to redeem the Jews from the law.) There were four levels with the law: God, Angels, Moses, Israel. But in God’s promise to Abraham it was just God speaking directly. With the law there was a *mediator*, which of course was Moses, for “*the law came by Moses*” (John 1:17). In a covenant such as the law, a mediator is required because there are two parties and the outcome depends on both. But with the principle of promise, there is only one party; “*God is one*”. The promise is independent of man’s responsibility, and therein is its strength! The strength of the promise is that it depends solely on God. God gives it, Christ receives it, and because God is one, man’s responsibility doesn’t factor into it at all. Note that the Spirit implies the idea of a mediator differently here than in 1 Tim. 2:5.

## The Limited Purpose of the Dispensation of Law (3:21-22)

¶ **21** *Is then the law against the promises of God? Far be the thought. For if a law had been given able to quicken, then indeed righteousness were on the principle of law; 22* but the scripture has shut up all things under sin, that the promise, on the principle of faith of Jesus Christ, should be given to those that believe. **vv.21-22** Now we get a second question. The law didn’t contradict promise in grace. The law has a different purpose altogether. It was never intended to give life or righteousness. It needs to be applied the way God intended (see v.22). The law was never able to make a man righteous. If the Mosaic law couldn’t accomplish that, no law ever will! The law came seeking or requiring. Grace comes *giving* promises. Man’s need is for a new life and nature, because he has a root of sin. The law exposes the sin, but cannot quicken. The office of quickening is reserved for the Spirit of God (John 3:5). But the law doesn’t militate against the promise. God has stayed consistent throughout all dispensations. The proper use of the law is to hear what it says. We need to take the great lesson of the law, the moral outcome of it, that all are “*shut up in sin*”. But having learned that great lesson, we must abandon the law as our rule of life, and turn to

Jesus Christ in faith for salvation!

## Two Figures for the Law: A Prison Guard & A Schoolmaster (vv.23-26)

**23** But before faith came, we [Jews] were guarded under law, shut up [with a view] to faith which was about to be revealed. **v.23** The figure of a *prison guard* is first used. The law showed Israel that God required righteousness from man, but didn't give them the means to produce righteousness. So it froze them in that position until faith came; meanwhile the ordinances in the law kept them apart from the nations. *Faith* here refers to the Christian faith.... not personal faith, because Old Testament saints had personal faith (Heb. 11:5-6), but they were still guarded under law. The Christian faith came after the death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ and the descent of the Spirit.

**24** So that the law has been our tutor up to Christ, that we [Jews] might be justified on the principle of faith. **v.24** The figure of a *schoolmaster* is next used. The law can never lead us to Christ; only grace can do that. Apparently these Judaizing teachers had not been good students of law, for they had not learned its two great lessons. The law teaches us about (1) God's holiness and (2) man's depravity, but even in those things it gave but a partial understanding. Both of those truths are seen fully at Calvary.

**25** But, faith having come, we [Jews] are no longer under a tutor; **26** for ye [Jews + Gentiles] are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus. **vv.25-26** School is out of session! We have been taken from being children under a schoolmaster and placed directly into the presence of God as sons of the Father! The Judaizers were self-righteously staying after class, missing out on the greatest individual Christian privilege: sonship. Sonship means "Son-place". This blessed privilege is expanded on in ch.4.

So near so very near to God,  
I cannot nearer be;  
for in the person of his son,  
I am as near as he.<sup>6</sup>

## Christians Have Been Brought into an Entirely New Sphere (vv.27-29)

**27** For ye [Jews + Gentiles], as many as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ. **v.27** Paul references [Christian baptism](#), which saves us outwardly, and puts us into the Christian profession. We have “died” out of the old sphere where national distinctions mattered. We are baptized “unto” Christ. “In Christ” is our standing before God. Here baptism puts Christ on us as a uniform, marking us as a Christian, and thus erasing other markings (v.28). After you are a son of God it doesn’t matter if you were a Jew or Gentile, etc. before you were saved.

**28** There is no Jew nor Greek; there is no bondman nor freeman; there is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus: **v.28 New Creation.** Our new standing “in Christ” is what has erased those distinction before God. None of those natural things gave us righteousness, and none of them are relevant in the New Creation. [Read more...](#) God only sees “one kind” now; Christ is all that matters. This doesn’t make void scriptures that call for a distinction between the sexes, such as 1 Tim. 2, or reverence of the wife for her husband, such as Eph. 5. Also, it is not the oneness of the body of Christ, but the oneness of the new creation. There are three onenesses in scripture. There is the oneness of the family (e.g. John 17), there is the oneness of the body (e.g. 1 Cor. 12), and there is oneness of kind in new creation (e.g. Gal. 3, Hebrews 2).

**29** but if “ye” are of Christ, then ye are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise. **v.29** Further, we have been brought into a new race “of Christ” (see Rom. 5). Earlier, Paul said that Abraham’s seed was singular, Christ alone (v.16). Now he says that we believers are Abraham’s seed. How does that figure? The promise to Abraham was confirmed to Christ, and therefore as part of Christ’s race, we are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise. This shows that it is only by *faith* in Christ that a person can really be Abraham’s seed. What do we inherit? Justification by grace. We cannot lay claim to the earthly promises made to Israel and deny them a future in the Millennium, which is what Covenant Theology does.

## The Different States Produced by Law and Grace: Old and New Testament Saints (4:1-7)

**Galatians 4.** While ch.3 was *paternal* (having to do with our standing), ch.4 is more the



*maternal* side of things, where the practical carrying out of the doctrine is emphasized. Here it is the Christian's connection with Sarah - not Abraham. The moral results of the doctrinal error are brought out, such as the infighting among the Galatians, and their coldness toward Paul. All together, seven mothers are mentioned: Mary (v.4), Paul (v.19), Sarah (v.22), Hagar (v.22), Jerusalem below (v.25), Jerusalem above (v.26), and the Spirit of God (v.29). Chapter 4 starts and ends with an allegory. The first is an illustration emphasizes the blessedness of the Christian position in contrast to the law. The final allegory emphasizes the effect of being under law, and the total incompatibility between those under law and those under grace.

## **An Illustration of a Child in a Family of Nobility (vv.1-2)**

### **CHAPTER 4**

¶ Now I say, As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a bondman, though he be lord of all; 2 but he is under guardians and stewards until the period fixed by the father. **vv.1-2** Paul gives an illustration to explain the position of Old Testament saints under the law. At a very young age, children of nobility are no different than a servant, because both are without intelligence or status. Both are excluded from important family decisions, and both need to be told what to do. The child has a better outlook than a servant, because he is an heir of the estate, but being under a legal age, the child enjoys none of the benefits of his nobility. This illustration defines Paul's use of the word "children" in this chapter. It is in the diminutive sense; the force of the word is 'infant'. An infant is incapable of thinking for himself, or of comprehending his Father's plans. In this way, a child is no different from a bondman. The word "children" in other places, such as Rom. 8 and 1 John 3, has a different sense. There we are viewed as children in the sense of relationship - a different use of the word. In Galatians 4 "children" refers the condition of a Jew under the law (not indwelt by the Spirit), but elsewhere "children" refers to those who are justified (indwelt by the Spirit). "Children" in Galatians 4 is in contrast with "sonship" or "adoption". Sonship is connected with position, intelligence, and dignity. When a person is immature (a child) they need constant supervision, much the way the law was a schoolmaster to the Old Testament saints; i.e. "*guardians and stewards*". The Jews in the Old Testament were in the position of heirs of the coming kingdom. They had a bright and blessed future according to the prophecies, but they were in a state of immaturity. The "*time appointed*" is the coming of age. In Judaism, this would be when the child had their bar-mitzvah or bat-mitzvah. It was the time when children were given a part in the family business, given responsibility, and allowed to share in adult conversation.

## Application of the Illustration: Distinctions between Old and New Testament Saints (vv.3-7)

**3** So we [Jews] also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the principles of the world; **v.3 Bondage Under Law.** This illustrates the difference in position of Old and New Testament saints. Jews under law were in bondage. They had the spirit of servanthip. Christianity elevates a believer to the position of a son. Gentiles went straight to being sons (see v.6), without ever being under the law! The Jews were in bondage in that they knew God's holy requirements but had no power for perform. They always had some measure of uncertainty as to their acceptance before God. They were really in bondage under the elements (principles) of the world. These would be the principles of a natural religion; and such is Judaism. Note that in v.9 Pagan idolatry is called the "*weak and beggarly principles*", and in Col. 2:8 we find philosophy is also after "*the rudiments of the world*". The elements of the world are principles suited to to "*a worldly sanctuary*" (Heb. 9:1), and to those who are in a state of infancy. Even the most blessed of Old Testament saints, such as John the Baptist, was still in the state of infancy.

**4** but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, **5** that he might redeem those under law [Jews], that we [Jews] might receive sonship. **vv.4-5 The Sending of the Son.** The Old Testament saints didn't have the full revelation of God (the Father and the Son, etc.). It was consequent upon *the incarnation*. Christ came into the place in which man was found. If He hadn't "*come of woman*", there would be no hope for any child of Adam. If he hadn't "*come under law*", there would be no hope for the Jews, or of deliverance from law. He became man under law, and perfectly kept it. Hence the law had no claim against Him. He could then accomplish redemption by standing in the place of others who are under the law's curse. The "*fulness of time*" refers to the 4000 years... the end of man's probationary period, the end of forty centuries of testing. There was no understanding in the Old Testament of the blessed Father/Son relationship. It could not be seen, much less enjoyed, until God sent forth His Son. Nor had redemption been accomplished yet. The work of redemption was consequent upon *the death* of Christ, which is the foundation for sonship. Gentiles don't need to be redeemed from under law, but they do need to be redeemed. God sent His Son, not only to deliver those in bondage to the law, but to give them the adoption of sons.

### Sonship, or Adoption.

In Greek, the word 'huiiothesian' means 'the place of a son'. It is translated into English as "sonship" or "adoption". Sonship is a privilege that Christians are given because they are

justified and stand in Christ's place before God. Sonship is not the same thing as coming into God's family. Due to the modern use of word 'adoption', the original sense of sonship has been lost for many believers. As we see in Galatians 4:1-7, the child becomes a son, showing that sonship has to do with a special status or relationship in the family. We enter God's family by new birth, and this makes us children of God. But adoption gives us a new status within the family. For an example of Jewish adoption, see Gen. 48:5 where Jacob took the sons of Joseph as his own. Ephraim and Manasseh were Jacob's grandsons, but he elevated them to the status of their uncles; "*as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine*". Sonship is the greatest blessing we have as individuals in relation to the Father... there is no higher place than the place of God's Son, and He has given us "the Son's place"!

[Read more...](#)

**6** But because ye [Gentiles] are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our [Jews + Gentiles] hearts, crying, Abba, Father. **v.6 The Spirit of God's Son.** The sending of the Spirit of God is connected with all of our spiritual blessings, especially here the privilege of sonship. Sonship is enjoyed through the indwelling Spirit of God. We know from John 7 that the sending of the Spirit was consequent upon *the ascension*. Old Testament saints could not be sons because the Spirit of God's Son had not been sent. The expression "*we [Jews] might receive*" (v.5) is contrasted with "*ye [Gentiles] are sons*" (v.6). Gentiles are saved in the same way as Jews, but more simply. Jews have much to unlearn; Gentiles have nothing to forsake but their sins. The word "*Abba*" (daddy) denotes intimacy. The name of "*Father*" denotes intelligence. The Spirit has been "*sent out into our hearts*" in the sense of indwelling. This is distinct from the Old Testament saints, on whom that Spirit came at times, moving them from without (like a sailboat). Christians are empowered from within (like a ship with inboard power). The Jews receive the adoption in verse five, and the Gentiles receive the adoption in verse six. In the New Testament, we are given the Spirit of God's Son, which causes us to speak to the Father with the same word that Jesus used in the garden of Gethsemane; "*Abba, Father*" (Mark 14:36).

**7** So thou [Gentile] art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God. **v.7 Heirship.** The Gentiles were not in bondage to the law, but they were in bondage to idolatry. But with the Spirit of God indwelling us, we are no longer servants, but sons of God. And since we are sons, we enter into the full privileges of heirship. The Jews in the Old Testament were infant-heirs, and Gentiles were servants of idols, without any inheritance. But in the New Testament we are sons, and heirs by that relationship! Our inheritance goes beyond that of Old Testament saints; the sphere of blessing is enlarged. All that God possesses now, and what Christ will take in power at His appearing, He will share with His

co-heirs (Eph. 1:11; 3:6). This is what *“the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”* (Eph. 1:18) means. *“In the saints”* tells us the mode in which Christ will possess His inheritance.

**Major Distinctions** between Old and New Testament Saints are given:

1. The full revelation of God in His Trinitarian relationships was not manifest (v.4).
2. The work of the cross had not been accomplished yet (v.5).
3. The Spirit of God had not been sent down, because Jesus was not glorified (v.6).
4. The saints could not enjoy the privilege of sonship.

Eternal ages shall declare  
The riches of Thy grace,  
To those who with Thy Son shall share  
A son’s eternal place.<sup>7</sup>

**Successive appeals.** In the remainder of the chapter, Paul gives a number of appeals to the Galatians, and in the appeals we find three things that legalism does:

- Legalism Undermines Christianity (vv.8-11)
- Legalism Degrades Christian Affections (vv.12-20)
- Legalism Persecutes Grace (vv.21-31)

## Appeal on the grounds that Legalism undermines Christianity (4:8-11)

**Judaism in Christianity is Idolatry.** Paul brings down the hammer on the teaching of the Judaizers. He explains that turning to the law after receiving the light of Christianity is on par with pagan idolatry. Ouch. This must have shocked the Galatians, who thought they were taking a step up. Instead they had fallen into grave error. The law in itself was not idolatrous, but the elements of the law had lost their meaning, except as shadows and types of Christ (Heb. 10:1). Those ordinances pertained to *“a worldly sanctuary”* (Heb. 9:1). To give up the Christian position and turn back to those natural things is idolatry. Ceremony

and ritual do not enhance Christian worship... they spoil it.

¶ **8** But then indeed, not knowing God, ye [Gentiles] were in bondage to those who by nature are not gods; **9** but now, knowing God, but rather being known by God, how do ye turn again to the weak and beggarly principles to which ye desire to be again anew in bondage? **vv.8-9** Even the Gentiles were in bondage, not to the law, but to all kinds of superstitious lore and idolatry. Afterward, they had been set free by the gospel. Paul is marveling at the foolishness of walking back into the same type of bondage. The emphasis is on the word “*again*”. To go back under law of any kind of is to make reverse progress. The bondage of the world is on the same principle as the bondage of the law, only in a different form. The world operates on the principle of works, not grace; e.g. in the world you need to have a *contract* to get paid for your work. Those principles are “*weak and beggarly*”... we have far higher motivations in Christianity. Note that Paul adds “*but rather being known by God*”. Why? It was grace that caused God to reach down to the poor Gentiles. He took an interest in us! To turn towards bondage is to turn away from God; it is to sin against His grace.

**10** Ye observe days and months and times and years. **v.10** This description of the Galatians sounds a lot like Judaized Christianity. That is because Christendom is a vast mixture of Judaism and Christianity. Christians have adopted the worldly practice of observing “*days and months and times and years*”. Properly understood, the ceremonies and holy days of Christendom, which had no foundation in scripture, are really *idolatrous* practices. This not a popular belief, but I believe it is the truth.

**11** I am afraid of you, lest indeed I have laboured in vain as to you. **v.11** Paul’s desire had always been to establish the believers in the liberty of sonship. Now it was in danger of all being wasted. Even in Corinth, with all the moral corruption and division, Paul had confidence in them. But he could not speak this way of the Galatians. In principle they had abandoned the truth of the gospel.

## Appeal on the grounds of Paul’s Relationship with the Galatians (4:12-20)

¶ **12** Be as “I” am , for “I” also am as “ye”, brethren, I beseech you: ye have not at all wronged me. **v.12** “*Be as I am*”, that is, as Paul was in his practice: fully delivered from

legal bondage. *"I am as ye are"*, that is, Paul had the same standing before God as the Galatians, who were not under law. It is good to be established in the truth of *our own standing* before we try to help others with *their state*. The Judaizers had gotten the Galatians to feel upset with Paul, as if he were spurning his Jewish heritage. They said, 'That Paul, he is no better than the Gentiles'. Paul says, 'In speaking that way, you do not offend me'. He was not offended because he had abandoned the ground of fleshly religion. Instead of taking offense, Paul turns the accusation around into an argument in support of the gospel. He could say, 'That's right, I do not view myself any different from a Gentile, and neither should you! Be free of the yoke of bondage like me, because I'm just like you in my standing before God.'

**13** But ye know that in weakness of the flesh I announced the glad tidings to you at the first; **14** and my temptation, which *was* in my flesh, ye did not slight nor reject with contempt; but ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. **15** What then *was* your blessedness? for I bear you witness that, if possible, plucking out your own eyes ye would have given *them* to me. **vv.13-15** Next Paul goes back to their beginning to remind them of their love for him, and to show them how legalism had changed them. He makes reference to some physical sickness - perhaps his eyesight (see Gal. 4:15 and 6:11), or a problem with his speech or appearance. Whatever it was, it would have been distracting from his ministry, because in 2 Cor. 12 Paul begged the Lord three times to remove the infirmity. Any kind of physical deformity would have been repulsive to the Jew (Lev. 21:16-20), but not to the newly saved Galatians. They loved the one who brought the gospel to them. They received Paul as an angel, just as they would have received Christ Jesus. Where was the "blessedness" or happy state the Galatians had enjoyed after their conversion? Now that the Judaizers had come in, everything had changed. We need to be careful that we do not look on the outward appearance of God's servants. Paul had a medical need (most-likely it was poor eyesight), but the hearts of the brethren in Galatia were so warm (pre-legalism) towards the Apostle that, if an eye transplant were possible, they wouldn't have hesitated.

**16** So I have become your enemy in speaking the truth to you? **v.16** The Galatians were now treating Paul as an enemy. It had been less than five years. How could this change have occurred? It was a bi-product of legality. The trend will follow even today. Legal persons often lack grace and sensitivity in their dealings with others. The Judaizers here were the real enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). Paul was telling them the truth; *"faithful are the wounds of a friend"* (Prov. 27:6).

**17** They are not rightly zealous after you, but desire to shut you out *from us*, that ye may be zealous after them. **v.17** The Judaizers had impressed the Galatians with a show of great



devotion, but underneath they had bad motives. First of all, they were skillfully turning them against the apostle. Secondly, they were getting a following and monetary support for themselves. The Judaizers displayed a great amount of zeal (energy) towards the Galatians. Their predecessors, the Pharisees, would “*compass sea and land to make one proselyte*” (Matt. 23:15). They were exhibiting a lot of zeal, but their purpose was to get a following after themselves.<sup>8</sup> Paul addresses this again in ch.6, saying that the Judaizers wanted to “*glory in your flesh*”. They were flattering the Galatians with the goal of getting glory for themselves. It was mutual flattery. This is according to the way the law acts on the flesh.

**18** But *it is right to be zealous at all times in what is right, and not only when I am present with you-* **v.18** The ploy had worked... the Galatians were zealously following the legalists. This should teach us that zeal is not enough. Zeal must be “*according to knowledge*” (Rom. 10:2)... “*have in your virtue, knowledge*” (2 Peter 1:5). We need to be zealous in “*what is right*”. Furthermore, there ought to be consistency in our zeal. We cannot just be zealous when we are around those who want to please the Lord. Paul knew that it was possible for the Galatians to put on a front “*when I am present with you*”. The Philippians are a good example of those who obeyed, not only in Paul’s presence, but “*much more*” in his absence (Phil. 2:12).

**19** *my children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you:* **v.19** Next we have a tender entreaty from the apostle’s heart to theirs. He calls them his “*children*” because legalism had stunted their spiritual growth.<sup>9</sup> He could say of them “*I again travail*”. This shows how much Paul loved them, but also how much work and pain they had caused him. He had agonized over them. Now he was drawing on their heart-strings. It was like going through labor twice for the same baby; once at their conversion, now again over this issue of legalism. Compare the spirit of Paul with that of Moses (Num. 11:12). What did Paul long for? To see “*Christ formed*” in them; that the moral features of Christ would be seen in their lives.

**20** *and I should wish to be present with you now, and change my voice, for I am perplexed as to you.* **v.20** Paul almost questioned their salvation, but didn’t. He was “*perplexed*” about them... how could this have happened to them if they were true believers? If Paul could just see them, he would be able to change his voice a little. His voice in this epistle is sober. If he visited and saw that they were fully entrenched in legality, his voice would change for the worse (1 Cor. 4:21). But if they received the epistle, his voice would become soft and gentle. Paul was not content to remain perplexed about them. This is a mark of a true shepherd.

# Appeal on the grounds of the Old Testament Scriptures (4:21-31)

**The Allegory.** In this allegory, drawn from the history of Abraham and Sarah, Paul shows that the systems of Law and Grace are entirely incompatible. We find that flesh, law, and bondage are connected in one system, while Spirit, promise, grace, and freedom are connected in another. Famously, it became impossible for the two women with their two sons to continue on together. Once the child of promise was born, the bondswoman and her son were excluded. This is a powerful type of the system of the law. Once the promised Seed came, there was no more room for the law or for the flesh. Trying to mix law and grace is like keeping Sarah and Hagar under the same roof. It is disastrous!

**Four Jerusalems.** Each time Jerusalem is used in scripture to reference something, it contains that thought of tranquility, as Jerusalem means 'the possession of peace'. The name Jerusalem is employed four different ways in scripture:

1. *Earthly Jerusalem* (Rev. 11:2) the city of earthly righteousness, the center of the Millennial kingdom.
2. *Moral Jerusalem* (Gal. 4:26) - a reference to the system of grace (vs. the system of law).
3. *Heavenly Jerusalem* (Heb. 12:22) - the Father's house, the third heaven, the eternal dwelling place of God and all the heavenly saints (not just the Church).
4. *Mystical Jerusalem* (Rev. 21:2, 10) - the glorified Church, the bride of Christ. The prefix "new" is added to describe the Church in the eternal state.

It is possible that the moral and the heavenly Jerusalem's are both the same company, just two aspects.

**21 Tell me, ye who are desirous of being under law, do ye not listen to the law? v.21 The Law itself Speaks against Legalism.** Paul draws together two uses of the word "law". When it is "law", it refers to the moral principle which the Christian is not under. When it is "the law" it can mean the Old Testament scriptures, especially the first five books, as it does here. If they would just listen to the law, it contains a built-in warning against legalism. What does the law say? According to Ex. 21:4, a boy born to a slave girl could be a slave son. The law can never liberate - only give birth to bondage (v.24). Paul uses an allegory from the book of Genesis to further illustrate the truth.

**22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons; one of the maid servant, and one of the free woman. **23** But he *that was* of the maid servant was born according to flesh, and he *that was* of the free woman through the promise. **vv.22-23 Details from Abraham's Past.**

Ishmael's conception was a result of trying to fulfill the promise by the efforts of the flesh. Isaac's conception was a result of God fulfilling His promise regardless of human effort. Isaac therefore pictures one who is standing in faith on the promises of God, while Ishmael pictures someone who is resting on their own works.

**24** Which things have an allegorical sense; for these are two covenants: one from mount Sinai, gendering to bondage, which is Hagar. **25** For Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which is now, for she is in bondage with her children; **26** but the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother. **vv.24-26 An Explanation of the Allegorical Sense.** The bondswoman (Hagar) pictures the law, which was a covenant given from mount Sinai. Just as Abram and Sarai used Hagar to try to fulfill the promise through their own energy, so Israel tried to gain the promises on the ground of the law (Exodus 19). What does the law do? It genders to bondage. That is all the law will ever do, when presented as the means for justification, or as the Christian's rule of life. Paul remarks that Sinai is in Arabia (probably the Sinai Peninsula), which is actually the place Hagar went with Ishmael. "Jerusalem which is now" is the center of an earthly legal system. All her "children" (those under law) are in bondage, not only to the Romans, but also to sin and to the law. The free-woman (Sarah) pictures grace, and that system is called "Jerusalem above". Rather than lead all its subjects into bondage, it leads them into liberty! Some translations erroneously read "which is the mother of us all ". The true thought is, "Jerusalem above is the mother of us Jews who have become Christians." This mistranslation leads people to covenant theology. Note that the blessing under grace comes *without* travail (no works). Also, the "children of Jerusalem" may be a reference to other religious systems which stand on the ground of the law, and inevitably take on a Jewish character.<sup>10</sup>

<b>Two Covenants</b>	Covenant of <u>Law</u>	Covenant of <u>Grace</u>
<b>Two Principles</b> (wives)	<u>Hagar</u> - a bondmaid - could only gender to bondage	<u>Sarah</u> - free woman - children are free
<b>Two Jerusalems</b> (systems)	<u>Jerusalem which is now</u> - connected with Mt. Sinai	<u>Jerusalem above</u> - sovereign grace
<b>Two Classes of Persons</b>	<u>Ishmael</u> - lives by the flesh, desires to be under law	<u>Isaac</u> - stands simply on the promise in grace

¶ **27** For it is written, "Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break out and cry, thou that

travailest not; because the children of the desolate are more numerous than *those of her that has a husband.*" [Isa. 54:1] **v.27 Added Support of Prophetic Scriptures.** Paul brings in a quotation from the prophetic scriptures to support his point. At the end of Isa. 53 we have the manifestation of Christ, when He will divide the spoil with the strong. This verse (Isa. 54:1) is at the start of the Millennium, where a future Israel looks back on her history. "*Her that hath an husband*" is Jerusalem under the Old Covenant, at the center of an earthly legal system. It was at a time when Jehovah was her husband, and when she had only a few children. "*Thou barren that bearest not*" is Israel forsaken by the Lord for her sin (Lo-ammi, not my people) and stripped of her outward privileges, and seen in the condition of being without any hope of outward deliverance. When she is still that condition, grace will begin to work, the remnant having forsaken the law and taken the ground of grace. But in hindsight, that "barren" Jerusalem, now under the New Covenant, will see by faith millions of Christians gathered then in heaven, who are counted by grace as her children! Christians are not under the New Covenant, but they are the children of that Jerusalem in that they come into blessing on the same basis as restored Israel; on the ground of sovereign grace. In that day, the Lord will urge Israel to sing, because in the mystery of God's grace, she gained more children in the centuries of being set aside, than in all her years prior to the captivity! All this blessing will be granted to her through grace; numerous children for whom she never had to labor.<sup>1112</sup>

¶ **28** But "ye", brethren, after the pattern of Isaac, are children of promise. **v.28 What Isaac Pictures.** Isaac pictures someone living on the principle of faith. It is the Christian's privilege to live and rest his soul on God's promises... "*children of promise*". We who believe are justified and blessed on the same basis as Old Testament saints. We are not children of law, but children of promise. The two principles are entirely *incompatible*, as we see in v.29. We cannot be the children of both; we are one or the other.

**29** But as then he that was born according to flesh persecuted him *that was born according to Spirit, so also it is now.* **v.29 What Ishmael Pictures.** Ishmael pictures someone living on the principle of works. What we find is that Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Specifically, it was the day he was weaned (Gen. 21:8-9); perhaps a reference to 'adoption'? Those who base their walk and standing on the efforts of the flesh will always persecute those who rest on God's grace and the Spirit's power. This mocking is here called "persecution," see 2 Tim. 3:12. This is an abiding principle; legalism *always* persecutes grace. A good example of this persecution is Heb. 11:32-40. Persecution had come to the Galatians from the Jewish corridor. In one sense, this is seen most clearly at the cross, when those born after the flesh (Pharisees, etc.) persecuted the great Seed of Abraham unto death. The casting out of Hagar and Ishmael took place at the cross, where God passed judgment on that whole

system. Yet there is a need for us to do the same in a practical way.

**30** But what says the scripture? **“Cast out the maid servant and her son; for the son of the maid servant shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”** [Gen. 21:10] **v.30 The solution.** What is the solution to the problem of legality? Cast out the bondwoman (the legal principle) and her son (the flesh that desires to be under law). They must be cast out completely; nothing can be saved. It seems hard, and remember that Abraham struggled with it (Gen. 21:11), but it had to be done, because law and grace cannot cohabitate. Many Christians have cast out the bondwoman, but are unwilling to cast out her son. Note: this verse may actually be instruction to cast out the Judaizing teachers, although I cannot say conclusively.

**31** So then, brethren, we [Christians] are not maid servant’s children, but *children of the free woman*. **v.31 Conclusion.** We should never forget who our mother is (grace), and the freedom that we Christians are brought into as her children. It is beautiful to see that in Gal. 3:29 we are Abraham’s seed, and in Gal. 4:31 we are Sarah’s children.

## Footnotes

1. The final fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham will be in the Millennium, when the nations are blessed, though in subservience to Israel. But the principle of it applies today in the gospel, as Paul shows in Galatians 3.
2. *In Genesis 22, the two things are quite distinct. Where the seed is spoken of without allusion to number, the blessing of the Gentiles comes in; but where they are said to be multiplied as the stars and the sand, then the character is unequivocally Jewish precedence. Such is, I believe, the argument of the apostle.* - Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians*.
3. *Thus the Seed with no number or multiplicity annexed to it is shown to be Christ, typified by Isaac, risen again from the dead in figure, who blesses all the Gentiles, as now in the gospel, contra-distinguished from the numerous Jewish seed, who are to subject the nations and rule over them, in the age to come. The Seed risen from the dead has evidently broken the link with life or relationship on earth, and is in a wholly new condition wherein He is able to bless the Gentile as freely as the Jew.* - Kelly, William. *Abram, the Friend of God*.
4. *If I make you an unconditional promise, a simple promise, to-day, I have no right to say to you on the morrow, Oh you did not do so and so, and therefore the promise is nullified. Certainly not. No! you would reply, you promised me the thing unconditionally, not if I behaved well or ill; and therefore it is mine. These “promises” were made after sin came in, but before the giving of the law.* - Darby, J.N. *The Christian Friend*. Volume 2. 1875.
5. *If God had made the accomplishment of promise dependent on the fulfillment of the law, it would not have been pure promise. If you make a promise to your child, and he disobeys you afterwards, you do not make him forfeit the promise, to do which would be to break your word; but you cannot pass over the offence without taking any notice of it. Your promise stands, but you must deal with him about his conduct, and not let him take what you have promised him, as if he deserved it. God made a promise, and man would come in and take the promise on the ground of his desert. Then God must bring in a law to prove his unrighteousness.* - Kelly, W. *The Bible Treasury*, Vol. 6
6. Paget, C. *A Mind at Perfect Peace with God*. Little Flock Hymnbook #27A.
7. Darby, J.N. *Father, Thy Name Our Souls Would Bless*. Little Flock Hymnbook #25. 1879.
8. *It is possible to be zealous in binding souls to oneself, or to the sect to which one is attached. The Pharisees compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and they made him twofold more the child of hell than themselves.* - Darby, J.N. *Notes on the Epistle to the Galatians*.

9. *Legalism had so disfigured the truth in their souls, that they needed to be rooted and grounded in the first elements of grace over again. They had lost their hold of the cross, and the apostle stood in doubt of them. Outwardly they might be very zealous; but as far as testimony for Christ, and their souls' enjoyment of Him, was concerned, all was gone. The apostle desired that the work should be renewed from the very beginning in their souls.* - Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.*
10. Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.*
11. *It is a comparison of herself during her time of desolation with herself when she had a husband. The latter was the time when she was owned in her earthly standing, and she had few children then; but now, in her desolation, there is a mighty outpouring of God's grace, and a wide ingathering of souls, who are counted, by grace, as her children.* - Kelly, William. *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.*
12. *These children are ourselves, Christians, during the time of the church (Isaiah 54:1). The passage is addressed to Jerusalem, restored in the kingdom to come, but it owns that the forsaken one has more children than she which had a husband. The children born according to promise, are more numerous in the present time, than those born when Jerusalem was owned.* - Darby, J.N. *Notes on the Epistle to the Galatians.*