

OUR INHERITANCE

Gal. 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

One of the greatest barriers to overcome in evangelism is trying to confront the notion many people have of their unquestionable right to be accepted into Heaven, - it is a foregone conclusion ... *if* there is a Heaven, they will be there! Good people do not expect to hear they are sinners before a righteous God ... They are not expecting God to send them out of His presence for good people automatically assume once they leave this life they will go to Heaven. It is not a place they have given much thought to ... but it is a place they nonetheless expect to enter, if it does indeed exist.

Galatians chapters three and four are some of the strongest writing penned by Paul. He was in a battle, - not unlike the battle in our own day against the salvation by works/privilege 'gospel', - and it was his priority to prove that salvation is by grace alone through faith, and not by the works of the Law. ... The Law refers to the Law of Moses given by God on Mount Sinai to the children of Israel, the Hebrews, the Jews.

The problem is though, no one can live up to the perfect standards of God's Law ... which means, the Law is a set of rules which ultimately condemns. For example, even if you could keep all the commandments, and yet you fail in one ... you have failed in them all, and you are a law-breaker.

Now, we are not Jews. Nevertheless, the Law given to the Jews indicates God's standard He requires for everyone, - Jew and Gentile. That means, it is never right to murder, or commit adultery, or steal, or tell lies, or to covet ... and it also means God alone is to be worshipped. ... He is not known by any other name, and He set honoured one day in seven to be particularly for Him.

There are other aspects to the Law of Moses which are only applicable to the children of Israel during those early times. However, the Ten Commandments are the foundation for both Jews and Gentiles, concerning conduct before God, in every age, country, and nation. ... Unfortunately, to keep what God has commanded is impossible, and that is what Paul meant when he wrote, **Gal. 3:10** For as many as are of the works of the law, - for all those who are hoping to be saved by trying to be good enough, - 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. ... He, a scholar and a former rabbinical Pharisee, realises no matter how good you try to be, your sinful nature 'comes along' always pulls you

down. And that is how he concluded, 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.

He further deduced, ¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ... If you put all your dependence upon *doing* the Law, it allows no room for *believing*. Your efforts override and undermine your faith! It becomes all about what *you* can do, rather than believing in what Christ has already done for you, 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 is something *I* am in control of trying to do ... but believing in Christ for my salvation is something I must trust He has done for me ... I'm not trusting in what I would like to be able to do for myself, but I'm and believing in what Jesus has accomplished on my behalf. And that is how Paul summarises, ¹⁸ For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Paul uses six different arguments to prove the only way God saves sinners is through faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law.

He begins with the *personal argument* (Gal. 3:1-5) in which he asks the Galatians to recall their own experience with Christ when they were saved, - by faith they had seen *Christ* (v.1), they had received the *Holy Spirit* (v.2-4), and they had experienced miracles through the work of the *Father* (v.5). Unfortunately, a group known as the 'Judaizers' had infiltrated their fellowship and brought confusion by convincing many of the people they had to observe Jewish law to properly be a Christian. Paul refutes those false teachers and tells the people to avoid them.

Then he moves into the *Scriptural argument* (Gal. 3:6-14), in which he quotes six Old Testament passages to prove his point. So, he is not basing his profession of faith on experience only because experience alone can sometimes be unreliable ... experience has to be tested by the Word of God, - ... what I believe must be subject to and in agreement with the Word of God. He tells them their father of the nation, - Abraham, - was saved by faith ... not by his observance of the Law (v.6,7), ... for, among other reasons, the Law had not yet been instituted!

... Then Paul explained how salvation is also for the Gentiles (v.8,9), - *that* was mind-blowing to those who had fallen under the influence of the Judaizers! ... But, said Paul, salvation is not only for the Jews, it is also for the Gentiles because salvation does not depend upon your national identity but it depends upon believing by faith alone (v.10-12) in Christ alone (v.13,14), and not through adherence to the Law. ... We shall return to this shortly ...

From the *personal* and *Scriptural* arguments Paul then moves to the *logical argument* (Gal. 3:15-29) where he reasons with his readers concerning what a covenant is and how a covenant works. The word ‘promise’ is used eight times within these verses (v.16,17,18,19,21,22,29), and it hinges on God’s *unconditional* covenant He entered into with Abraham, that in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Gen. 12:2,3) ... that is, through His Seed. Yes, God promised to have a special place in His programme for the earthly generations of Abraham ... but, God also promised, - as Paul, this former rabbi teaches us, -, v.16 *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises [note the plural] made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.* ... God made the promises, but the promise that was first among all the promises God made to Abraham related back to the promise concerning the Lord Jesus, ‘the seed’. ...

God made the promise, and He kept it, ... He *is* keeping it, and He will *continue* to keep it. ... He does not break His Word ... The Law cannot be annulled, and it cannot change the promise (v.15-18), it does not outweigh the promise (v.19,20), it is not contrary to the promise (v.21-26), and it cannot do what the promise can do (v.27-29). ... God made the promise, and *He* is keeping it! That, in brief, is the *logical argument*.

Paul then presents the *historical argument* (Gal. 4:1-11), explaining the place of the Law in the history of Israel. At this point, he writes very personally. He shared with his readers what he and they were before they came to Christ, - children in bondage (v.1-3), and then what God did to redeem them (v.4-5), adopting (v.5) them His sons and heirs (v.6-7) ... and he appeals to them to return to where their Christian roots (v.8-11).

It follows very simply on to the *sentimental argument* (Gal. 4:12-18) where, - since he has shown them what the Lord has done for them, - Paul appeals to them to remember his love and their privileged relationship in days gone-by, Gal. 4:12 *Brethren, I beseech you ...* ¹⁵ *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? ...* Where has the faithfulness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob gone?! Where has

their faithfulness of the Lord gone ... and His work ... and His servants ... where has it all gone?! ... And Paul was trying to get them to see the Judaizers and their false doctrines were corrupting their faith ... Once upon a time, he said (perhaps indicating Paul had poor eyesight), *I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* ... They had turned against him because they had been 'taken in' by men preaching a false doctrine, **4:16** *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

And then Paul goes right back to his reasoning, and concludes with the *allegorical argument* (Gal. 4:19-31), based on the life of Abraham and his relationships with Sarah and Hagar. This is a section that many take and spiritualise almost beyond belief, - just take it simply as it is meant to be taken and you will get the message clearly. We don't have time this evening to go into this section properly ... and anyway it is not our purpose because we are going back to verse eighteen in a few moments ... But just to wrap up our summary in these two chapters, we see how we Christians are included among the children of promise according to God's grace (v.28). The covenant of grace, - allegorised by reference to Sarah (**24** *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.*), - is our spiritual mother.

It is only safe to use allegory in interpreting Scripture when Scripture gives us permission ... otherwise we could end up concocting all sorts of dubious doctrines. ... The Law and the old nature, - allegorised by Hagar and Ishmael (v.25), - want only to draw us into bondage. ... And Paul concludes, **v.31** *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.* ... Hagar was Abraham's way of bringing about God's promise that he would have a son, - Sarah was too old to bear a child, so have a child with the young Hagar instead ... but Abraham was wrong in trying to *work out* his own solution (... and Sarah was also implicit in this folly). The answer to their problem lay only in believing, - having faith, - in God's word. ... Abraham having a child with Hagar caused the problem we are living with today because the son of Hagar was Ishmael, the father of Arab nations.

... So that is just a very brief background to what we read in Galatians 3:18, *For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise.* ... Εἰ γὰρ ἐκ νόμου ἡ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός.

For if the inheritance [*be*] of the law ... That would mean the inheritance would have remained in the possession of the Jews only because the inheritance was only of the law ... which was given to the Jews. There would have been no opportunity for salvation outside of the descendants of Abraham, the receivers of the Law of Moses. ... No Gentile, - neither you or me, nor any other, - would have been granted the hope of salvation *unless* we converted to Judaism ... and that was what the Judaizers were teaching, “For you to become a Christian, you must first become a Jew, and keep the Law!”

Let’s look at this in another way. When, at a very early age, I came to be taught about salvation, I knew I had to repent of my sins and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. I’m grateful to the Lord and to my parents for being brought up in that knowledge. However, I was taught this was not altogether a ‘done deal’ ... that, first of all, - and crucially, - God’s plan for my salvation depended upon whether or not I would agree to what He wanted. He was, - as it were, - standing at the door of my heart, and He couldn’t open that door because ‘the handle was on the inside’. ... He would stand and knock in the hope I would answer ... but He could not compel me, even though He is the Almighty God of our salvation. ...

It, therefore, ultimately depended on me, - they said, - and upon whether I was prepared to ‘lift that latch’ and allow Him entrance. ... But no, that is not how it works ... That was not how it worked when Jesus stood outside the tomb and shouted, Lazarus, come forth (Jn. 11:43) ... He did not *invite* the *dead* Lazarus arise forth ... but He *called* and *commanded* Him to be obedient! When God calls a soul who is dead in trespasses and in sins, He does not speak with a whimper, but He speaks with authority, **Jn. 11:43** *And when he [Jesus] thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. ⁴⁴ And he that was dead came forth.* ... Salvation is of the Lord, - it is not of how we can do even the slightest *twitch*. Salvation is of the Lord only, by faith alone.

But some might say, what faith did Lazarus have?! ... Actually, that kind of a question shows you all the more how beautiful God’s grace truly is because Lazarus only heard the voice of Jesus when God opened his dead ears to hear!

Salvation does not need to be added to for it is perfect the way God has planned it. ... Salvation is not dependent upon fulfilling the Law, - a set of criteria. Salvation is achieved only by trusting by faith in the Christ Who came to fulfil the Law.

... There was nothing wrong with the Law for the Law was written and instituted by God, - it was His pattern for His people to live by ... *However*, His people were far from perfect, and unable for the Law was the obstacle to their faith because they could not help themselves from falling short of it.

And that is the way it affects us all, - Jew and Gentile, - for no matter how hard we try to reach God's standards, we fall so terribly short, and the result is ... *there is none righteous, no not one (Rom. 3:10)*. ... Paul was showing them the Law does not save you ... and it was never meant to ... and you could not live up to it anyway, no matter how hard you tried! That is why God sent His Son, to fulfil all the demands of the Law we could never achieve.

... And, something else ... I cannot be trusting in Christ to save me if I am not trusting in Him to keep me. If Jesus was not in charge of my salvation, I would make a hopeless attempt at keeping it! If it was up to me, my salvation would be 'on and off' ... more 'off' than 'on'! ... Salvation is of the Lord, - from beginning to end, and every other part too! And that is why I must keep trusting in Him, as Paul put it, **II Tim. 1:12** *[I] am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*. ... And I am only able to keep it because He is keeping me, As Paul again wrote, **Gal. 3:18** *For if the inheritance [be] of the law, [it is] no more of promise: but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise*. ... Our inheritance relies totally upon the promise of God.

And also look and see how it is emphasised in that glorious 'but' ... *but God gave [it] to Abraham by promise*. ... *but God* ... But for God, it would not have been! There would have been no salvation *but* for His plan to save us. God announced the plan of salvation *to Abraham by promise* ... and that confirms it is all of God, and He is the only One can keep us out of the everlasting punishment of Hell.

Salvation, therefore, comes through faith in Christ alone ... and nothing to do with anything we would try to do to achieve it. It is a gift *straight* from God (Eph. 2:8). It is all His to give as He chooses, and so He chose to call out Abram from a foreign idolatrous country, and He promised him, **Gen. 12:2** *I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing* ... and one day I shall graft in to that nation which will come from you souls from across the world Who shall believe in Me through the Gift of My only-begotten Son, for no matter who they are and where they come from, He will be sacrificed upon a cross to redeem them unto Myself (cf. Rom. 11).

And that is what God did. All His plans for our salvation were laid upon our Saviour at Calvary, so that **Gal. 3:6** *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness ...* when we believe in God in the same way for His righteousness, the same righteousness Abraham was granted is accounted unto us too. We are trusting in Abraham's God for Abraham's God is our Saviour also ... and Abraham too was saved by the precious blood of Christ on the cross ... **v.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. ...* And that is how God brought us in, from being strangers, to being in His family.

Are you saved by God's grace? Have you trusted in Christ as Saviour and Lord? If you have, where previously without Him you were far off but now in Christ Jesus you have been brought nigh by the shedding of His precious blood (Eph. 2:13). That blood was poured out from His body to wash away your sins and fit you for Heaven. ... And that is how we are inheritors of the Heavenly Kingdom, and what belongs to Him belongs to us because of His grace. We are joint-heirs with Him. We are reigning with Him now, and we shall reign with Him *then* when He comes again. That is the Gospel. That is the Good News. That is the confidence God has blessed us with through His promise to Abraham ... and *that* is our inheritance for eternity! Amen.