

Sunday, January 24, 2010—Grace Life School of Theology—Understanding Galatians and the Law—
Galatians 3:17-21

Galatians 3:17

- *“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”*
- In verse seventeen, Paul picks up the idea that he started in verse 15, the unchangeableness of both human and divine covenants.
- The first thing we see in verse seventeen is that the law was added 430 years after the promises were given to Abraham.
- Notice that when God confirmed (validated or ratified) this covenant that Christ was associated with it.
- We also see that when the law was added it did not have any effect upon the promise God made to Abraham. The law could not invalidate or make of none effect what God had already said to Abraham. In other words, the giving of the law did not deactivate the promise.
- By way of summary, we see that the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic Covenant was not affected in any way by the giving of the Mosaic Law (conditional covenant). Have the promises that God made to Abraham and his seed all been fulfilled? No. So the law clearly could not have disannulled the promise without making God a liar.

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.”*
- Abraham’s ability to inherit the promise cannot be based upon a conditional and unconditional system at the same time.
- If the inheritance comes to Abraham through the law, then it is not of promise. But God gave it to Abraham by promise.
- “The promise covenant was unconditional. Abraham was not required to do anything but accept it by faith. Therefore the covenant of works which came in four hundred and thirty years later cannot change in any way the promise by faith. Since the principles of faith and Law-works are opposites, the inheritance could be only through one or the other. Paul has clearly shown that no

one could ever inherit eternal life through trying to observe the Law, besides, God gave it to Abraham by promise.”

Galatians 3:19

- *“Wherefore then serveth the law?”*
- On basis of what he just said in verse eighteen, Paul asks the following question, “if the inheritance cannot come through the law, what then is the purpose of the law?” What is the intent of the law? Why did God give the law in the first place?
- *“It was added because of transgressions,”*
- It was added on account of transgressions. The purpose of the all as we have seen many times in our study of Galatians is to manifest sin and make the one under the law conscious of his or her sin.
 - Romans 3:19-20
- Men do not become sinners when they do something wrong. Mankind sins because we are sinners by nature.
 - Romans 3:23
 - Romans 5:12-13
 - Ephesians 2:3
- *“till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;”*
- Notice the use of the word “till.” This word is a time word and it tells us that the law was never designed to be permanent. Paul says that the law was given “till” which means the law would function up to a given time.
- The verse defines when this time would be. When the seed came to whom the promise was made. Based on our studies last week in verse sixteen, who is the seed this verse is referring to? Jesus Christ.
- So we see here that the law was only temporary from the time it was given under Moses until Christ.
- John 1:17—grace comes through Jesus Christ. Does this mean that when Christ came that men were no longer under the law? No. We have already seen that when Jesus came he was very interested in having Israel follow the law.
- *“and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”*

- God did not talk directly with the children of Israel when he gave them the law. Angles gave it to Moses and then Moses brought it down to the people.

- Acts 7:35

Galatians 3:20

- *“Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.”*
- You don’t need a middleman unless you have two parties involved.
- I Timothy 2:5—Christ is the “one mediator between God and man,” but once a man is saved and has been baptized into Jesus death, burial, and resurrection there is no more need for a mediator.
- Ephesians 2:6—once we are saved we are one with Christ, he is in us and we are in him.
- God deals with us just like he did with Abraham.
 - Genesis 15:6-13—God deals directly with Abraham whereas he dealt indirectly with Israel.
- Paul’s argument here is that what God gives directly is better than what he gives indirectly. Thus we see that the Abrahamic Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Law because God himself directly gave it to Abraham.
- Galatians 1:11—how did Paul receive his gospel and apostleship? By direct communication from Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:21

- *“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.”*
- If a law had been given which had the power to bestow life, then righteousness could have come by the law and seed would not have needed to come.
- Please recall that Moses the great law giver to Israel could not led the children of Israel into the promise land because he disobeyed God.
- Acts 7:45—it took a guy named Joshua to led Israel into the promise land. Joshua is a type of Christ. It is only through the singular seed of Abraham that life can be had and that seed is Christ. Righteousness cannot come through the law.