

Question: Have you ever struggled with the idea of the law of God?

- A. What is it for? Is it against grace? Should it be looked upon as an enemy now?
 - 1). We're going to start to clear this up in the next two weeks

Ga 3:15–18 (ESV) To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. ⁽¹⁷⁾ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ⁽¹⁸⁾ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

1. Paul is still expounding the truth of the Gospel

- A. Salvation is a free gift received by faith and not earned by works
 - 1). He has proven it by showing us how Abraham was made right with God – by faith alone
Ga 3:6 (ESV) just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?
Ga 3:9 (ESV) So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.
- B. But that creates a bit of a problem doesn't it – then why did God establish the law?
 - 1). If we're saved by faith alone – apart from our works – as seen in Abraham
 Then why add the law that is dependent upon our works
 - 2). Did God replace faith with the law?
 Did He combine faith with the law? A faith – law hybrid like the false teachers were saying
 - 3). If the law didn't replace salvation by faith – should I hate it now – treat it as an enemy?

Thought: It's important we understand these things

- A. If we don't we can really become confused on how we are saved
 - 1). And be confusing in our evangelism as we attempt to lead others to the Lord
- B. In this section Paul's going to start to get all that sorted out – *going to show us two things*
 - 1). He is going to show us the law has NOT replaced faith in the way a person is saved
 - 2). He'll teach us that the law has a completely different function than faith
 - a). The law is not temporary – faith has now replaced it
 It was faith – then law – then faith again – God flip-flopping – NO!
 - b). The law and faith are both necessary in salvation – they have different functions
 - c). Like I said it's going to take us two weeks to sort all this out

Transition: Before we dig into these verses – need to see a couple things as an introduction

- A. We need to know the history behind this passage
- B. We need to understand a bit of theology about these two thoughts of faith (grace) and the law (works)

The History Behind this Passage (Cast of characters in this passage)

Ga 3:16 (ESV) Now the promises were made to Abraham...

1. Paul goes back some 2000 years to the call of Abraham (Genesis 12)

- A. God called Abraham to leave family and country – then gave him some incredible promises
 - 1). He would give him so many descendants they couldn't be numbered
 - 2). He would give those descendants a land to dwell in (promised land)
 - 3). Through his seed all the nations of earth would be blessed
 - a). Abraham simply believed what God said and *God credited to him the gift of righteousness*
 - b). Abraham believed and was given a right standing with God
- B. God continued to reaffirm the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and to his son Jacob
 - 1). Descendants and land – but Abraham and his sons died before inheriting the land

- 2). They were driven into Egypt because of a great famine in the land
 - a). They enjoyed blessing there for many years
But eventually the Pharaoh turned on them and made their lives miserable
- 3). They cried out to God and He raised up Moses to deliver them

Transition: Brings us to v. 17 where Paul moves from Abraham to Moses

2. God gave the law through Moses

Ga 3:17 (ESV) ... the law, which came 430 years afterward...

- A. 430 years after what? Abraham being declared righteous? Abraham dying?
 - 1). No! 430 years is the time the Israelites spent in Egypt before God delivered them
Ex 12:40 (ESV) The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.
- B. God hears their cries and delivers the Children of Israel out of the cruel bondage of Egypt
 - 1). They go out into the desert and at Mt. Sinai God gives them the law
Ga 3:19 (ESV) ... *it was put in place through angels by an intermediary (Moses).*
Clearer: Ga 3:19 (NLT) ... God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people.

Point: Paul is showing the time that separated these two great men

- A. The time in-between Abraham and the Children of Israel being given the law
Can't know to the year – but it was close to 650 years

The Theology Behind These Two Systems of Thought

Intro: God's dealings with Abraham and Moses was based on two entirely different principles

1. God's promise to Abraham was based on His (God's) ability

Turn: Ge 12:1–2 (ESV) Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that *I will* show you. ⁽²⁾ And *I will* make of you a great nation, and *I will* bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

- A. Notice all the divine "I will's"
 - 1). So the promise is dependent upon God and His power for fulfillment
Therefore it's fulfillment is sure because it is based on God's faithfulness and NOT man's

2. To Moses God gave the law that was based on man's merit

- A. The law was summarized by the 10 commandments
 - 1). Ten times God says "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" – You must! You must not!
 - 2). Never once does He say "I will"

- B. Therefore the law is dependent upon human power and faithfulness to keep it

Point: So the great difference between the two is who is responsible to keep it

- A. The promise and the blessings contained in it – including justification (change of legal status)
Is given by grace to those who could never earn it
 - 1). It is God's plan – God's initiative – it's fulfillment is based on God's faithfulness
- B. The law is based on man's effort
 - 1). Man's duty – man's work – man's responsibility = human merit
- C. The promise and its blessings (our salvation) could never fail – because God is responsible
Salvation by keeping the law could never succeed because it is based on us – we're responsible

Thought: This is why we are secure in our salvation – God is responsible for it

Php 1:6 (ESV) And I am sure of this, that *he who began a good work in you (salvation) will bring it to completion* at the day of Jesus Christ.

- A. He began it and He will complete it

Transition: So Paul says there are these two elements both given by God – but so different

- A. We are going to take two weeks to sort this out
 - 1). This week Paul will show us - even though the law came after the promise received by faith
The law didn't come to replace salvation by faith alone in Christ alone
 - 2). Next week we'll see that the law actually came to compliment grace
 - a). God established the law to work hand-in-hand with grace
- B. Let's see how Paul proves law didn't replace the promise received by faith alone (going to have to think)

I. THE LAW DOES NOT REPLACE THE PROMISE RECEIVED BY FAITH

Ga 3:15–18 (ESV) To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. ⁽¹⁷⁾ This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. ⁽¹⁸⁾ For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

1. Uses an example from everyday life – the making of a will

- A. Paul seems to be referring to the ancient Greek law here
 - 1). He uses a word "Covenant" that meant will (as in last will and testament)
- B. Once a will was executed and formally approved it was irrevocable
 - 1). It was set – it couldn't be changed by the one making the will or by anybody else

Point: If a human covenant cannot be set aside or altered

How much more a divine covenant that's been formerly set in place by God Himself

Ga 3:17 (NLT) This is what I am trying to say: The agreement God made with Abraham could not be canceled 430 years later when God gave the law to Moses. *God would be breaking his promise.*

Transition: To understand - need to go to Gen 15 to see what took place between God and Abraham

The Divine Promise and Covenant

TURN: Ge 15:1–7 (ESV) After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ⁽²⁾ But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ⁽³⁾ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁽⁴⁾ And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: *"This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir."* ⁽⁵⁾ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁽⁶⁾ *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.* ⁽⁷⁾ And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans *to give you this land to possess.*"

1. The elements of the promise

- A. Abraham will have a son who will be his heir
- B. His descendants will be as the stars in the sky
- C. In Gen 12 "All the nations would be blessed through his offspring (Jesus Christ)"
- D. The condition to receive this is faith alone
 - 1). Abraham simply believes the promise and it is credited to him as righteousness
He is not counted as a sinner – but is now considered to be right with God - justified

Thought: Now here is where it gets really interesting

- A. Notice the very next verse – look at Abraham's question

Ge 15:8 (ESV) But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

- B. God's response in our day seems really strange – but it is so significant

Ge 15:9–10 (ESV) He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ⁽¹⁰⁾ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half.

1. This was all according to the custom of the day

- A. When two people made an agreement they would perform this ritual
 - 1). Take the animals and kill them – the shedding of blood was to confirm the agreement
- B. They would lay out the pieces of the animals opposite to one another
 - 1). Then they would walk hand-in-hand in-between them
- C. This was a visible testimony to all that these two had entered into this agreement
 - 1). It was a statement proclaiming that BOTH parties would keep their part of the deal
 - 2). If they didn’t the penalty would mean your life

Transition: Notice what happens in v. 12 – so important – this links to your salvation so listen up!

Ge 15:12 (ESV) As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him.

1. Abraham prepares the animals then is put into a deep sleep

- A. But notice who walks through the animals – here’s the point

Ge 15:17–18 (ESV) (Abraham is in a deep sleep) When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. **(representing the Lord)** ⁽¹⁸⁾ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,

1. Did you notice one huge exception to the normal procedure?

- A. Usually both parties involved in the agreement walk through the animals together
 - 1). This binds each one to keep their part of the contract
 - 2). But here **Abraham is fast asleep and God walks through the carcasses alone!**

Question: Do you see that means? This agreement is made by God alone!

- A. God bound Himself to His own covenant to keep the promise He made to Abraham
 - 1). IOW it was an unconditional covenant not dependent upon Abraham at all
It was not dependent upon anything that Abraham would or wouldn’t do
 - 2). **Abraham’s part was this – I believe you’ll do what you said you’d do Lord! = Faith**

2. The comfort of this one-sided contract

- A. Because man is not involved there is no weak link
It will be fulfilled because it is based on divine faithfulness and divine ability

Question: But where do we come in to all this? We are included in that covenant God made with Abraham

- A. Watch how Paul weaves this all together (gotta think now)

3. Our inclusion in this one-sided covenant

Look: Ga 3:16 (ESV) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.

- A. This promise was not replaced with law - it extends out to at least Christ
 - 1). AND through Jesus Christ it extends out to us

Look at: Ga 3:8–9 (ESV) And the Scripture, **foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith**, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, **“In you shall all the nations be blessed.”** ⁽⁹⁾ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

- A. We are part of the **“In you all the nations will be blessed”**
- B. What is the blessing? **“foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles”**
 - 1). It’s **justification** – Gentile sinners will be declared to be righteous – 100% compliance
 - a). Christ’s perfect obedience placed into our account
The threat of hell being removed – the hope of future glory given

- C. How does that happen? The same way it did for Abraham – by faith

Look at: Ga 3:8–9 (ESV) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would *justify the Gentiles by faith*, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” ⁽⁹⁾ *So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham*, the man of faith.

- 1). The child of God is brought into that covenant made with Abraham through faith alone
 - a). That is guaranteed because it was based on God’s faithfulness alone – His power

Point: The promise (which includes justification) has not ended – it was not replaced by the law

If a covenant made by man could not be changed how much more one made by God

- A. This covenant cannot fail – Why? Because we can keep a set of rules well enough? NO! We can’t
 - 1). He kept the weak link out – He put man into a deep sleep so he couldn’t mess it up
- B. The promise of justification and its result – glory to all who believe
 - 1). Is guaranteed by a God who cannot lie
 - 2). And backed by a God whose purposes cannot be thwarted
- C. Therefore in this covenant our inconsistencies do not keep us out of heaven
 - 1). They don’t destroy our relationship and usefulness
 - 2). Grace tells us that we are still objects of His affection

Precious lambs of God – still usable in His kingdom

 - a). The believer can do some stupid things – but grace is greater

4. I want to show you grace – how this works

Lk 15:11–12 (ESV) And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ⁽¹²⁾ And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.

- A. This was unheard of in these days – was like saying to his father

“I wish you were dead so I could have all my money” - horrendous
- B. Plus his share of inheritance would include family land
 - 1). The Jew viewed this land as a sacred trust given to them by God Himself

You just didn’t sell family land – unthinkable!

Transition: But this boy gets his inheritance and cashes out his assets to taste the world

Lk 15:13 (ESV) Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

- A. Bright lights – big city – pleasures of the flesh – bring it on!
- B. He probably had fun – sin is fun for a season – but he spent all of his money

Transition: I think we see God moving in the next verse – discipline meant to wake him up

Lk 15:14–16 (ESV) And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ⁽¹⁵⁾ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ⁽¹⁶⁾ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

- A. God is graciously removing everything – every bit of support – every bit of security

God is graciously isolating him – keeping anybody from helping him

 - 1). Why? To remove everything that would keep him from looking to the Father

To make him feel desperate enough to admit his need – I can’t do this!
- B. Grace doesn’t give up – God is responsible and He will chase the wayward child down!

He will do whatever is necessary to finish the work He’s begun

 - 1). He’s done it so many times in my life and yours
 - 2). You may have never gone wild like this boy – but you’ve backslid a 1000 times
 - a). Your heart has wandered off – you’ve grown cold to God

And He has come to you – lifted you up – stirred your heart again and again and again

O to grace how great a debtor
 Daily I'm constrained to be!
 Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
 Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
 Prone to leave the God I love;
 Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
 Seal it for Thy courts above.

- b). Prone to wander Lord I feel it – but how grateful I am to still be here
 - 1a). Praise God my salvation brought me into a covenant He is responsible for
 - 2a). He will keep me until I'm safe with Him

Watch what the discipline does: Lk 15:17–20 (ESV) “But when he came to himself (**senses**), he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ⁽¹⁸⁾ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ⁽¹⁹⁾ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ ⁽²⁰⁾ And he arose and came to his father. (stop there)

- A. Notice there is confession of sin – that is always necessary when we’ve walked into darkness
1 Jn 1:9 (ESV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- B. I see something else here – something I think a lot of Christians carry around with them
Lk 15:18–19 (ESV) I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ⁽¹⁹⁾ *I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’*
 - 1). How many believers feel they’ve out-sinned God’s grace and His love
 - a). I’ll go back but it will never be the same – I’ll always be a second class citizen
 I get why you can’t treat me as a son – just treat me as a servant
 - 1a). I know what I’ve done – I know how you must feel

Transition: That is why this parable is so important – the father here is a type of God

- A. Notice what the Father does – after this son (the wayward believer) drinks of the world so deeply
Lk 15:20 (ESV) ... But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and *felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*
- A. What! He’s not angry? Wait! He embraces him rather than beating him? He kisses him!
Confession: Lk 15:21 (ESV) And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

- A. I know what I’ve done – I’ll take my place with the servants

Transition: Notice while he’s confessing – the father’s already blessing

Lk 15:22–24 (ESV) But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ⁽²³⁾ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ⁽²⁴⁾ For this my *son* was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

- A. Did he just say “My son” – I heard that did you? He called me Son? He did right?
 - 1). He’s not holding a grudge – He’s not mad – He still loves me!
 - 2). The promises are stable – based on His work and His word
- B. Grace didn’t let him go – it did what was necessary to draw him back to love and blessing

Question: This boy was a recipient of breath-taking grace!

- A. Why is that parable in the Bible?
 - 1). Because there may be someone here who is afraid they out-sinned grace
 Who is heartbroken – thinking “Even if God accepts me it will never be the same”
 - a). I’ll never enjoy that intimacy again – that thrill of being close to Him!
- B. Then my friend this parable shouts out to you – grace is greater than your sin!

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- 1). If you've truly been brought into the promise – God still loves you
 - 2). The fact that you returned from your sin proves that – He drew you back - GRACE
 - 3). The fact that you may be feeling that tug right now to return – Grace!
 - a). Return – enjoy His love again!

Question: What do you think happened to the boy after this?

Do you think he though – pushover – now I can sin anytime I want against Him

- A. Of course not! After being a recipient of such love – He would serve Him willingly - wholeheartedly
 - 1). What understanding grace always does
I want to know and serve one who loves me like that
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CONCLUSION

1. The law did not replace the promise received by faith

- A. God entered into a covenant with Abraham and all who would believe like he did
 - 1). That covenant is unbreakable – so the law coming 100's of years later can't replace it
- B. Then the law must have come for a different reason than making somebody right with God
 - 1). Will see that next week

2. This week I pray God would amaze you with His grace

- A. That the Spirit would give you greater understanding of what God has done for you
 - 1). I pray that you could finally start to rest in the truth of His faithfulness
And finally stop trying to earn what He has already given you as a gift
 - a). Salvation and all the blessing that flow from it