

Galatians

Chapter 3:15-18

January 15, 1995

- **Galatians 3:15-18**

In the previous verses, Paul has asserted that the Judaizers are trying to obtain their justification by works of the law. Remember that in many cases in this book the terms "law" or "works of the law" is not the obedient submission to the law of God through faith but rather a heretical distortion of the law of God where sinful man attempts to be justified by his deeds. After asserting that the Judaizers are guilty of this heresy, he states that a man cannot be justified by the law because those who seek this route to justification must obey every law perfectly. Paul is not charging them with trying to obey the law of God too much, he says that they aren't obeying enough. If they seek justification through the law they must be obedient in all respects. In short, Paul has said that their own false doctrine (false gospel) is what will condemn them.

Additionally, in this entire sustained argument of Paul's, we must go away with the understanding that the debate is not between whether we obey the law or not but rather, it is between obeying the law and receiving justification by faith and obeying the law and receiving justification by how well we obey the law. This second option is one that was devised by man not God.

15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

- Paul uses a human example to demonstrate his point. When people enter into a covenant it is written down, signed, witnessed and notarized after the terms have been clearly spelled out. After the covenant had been established and sealed you wouldn't later add new features or remove previous promises. That is what makes a covenant secure enough to be a covenant. The purpose of the example is to provide a how-much-more argument. If this is the way a covenant works between humans and such a covenant is immutable, how much more would a covenant be that was sworn by God? The answer is infinitely more.

16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

- Paul clarifies that this promise from God which cannot be added to or annulled, was to Abraham and his Seed, not seeds. Paul reveals an incredible understanding of the promise of grace made to Abraham that the recipients of the promise were not the ethnic descendants of Abraham but rather, the promise was to Abraham and Christ. Christ was the Seed that God referred to in Genesis 22. This is a very important understanding because the nation of Israel claimed to be the recipients of the promise because they were the direct descendants of Abraham.
- The wars which continue to this day between the Jews and the Arabs are centered in this very issue. God had told Abraham in Genesis 17 that His covenant would be established through Isaac, the offspring of Sarah; not through Ishmael. The Arabs believe that Ishmael was the child of promise and not Isaac. The wars continue to this day.
- Paul teaches us that the promise to Abraham was also to Christ, the Seed of Abraham. The covenant isn't with the offspring of Abraham but rather those who are in Christ. We are inheritors of the covenant because we are in Christ. This relationship was true for those who lived before Christ and those who lived after. All those who are saved have been so by having a faith like Abraham and being included in Christ.

17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. (NKJV)

- The Judaizers were trying to teach the Gentile Christians that they must obey the law of Moses. They couldn't just learn the new doctrines of Christianity. They had to go all the way back to Moses and understand how God's plan was to be understood. Here Paul takes that argument and tells them that if they are going to go back to Moses to gain an understanding of the promises of God, they must go back not to Moses but 430 years prior to that to Abraham where the promise was given. We must realize that God made a promise to Abraham and sealed it with an oath. It was a promise of the blessing of grace. Then came the law 430

years later and then the fulfillment of the promise of grace came in Christ. The coming of the law was not a momentary diversion from the promise nor did it modify or annul any part of the promise of grace. The law was part of the fulfillment of the promise of grace.

- The law could not change any part of the promise because it had been sealed with an oath. This is a strong ground of confidence for those who are in Christ that God will keep His promise to Abraham and the nations of the world will be blessed; the elect will be an innumerable host in heaven, and God will ensure that He keeps his promise. Heb 6:13-20.