

THE PROOF OF GOD'S COVENANT AND PROMISE GALATIANS 03:15–18

Introduction

Some teachers in the Galatian churches were teaching a false doctrine, a very dangerous doctrine. They were saying that a person was not saved by the grace of God through faith alone; a man had to keep the rituals of the church and focus his life upon the law and upon doing all the good works he could possibly do. Very simply stated, if a man wanted to be acceptable to God, he had to be the very best person he could, be as religious as he could, and keep all the laws of God that he could

This, of course, is totally wrong. A person is justified by faith alone; he is not justified by being religious, by doing good and by keeping the law. Religion, good works and the law all have their place in the plan of God and in the life of man. But man is not saved and made acceptable to God by his own effort. Man cannot earn, win or merit God's acceptance; for no matter how good and disciplined man may become, he is still short of God's glory which is perfection. Despite all of man's goodness and achievements, man is still too often polluted with...

- selfishness
- greed
- injustice
- trespasses
- transgression
- aloofness
- pride
- failure to honour God
- lack of love
- envy
- failure to worship
- impatience
- anger
- unbecoming behavior
- lust
- bitterness
- being easily provoked
- hatred
- unkindness
- failure to endure
- failure to hope
- favoritism
- failure to pray
- immorality
- prejudice
- being puffed up
- evil thoughts

The list could go on and on. The point is that no matter how good we are, we are all guilty of so much so often — we are short of God's glory, ever so short of perfection. Our goodness just cannot earn or merit acceptance with God. If God is going to accept us, it will be because we *believe Him, truly believe that He will accept us* and that He loves us enough to honour that belief. If God does not love us enough to accept our faith in Him, then we are hopelessly lost forever. Faith in Him — in His love and in His promise — is our only hope for salvation and acceptance by God.

This is the point of the present passage. God's covenant and promise to Abraham proves that justification is by faith and not by works of the law.

- I. God gave a covenant that is permanent, lasting (v. 15).
- II. God made His covenant with Abraham and his seed (v. 16).
- III. God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law (v. 17).
- IV. God gave His covenant or inheritance (righteousness) by promise - not by law (v. 18).

I. *Galatians 03:15 God's Covenant and Promises*

God gave a covenant that is permanent, lasting. Paul gives the illustration of a covenant between men. (See *Covenant*, 2 Cor. 3:6; See Rom. 9:4.) A *covenant* (diatheke) is an agreement made between two parties, a special relationship set up and established by two or more persons. The point is that once a covenant has been made and executed, it stands: it cannot be annulled or added to. By law the promises of God's covenant are sealed. Both parties — God and Abraham's seed — are bound to keep their word, their promise to one another.

II. *Galatians 03:16 God's Covenant with Abraham*

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God made His covenant with Abraham and *his seed*. Note that the promise was not given to Abraham alone, but it was also given to the *seed*, the descendants and offspring of Abraham. The promise or covenant with Abraham is covered in the Book of Genesis:

Gen 17:7-8 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

The important question is: Who is meant by the seed of Abraham? Scripture declares that it is Jesus Christ. The word "seed" is singular, not plural. Therefore, God's promise points to one single person, and that person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is...

- the *seed* promised to Abraham.
 - the *seed* who is to receive the promises made to Abraham. This is a phenomenal truth, and it means three significant things.
1. It means that the promises made to Abraham have passed down to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the descendent who is to inherit the *promised land*, the land of Canaan for an *everlasting possession*. Canaan, of course, is a type of heaven and of the new heavens and earth which God has promised to recreate (see *The Promise*, Rom. 4:13). The point is that Jesus Christ is to inherit the world and be exalted as the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, ruling and reigning forever and ever.
 2. It means that believers, too, shall inherit the world and reign with Christ through all eternity. Abraham was promised that he would be the father of many nations or of many children, and believers are those children.

Mat 5:5 *“Blessed are the meek [the humble, trusting believing], for they will inherit the earth.”*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

3. It means that faith is the way men become justified and acceptable to God.

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Rom 4:16 *Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

Gal 3:6-7 *Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.*

Gal 3:9 *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

In summary Abraham believed God, and because he believed, God kept His covenant and promise.

=> Abraham has been given a *seed*, a descendent who has blessed the whole world, that is, Jesus Christ.

=> Abraham has also been given nations of people who are heirs of his and of Christ. And there is only one condition to receiving the inheritance: believing God, that is, following in the “footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had” (Rom. 4:12).

Rom 4:3 *What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

Rom 4:5 *However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Rom 4:13-14 *He, Christ, and his descendants are to receive the promised land — a new heavens and earth that will be perfected eternally. It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless.*

Heb 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Heb 11:13-14, 16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 21:1-7 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."*

III. Galatians 03:17 Covenant and Law

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law. The covenant of faith preceded the covenant of law. The law of God did not even appear upon the scene until four hundred and thirty years later. Note two significant things.

1. When the law was given, the promise to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled; therefore, the law could not void or change the covenant of faith with Abraham. The promises of God to Abraham and his descendent, Jesus Christ, still stood. As Lehman Strauss points out:

=> The covenant of faith finds its roots in eternity past.

John 1:17 *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

=> Since Jesus Christ, who is eternal, existed before Abraham, the covenant of faith was given to Christ even before it was given to Abraham (*Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 45).

2. The covenant made with Abraham told man how he was to follow God and receive the promises of God, that is, by faith. Therefore, when the law was given, it must have been given for a different purpose entirely. It could not have been given to show men how to follow God, for that truth was already established in the covenant of faith given to Abraham.

The point is clear: no man is justified by the law, that is, by self-effort and works, trying to become good and righteous through obeying the law. That was not the purpose of the law. A person is justified by faith and by faith alone. (See Gal. 3:19-22; Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7-13.)

Thought 1. God's covenant of faith or of grace is sure. It cannot be revoked or changed. *Believers* will inherit the promises made to Abraham and Christ.

Luke 21:33 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."*

Rom 4:16 *Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

Heb 6:13,16-18 *When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. (The promise and oath of God are the two undeniable things which guarantee the promise.)*

IV. Galatians 03:18 Covenant — Law — Inheritance

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God gave His covenant or inheritance by promise, not by law.

William Barclay sums up this passage in a most descriptive way.

Again and again Paul comes back to the same point. The whole problem of human life is to get into a right relationship with God. So long as we are afraid of God, so long as God is a grim stranger, there can be no peace in life. How

can we achieve this right relationship? Shall we try to achieve it by a meticulous and even self-torturing obedience to the law, by performing endless deeds, by observing every smallest regulation the law lays down? If we take that way we are forever in default, for man's imperfection can never fully satisfy the perfection of God; we are forever frustrated, forever climbing up a hill in which the peak never comes in sight, forever under condemnation; but if we simply abandon this hopeless struggle and bring ourselves and our sin to God, then the grace of God opens its arms to us and we are at peace with a God who is no longer judge but father. Paul's whole argument is that that is what happened to Abraham; it was on that basis that God's covenant with Abraham was made. And nothing that came in later can change that covenant any more than anything can alter a will that has already been ratified and signed. (The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians. "The Daily Study Bible." Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1954, p. 30.)

The inheritance given to Abraham is that of righteousness, of being accepted by God and given the privilege of living forever with Him in the new heavens and earth. The inheritance was not given to Abraham by law. Abraham could not earn, win or merit it; but as Scripture declares: "God in his grace gave it [the inheritance] to Abraham through a promise."

Thought 1. The same promise is given to believers, that is, to all those who walk in the faith of Abraham: the promise of being counted righteous and acceptable to God, and of being given the privilege of living forever in the new heavens and earth.

John 14:1-2 *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."*

Rom 4:13 *It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*

Rom 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

2 Pet 3:10-13 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ■*

THE PROOF OF THE LAW'S POWERLESSNESS GALATIANS 03:19–22

Introduction

There were some teachers in the Galatian churches who were teaching that a person is justified, that is, acceptable to God because...

- he does the very best he can: he honestly tries to obey the law of God and to do as much good as he can.
- he practices religion: he keeps the rituals, ceremonies and rules of the church.
- he has submitted to the basic ritual of the church (circumcision, church membership, baptism or whatever).

All of these are important: everyone should be faithful in obeying the law, in practicing religion and in being baptised. However, Scripture is abundantly clear: these are not the things that *actually justify* a person. Jesus Christ alone justifies a person. Man can do nothing whatsoever — exert no energy, no effort, no work — to make himself acceptable to God. A person is acceptable and justified before God only when he believes, truly believes in God's Son, Jesus Christ. There are many people...

- who exert all kinds of energy and effort in keeping the law and doing the best they can, but they *do not believe in Jesus Christ*.
- who practice religion, but they *do not believe in Jesus Christ*.
- who have been circumcised and baptised, but they *do not believe in Jesus Christ*.

The raw energy — the fundamental act — that saves a person is *faith in Jesus Christ, true faith* in God's very own Son. When a person truly believes in God's Son, God takes that person's belief and counts his belief as righteousness. God accepts that person because he honours God's Son — honours Jesus Christ by entrusting and giving all he is and has into His keeping.

Since this is so, why then did God give the law to man? If we are not saved and justified by obeying the law of God and doing the best we can, what is the purpose of the law? This is the discussion of this passage: to show that the law is powerless in saving a man. And the powerlessness of the law actually proves that a person is justified or made acceptable to God by faith.

- I. The law was given to reveal sin — to make men more aware of their sins (v. 19).
 - II. The law was temporary (v. 19).
 - III. The law was not given by God, but through a mediator; therefore, it is inferior (vv. 19-20).
 - IV. The law has no power to give life (v. 21).
 - V. The law declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin (v. 22).
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I. *Galatians 03:19 The Purpose of Law*

How do we know that the law does not justify or make a person acceptable to God?

Because the law was given to reveal sin — to make people more aware of their sins. Note the crucial fact: the law was not given to make men righteous, but...

- to make men aware of their sin and condemnation.
- to show men that they are short of God's glory.
- to stir men to pay attention to the fact that they are sinners.
- to stop every mouth from boasting and claiming self-righteousness.
- to awaken men to their crying need for God's help.
- to plant in man's mind that he desperately needs God to save him from sin and death.
- to arouse every mouth to confess its need for a Saviour from sin and its punishment (death).

Rom 3:20 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Rom 5:20 *The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.*

Rom 7:7 *What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."*

Gal 3:19 *What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.*

Gal 3:24 *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

1 Tim 1:9 *We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers.*

II. *Galatians 03:19 Law was Temporary*

How do we know that the law does not justify or make a person acceptable to God?

Because the law was temporary. It had a certain course to run and when it was run, it was to be set aside. To say that the law was temporary frightens some believers, for they fear that such a teaching makes way for loose living. Nothing could be further from the truth. Note what Scripture says:

Gal 3:19 *[The law] It was added because of transgressions until the Seed...had come.*

When Jesus Christ came, the law was to be set aside. The law was meant to have only a temporary purpose and life span. It was to extend only from Moses to Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is “the seed” to whom the promise of righteousness was given. God *never intended the law* to be the way of salvation. It was only for the temporary purpose of showing men their sin and its awfulness.

=> However, note: since Jesus Christ has come, He (His perfect life and righteousness) is to be the standard for men. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law; that is, in Jesus Christ God gave man more than just mere words to describe how He wants man to live. He gave man the Life, the Person who perfectly pictures and demonstrates the law before the world's very eyes. Jesus Christ is the Picture, the Living Example, the Pattern and the Demonstration of life as it is to be lived. He is the Perfect Picture of God's will, the Ideal Man, the Representative Man, the Pattern for all men.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Col 1:15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the First-born over all creation.*

Heb 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

1 Pet 2:21-23 *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

Now note: since the law was meant to be temporary until Christ came, does that mean that the law has no value for men today? Could we just cut the law out of our Bibles and be just as well off? No, a thousand times no! Jesus Christ fulfilled the law; therefore, He embodies the law. True, He embodies much more than the law, but He does embody the law. The law and its righteousness is part of His nature. Therefore, when a man looks at Jesus Christ, he sees the perfection of His nature, and that perfection includes the righteousness of the law. To cut the law out of our Bibles would be to erase part of our understanding of Jesus Christ and part of His very nature.

Mat 5:17 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”*

Rom 8:3 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.*

Gal 5:16-18 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit*

what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Heb 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

Heb 10:15-17 *The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."*

Note another point as well: the law is still in force for the unbelieving world. Why? Because all unbelievers who have not trusted Jesus Christ are trusting their own righteousness to make them acceptable to God. They are still trying to become righteous by the law. Therefore, God shall judge them by the law.

Rom 10:3-4 *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Gal 3:10 *All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."*

Mathew Henry points out another fact that should be noted: the law can still be used to convince men of sin and to restrain them from living loose and evil lives (*Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 661).

III. **Galatians 03:19–20** *Law is Inferior*

How do we know that the law does not justify or make a person acceptable to God? Because the law was not given directly by God, but through a mediator; therefore, it is inferior. Two arguments show this.

1. The law was not given directly by God. The law came from God, but it was given by angels to Moses and then to man. Moses stood as a mediator between God and man in the giving of the law; therefore, the law came to man as a second-hand thing. But not the promise of God. God Himself gave the promise of grace and righteousness (that is, His acceptance and eternal life or the promised land). Abraham received the promise of God directly from God. Therefore, the promise of God is bound to be superior to the law, for it involves more of a personal contact (relationship) with God.
2. The law was between two parties — man and God. In the covenant of law, man and God both had responsibilities or work to do. Man had to keep the law, and if he did, God would act and reward him with the gift of righteousness. The gift of righteousness was conditional under the law.

However, the promise of righteousness or grace was given by God alone. No one could break that promise. If man (Abraham) simply believed God's promise, he received the promise of righteousness and grace.

IV. Galatians 03:21 Law is Powerless

How do we know that the law does not justify or make a person acceptable to God? Because the law has no power to give life.

1. The law is only words and rules. It can only inject the idea of behaviour into the mind of a person. It can only demand — demand that each precept be kept and obeyed. The law is mere words, cold and lifeless. It is entirely external to man, outside the body of man. It has no spirit, no life, no power to enable a person to do the law. It cannot help man to any degree whatsoever as he tries to keep the law. The law demands obedience, but it leaves man entirely on his own as he struggles to obey.
2. The law cannot give life to man. It is not a living being with the power to give life. If it was, then righteousness would have come by law. But, as stated, the law has no life and it has no power. It is mere writing, mere words and rules. However, this is not true of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is both a Person and life. Therefore, He is able to put spirit and life to the words and rules of the law. He is able to live the life described by the words and rules. As such, He is able to inject both the idea and the power to behave into a person's mind and life. It is now His life that sets the standard and the rule for the believer; it is His spirit and life that gives the believer power to obey.

Mat 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”

Rom 3:20-22 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.

Rom 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.

Heb 7:19 (For the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

V. Galatians 03:22 Law Declares All Men Prisoners of Sin

How do we know that the law does not justify or make a person acceptable to God? Because the law declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin. Note several significant facts.

1. "The Scripture" refers to the law. The law of God, or the Scripture, is conclusive: all men are lawbreakers — all men are prisoners of sin.
2. *Prisoners of sin* (hupo hamartian) means to be shut up as a hostage in the solitary hopeless depths or solitary confinement of a dungeon.

Rom 3:9-20 *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

Rom 11:32 *For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.*

3. The great purpose of the law is stated again: to drive men to seek the promise of Jesus Christ, that is, righteousness by faith. When men look at the law and see that they are sinners, they are driven to seek a Saviour, even Jesus Christ. Man can seek and trust the righteousness which Jesus Christ has secured. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ judges that man righteous, and the man becomes a "participant in the divine nature of God" (2 Pet. 1:4).

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Gal 3:6 *Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ■*

THE PROOF OF WHAT FAITH DOES FOR US

GALATIANS 03:23–29

Introduction

Some in the churches of Galatia were spreading a false teaching. They were saying that a person is justified by works and law; that is, that a person becomes acceptable to God by subjecting himself to Christ, but he must also subject himself to the law and do the very best he can. Christ is important, yes, but a commitment to live by the law — a commitment to do the very best one can — is also essential in order to be saved and acceptable to God.

The false teaching sounds good, for a person not only should, but he must, do the best he can. Actually a person should not only do the best he can in seeking God, but in everything he undertakes. However, Scripture is very clear: man is not justified by being good and doing good. Man just cannot be good enough nor do enough good to become perfect. God is perfect; therefore, man must become perfect if he is to live with God.

How then can a person become acceptable to God? By faith in Jesus Christ. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he honours God's Son, and God honours the person who honours His Son. God honours the person by doing the very thing the person believes. Therefore, when a person honours God's Son by believing in Him, God honours the person by doing the very thing for which the person trusted Christ. God counts the person righteous, credits his faith as righteousness. Note, however: belief does not mean *mental assent*, just believing in one's thoughts and mind that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. True belief is *spiritual commitment*, the commitment of one's heart and life — all that one is and all that one has to Christ.

How do we know that we are justified by faith, and not by the law and doing the best we can? Because of what faith does for us.

- I. Faith in Christ frees us from supervision of the law (vv. 23-25).
- II. Faith makes us children of God (vv. 26-27).
- III. Faith in Christ makes us one: eliminates all distinctions and prejudices (v. 28).
- IV. Faith in Christ makes us heirs of the promise (v. 29).

I. *Galatians 03:23–25 Faith Frees Man from the Supervision of Law*

Faith in Christ frees us from supervision of the law. There are three pictures that clearly illustrate this point.

1. The law was a prison for man. Before faith came, that is, before Christ died, “men were held prisoners by the law.” The word for *held* (ephrouroumetha) means to be guarded, kept in custody, imprisoned. Very simply, the law locks man up under sin; it imprisons and holds man in bondage to sin. How?
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- a. The law shows man exactly where he fails — exactly where he comes short. There is no question about it: the law said to do this, but the man did that. He did not do this. The failure is clearly spelled out, just as clearly as a speed limit sign spells out the violation of the speeder.
- b. The law accuses and condemns man. As soon as a person violates the law, the law charges him. The law is in black and white, written down, so there is no question about it having been broken. Therefore, it preys upon his mind, cuts and convicts his heart. Guilt and conviction take over and the man is troubled and vexed to varying degrees, all dependent on the seriousness of the violation.
- c. The law has no life and no power to deliver man from the punishment due him for his violation. This is the whole point: the law reveals the violation and condemns man; it imprisons him. The law does not deliver man: it condemns man to bondage. It continues and continues to point out man's sins and failures. And the case of the law is endless: its finger of accusation points out the man's failure every time he violates it. The bondage to the law is perpetual.

The only hope for man is for someone to appear on the scene with the power to release him. That someone has appeared: Jesus Christ has come to set us free. But note: as prisoners we have to accept His deliverance. The choice is ours. We can believe and trust His power to deliver us or not.

2. The law was a *guardian* or *teacher* (*paidagogos*) for man. The NIV Study Bible says that the law was put in charge of man to lead him to Christ. Simply stated, the law was man's guardian to lead him to see his need for Christ. The *paidagogos* was usually a trusted slave who was in charge of a child's moral welfare, but he had one particular duty to which Paul was referring. Every day the guardian took the child to school and delivered him to the teacher. And then at the end of the day, he returned for the child and brought him safely back home. This was what the law was to do. The law was to lead man to Christ, the true Teacher. The law does this by showing man that he is utterly unable to secure righteousness by himself. He must look to Christ, the real Teacher, for righteousness and acceptance by God, that is, for justification by faith.
3. The law kept man in bondage to the law. But once Christ (faith in Him) came, there was no need for the law nor for any other guardian, for Jesus Christ brings us face-to-face with God. Thus it is the power of faith in Christ that truly frees man from the bondage of the law.

II. *Galatians 03:26-27 Faith Makes Us Children of God*

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by observing the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith makes us children of God. As stated in the previous point, Jesus Christ bring us face to face with God. He stirs God to adopt us as children of God.

How? by faith. Note two crucial points.

1. Faith causes us to focus upon God's Son, Jesus Christ. Man can rest upon one thing: God will accept anyone who *focuses* upon His Son Jesus Christ, for God loves His Son to the ultimate degree. God is no less than any normal father who loves his son. In fact, God is much more than man; He is perfect. Therefore, God loves His Son, Jesus Christ, with a perfect love. This simply means that God will honour any person who honours His Son by believing and trusting Him. If a person believes in Jesus Christ for righteousness, then God will honour that man by counting him righteous.

The point is this: the person who tries to become acceptable to God by the law and by doing the best he can — the man who focuses upon the law and good works — that man keeps his mind upon the law and struggles to be good. God is not the centre and focus of his thoughts and life; the law and works are.

But the person who has *faith in Jesus Christ* focuses upon Christ. He honours God's Son: therefore, God accepts his faith, the focus of his life, as righteousness. The person becomes acceptable to God. God actually accepts the person as a child of His. How is this possible? The answer is the subject of the following point.

2. Faith clothes us with Christ, with His righteousness and Sonship. This is a most wonderful truth, for it tells us that we can actually “put on” Christ. We can actually clothe ourselves with Christ's — a glorious revelation! The phrase put on or clothe is the picture of putting on clothes, of covering oneself. All that Christ is can cover us. Christ is two things that hold great significance for us.
 - a. Christ is the very embodiment of righteousness. He is the Son of God who came to earth to secure righteousness for us. He lived a sinless and perfect life; He always obeyed God, never violating the law or will of God — not even once. Therefore, He was the Perfect, Ideal Man; He was the Pattern of what every man should be. As the Ideal and Perfect pattern. He could represent all men; and this is exactly what happened. Jesus Christ is our righteousness. When we believe in Him, God clothes us with Christ, with His righteousness. And, because we are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God sees us in His Son and accepts us.

Picture this illustration. If my left hand wraps itself around the index finger of my right hand, what is seen? My left hand, not my index finger, for my left hand covers my index finger. Now, let my left hand represent Christ, and my index finger me. When Christ covers me, who is seen? Christ, of course, not me; for Christ covers me. So it is with faith. When I believe in Jesus Christ, my faith covers me with Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Phil 3:9 *And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Heb 7:25-26 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Acts 13:39 *Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

- b. Christ is the Son of God; therefore, to be clothed with Christ means that we are covered with His Sonship. When God looks at the believer, He sees His Son Jesus Christ covering him; therefore, He counts the believer as a son of His. This is the way we become children of God: by faith in Jesus Christ, God's Son. When we believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, God takes our faith and places us in Christ, and to be in Christ is to be in the Sonship of Christ. God actually sees us in Jesus Christ, in His Son. Therefore, he accepts us as children of His — all because our faith has covered us with Christ. (See *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6.)

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Gal 3:27 *For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self [Christ], created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self [Christ], which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

GALATIANS 03:27 BAPTISM

For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. Galatians 03:27

Note the reference to baptism instead of belief.

Why did Paul switch from using the word believe to the word baptism? Why did he not say:

For all of you who have believed in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ?

Is Paul saying that a person is *saved* by baptism? Any thinking and honest person knows that there are thousands and thousands of people who have been baptised and yet they live like the devil himself. Therefore, Paul could not mean that it is baptism that causes God to clothe a person with Christ.

Similarly, any honest and thinking person knows that there are thousands and thousands of people who *profess faith* and yet live like the devil himself. Therefore, Paul could not mean what the general public means by faith.

What Paul is saying is what Scripture declares: a true believer fulfils all the righteousness of Christ which includes baptism. The believer lives for Christ and living for Christ includes the ordinance that pictures his faith. Baptism (and repentance) is the *first and immediate* evidence of faith; therefore, faith and baptism are closely linked, so closely that Paul can speak of baptism as faith. (See *Baptism*, Rom. 6:3-5; *Baptism*, Acts 2:38.) □

III. **Galatians 03:28 Faith Makes Us One in Christ**

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith in Christ makes us one, eliminating all distinctions and prejudices.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (v. 28).

This is a startling truth: Jesus Christ is the answer to all the prejudice, bitterness, hatred, oppression and inequalities of earth. How can He solve the divisions among men? Note the phenomenal statement: “You are all one in Christ.” What is there about Jesus Christ that makes us one?

1. Every believer stands on an equal footing before Jesus Christ: the footing of faith. No person is accepted for any other reason than faith. All persons who come to Jesus Christ come...

- because they are ever so short of Christ.
- because they are ever so different from Christ.
- because they are ever so imperfect.

Yet, Jesus Christ accepts them. Jesus Christ reaches out and embraces all believers despite their being so much less and so different from Him. Therefore, when we look at another believer and he differs from us, we do just what Jesus Christ did for us. We love, accept and embrace him; differences do not matter. All that matters is love, acceptance and brotherhood in Christ.

2. Every true believer loves and stands *in Jesus Christ*. Therefore, when we look at another believer we see him *in Christ*. We do not see the believer, but we see Christ covering the believer. We pay no attention to his colour, nationality, sex, social status or any other differences. Differences just do not matter. All that matters is that we all grow into the image of Christ — love, accept and become more and more the brothers and sisters of God.

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 4:13 *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

James 2:5 *Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Psa 119:63 *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow; your precepts.*

Prov 22:2 *Rich and poor have this in common: The Lord is the Maker of them all.*

IV. Galatians 03:29 Faith and Inheritance

How do we know that we are justified by faith and not by the law and by doing the best we can? Because faith in Christ makes us heirs of the promise.

⇒ Remember the promise made to Abraham: the promise of God's blessing, of God's presence and leadership, of being accepted by God and given the privilege of living forever in the land of Canaan (the type and symbol of heaven, of the new heavens and earth). (See Gal. 3:15-18.)

The point is this: Jesus Christ is the heir of Abraham; therefore, if a person is *in Christ*, then he inherits the promise made to Abraham. He inherits the promise of God's acceptance, of righteousness, and of living forever in the new heavens and earth as a son of God.

John 14:1-2 *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”*

Rom 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Gal 4:7 *So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Heb 6:17 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you. ■*

THE PROOF OF CHRIST AND THE FULLNESS OF TIME

GALATIANS 04:01–07

Introduction

Some in the churches of Galatia were teaching that a person is saved by law; that is, he is saved by being good and religious and by doing the best he can. Of course, every person...

- should be good, ever striving to be better and better
- should be faithful in worshipping God *in church*
- should do the best he can — always

However, Scripture is clear and forceful: a person is not saved by these things, for no amount of effort, energy or work can make a person perfect. And to be acceptable to God — to be given the right to live with God — a person must be perfect.

How then can man be saved — be justified and made acceptable to God? This passage deals with the issue; it gives the answer. It shows how Christ and the fullness of time prove that a man is justified by faith and not by law nor by works.

I. There was a time when the world was in bondage (vv. 1-3).

II. There was a fullness of time when God delivered the world (vv. 4-7).

I. *Galatians 04:01–03 Law: Basic Principles of the World, Misconceptions of God*

There was a time when the world was in bondage. The illustration is brief, yet descriptive: an heir who is a young child is under the care of guardians, trustees or managers until the time appointed for him to receive his inheritance. Until the appointed time arrives, he has no more right to the inheritance than a slave.

The point is striking: there was a time when man was in bondage under the elementary, basic principles of the world. What is meant by the *elementary, basic principles* of the world? Very simply, it means man's *elementary or basic notions and ideas about God and the various ways he tries to approach God*. Letting Scripture interpret Scripture:

- => It means the first principles (the ABC's) of the Word of God, that is, the sacrifices, observances, rituals and ceremonies of the Old Testament (Heb. 5:12).
 - => It means philosophy, the traditions of men and the rudimentary or elementary teachings of men — the ABC approaches of men to God (Col. 2:8).
 - => It means the elements, the heavenly bodies of the universe (2 Pet. 3:10). (There have always been men who tried to rule their lives by the heavenly bodies or astrology and the signs of the zodiac.)
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=> It means the ordinances, rules and regulations of men (Col. 2:20).

=> It means the ceremonial laws, the legal yoke placed upon men as they try to approach God (Acts 15:10).

=> It means the law of the Old Testament, the yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1; see 4:3).

=> It means the observances of religious days, months and years (Gal. 4:9).

Very simply, the elementary, basic principles of the world refers to all the things that men use to get right with God and to secure the favour and approval of God. It refers to anything that man uses to justify himself before God, any approach to God that is taken by man through his own energy and effort...

- law or works
- church memberships ordinance
- philosophy or religion
- ritual or ceremony
- astrology or science

The point is this: before Christ, all approaches to God were only elementary approaches. No approach was the right approach, for man had only little knowledge of God — an elementary knowledge that required the *discipline and guidance of the law*.

Note a critical point: the Galatians were about to turn back to the elementary, basic principles about God, to their own notions about God (Gal. 4:9-11). Does this mean they were about to turn back to their pagan idolatrous worship? No, that was not what they were about to do. What were they turning back to? The false teachers (Judaizers) in Galatia were teaching that a man was to approach God by the law and works — that a man became acceptable to God by his own efforts, by working and doing as much good as he could.

Of course, this is exactly what all religious people do, no matter their religion: they try to please their god, to secure the god's approval by doing what pleases him. This means that all religions (except Christianity) are religions of works and of law. Therefore, if the Galatians subjected themselves to the law and to a religion of works, they would be *returning* to a life of bondage — the bondage of working and working to get God to pay attention to them and to receive and accept them.

The crucial point is this: there is no difference between seeking God through the law and seeking God through pagan worship. The foundation of all religious seeking (except Christianity) is the same: that of working to keep the laws that please a person's god — that of doing good so that a person's *god* will accept him.

Note that Paul calls man's elementary, basic notions of God weak and miserable principles.

- a. The law and other approaches to God are weak in that they are helpless in saving man. The law itself could only point out man's sin, but it could never justify and make him acceptable to God.

- b. The law and other approaches to God are miserable, that is worthless in saving man. The law itself is meaningless, of no use whatsoever in justifying and making man acceptable to God. It is not the law nor man's works and attempts to be good that saves him.

Note also that Paul illustrates his point by referring to special religious holidays. The point is that ritual, ceremony, and the keeping of religious days will not justify and make a person acceptable before God. Christ and Christ alone — faith in Him — saves a person.

1. Note the results of backsliding, of turning back to the world and seeking to please God by self-effort and self-righteousness.
 - a. A person becomes enslaved in that he tries and tries to please God by keeping the rules of the law, but he finds he cannot. But he still slavishly tries and tries again. However, it is all to no avail, for the man finds himself still in the bondage of sin and death. He still sins and he still dies, and there is no absolute assurance within of eternal life. And it is the lack of assurance, of knowing that one is acceptable to God, which is so enslaving. The question and doubt of living with God gnaws and gnaws at man — always without the sure knowledge and assurance of God's love. Perfect assurance, confidence and security come only through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. A person lives a wasted life. Every approach to God fails except faith in Jesus Christ. Every approach leads to death and condemnation; therefore, every life that approaches God by any other means than faith in Jesus Christ is a wasted life.

Luke 9:62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Gal 4:9 But now that you know God — or rather are known by God — how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?

Heb 10:38 "But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

Rev 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

However, when everything was ready for the world to come of age and to gain an adult knowledge of God, Christ came to release men from the law and to reveal that man was intended to have a father-son relationship with God. In Christ men are no

longer to be slaves to the law, they are to be sons of God. In Christ they are to enter into their inheritance.

1 Cor 14:20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

Eph 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

Heb 5:12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

II. Galatians 04:04–07 Adoption and Redemption

There was a fullness of time when God delivered the world. This is one of the great passages of Scripture dealing with the mission or work of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Note several significant points.

1. Note that God had prepared the world for the coming of Christ (see *Fullness of Time*, Gal. 4:4).
2. Note that God sent His own Son into the world to deliver men. It was not an angel or some other creature that God sent — nor was it some great leader from among men. It was God's very Son that He sent. God cared and loved men so much that He would send no less than His own Son to deliver men from the terrible condemnation of the law: the bondage of sin and death.

John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”

John 7:29 “But I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”

John 9:4 “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

John 10:36-38 “What about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God's Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it,

even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

3. Note that God sent His Son *born of a woman* (genomenon ek gunaikos). He came into the world just as all men do, through a woman. But note the most glorious truth: He was “sent” by God. Jesus Christ was “His Son,” the Son of God. God spoke the Word and the woman conceived miraculously. The Virgin Birth did take place: God’s very own Son has been sent into the world *as a man* to save men. (See *Jesus Christ, Son of God*, Mt. 1:16; *Jesus Christ, Son of God Virgin*, Mt. 1:23; *Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ*, Lk. 1:27; note, 1:34-35. Especially see Lk. 1:27.)

Luke 1:31 *“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”*

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Phil 2:7 *But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

1 John 4:2 *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*

4. Note that God sent His Son born under the law. Jesus Christ had to live under the law in order to secure the perfect righteousness of the law for man. He had to obey the law in every single precept and stand before God as the Perfect and Ideal Man — the Ideal Embodiment of Righteousness. As stated, He had to do what no other person had ever done: secure the Ideal Righteousness and Perfection so that the Ideal and Perfect could stand for all men.

Rom 8:3-4 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:25-26 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

5. Note why God sent His Son: to redeem men (see note, *Redemption*, Gal. 3:13-14).
6. Note the result of God sending His Son to redeem men.
 - a. Believers are adopted — receive the full rights — as sons of God. When a person believes *in Jesus Christ*, God takes his faith and counts the person as being *in Jesus Christ*. Since Christ is God’s Son, the believer is counted as a son of God — all because he is seen as being *in Jesus Christ*. His faith *in Jesus Christ* causes God to cover him with the Sonship of His Son, to adopt him as a son of God. (See notes, *Believers, Position*, pt. 2, Gal. 3:26-27; *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6.)

John 1:12 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*

Rom 8:15 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

Gal 4:4-6 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

- b. Believers receive assurance of being accepted by God through the Spirit of His Son. The Spirit of Christ is sent by God to dwell in our hearts and to give us a personal relationship with God. The Spirit of Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, gives us a fellowship of communication and communion with God: He stirs our hearts to cry out to God as our Father: “Father, Father.”

Rom 8:16 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.*

Gal 4:6 *Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

1 John 3:24 *Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.*

1 John 4:13 *We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

1 John 5:6 *This is the one who came by water and blood - Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*

- c. Believers are made heirs of God. But note: they are heirs because they are sons of God. Both sonship and heirship are “through Christ” — through faith in Him.

Rom 8:16-17 *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 3:29 *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

Heb 1:14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

Heb 6:17 *Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you. ■*

GALATIANS 04: 04 FULLNESS OF TIME

*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law. **Galatians 04:04***

The coming of Christ upon the world scene was not by chance. His coming was under the strategic timing providentially set by God. His coming was not one day before or behind the appointed time (see Mk. 1:15). A child who is placed under the control of

guardians is under their control until “the time set by his father” (Gal. 4:2). God and God alone decided the fullness of time for the coming of Christ. Christ was born of a particular person, at a particular time, in a particular way (incarnation), and under a particular system (the law). He shared the frustration and agony of being subjected to the very system from which He came to save men. The world had been wonderfully prepared for His coming.

1. The law had done its educational work. It had shown through the Jewish nation that men are terrible transgressors and despite all of God’s favour and blessings, men still failed to worship God in love. The world now had a picture of the depraved heart of man. (See Rom. 3:10-18.)
2. The world was full of people spiritually starved. The worship of self, pleasure, gods and philosophical ethics - all had left many empty and barren. The soul was now ready to have its hunger met.
3. The world was at peace under Roman rule. The world was an open door for the spread of the gospel - without any restraint.
4. The world spoke Greek as a basic language, making communication possible with many from all over the world.
5. The world had a system of roads for mass travel which allowed Christian missionaries to reach the farthest parts of the earth. It also brought commercial travellers to metropolitan centres where Christian believers were concentrated.

Mark 1:15 “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Gal 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

1 Tim 2:6 Who gave himself as a ransom for all men - the testimony given in its proper time.

Titus 1:3 And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.

Heb 9:26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. □

GALATIANS 04:05-06 ADOPTION

To redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who called out, "Abba, Father." Galatians 04:05-06

The word *rights* or *adoption* (huiothesia) means *to place as a son*. The picture of adoption is a beautiful picture of what God does for the Christian. In the ancient world the family was based on a Roman law called "patria potestas," the father's power. The law gave the father absolute authority over his children so long as the father lived. He could work, enslave, sell, and if he wished, he could pronounce the death penalty. Regardless of the child's adult age, the father held all power over personal and property rights.

Therefore, adoption was a serious matter. Yet, it was a common practice to ensure that a family would not become extinct — by having no male children. And when a child was adopted, three legal steps were taken.

1. The adopted son was adopted permanently. He could not be adopted today and disinherited tomorrow. He became a son of the father — forever. He was eternally secure as a son.
2. The adopted son immediately had all the rights of a legitimate son in the new family.
3. The adopted son completely lost all rights in his old family. The adopted son was looked upon as a new person — so new that old debts and obligations connected with his former family were cancelled out and abolished as if they never existed.

The Bible says several things about the believer's adoption as a son of God.

1. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God - forever. He is eternally secure as a child of God. But the new relationship is established only when a person comes to Christ through faith (Gal. 3:26; 4:4-5).
2. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God as father. The believer has all the rights and privileges of a genuine son of God (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).
3. The believer's adoption establishes a new dynamic experience with God as father, a moment by moment access into His very presence (Rom. 8:14, 16; Gal. 4:6).
4. The believer's adoption gives him a very special relationship with other children of God — a family relationship that binds him with others in an unparalleled spiritual union (See Eph. 2:11-18; 2:19-22; 3:6; 4:4-6; 4:17-19. See Acts 2:42; Mt. 12:46-50.)

5. The believer's adoption makes him a new person. The believer has been taken out from under the authority and power of the world and its sin. The believer is *placed as a son* into the family and authority of God. The old life with all of its debts and obligations are cancelled and wiped out (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-27; 2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 4:22; 4:24.)
6. The believer's adoption is to be fully realized in the future at the return of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:19; Eph. 1:14; 1 Th. 4:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:2).
7. The believer's adoption and its joy will be shared by all creation on a cosmic scale (Rom. 8:21). There is to be a new heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:12-14; Rev. 21:1-7). □

MATHEW 01: 16
BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD

*And Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. **Mathew 01:16***

Note the changed expression from "the father of". Jesus was born of Mary but not of Joseph. Joseph was the husband of Mary, but Jesus was not born of Joseph. He was born of the Holy Spirit through Mary.

This stresses a vital fact: Jesus was not born of a man, but of the Holy Spirit. He was Divine, yet human through His conception in Mary. He was God-Man, fully God and fully man. The real significance of this is that as God, He had the *capacity not to sin*. No other man since Adam has ever had this capacity, for all other men have had a human father and human mother, a father and mother contaminated with a sinful human nature. Therefore, the child of a man is born with the same nature, a nature that *cannot help but sin*. However Jesus Christ, as the only begotten Son of God born of the Holy Spirit, had the capacity to live a perfect and righteous life. He had the capacity never to sin.

However, Jesus Christ, as man, also had the capacity to sin. He suffered the pull and strain and suffering of temptation as all men do. He could have *willed* to sin. (Jn. 6:38.)

But there is this glorious difference. He utilized the capacity never to sin. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered (Heb. 5:8). He never gave in to temptation; He never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). Thereby He became the Perfect and Ideal Man in whom all men find their salvation. □

MATHEW 01:23
THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD

*“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” – which means, “God with us”. **Mathew 01:23***

Four convincing things about the virgin birth of Christ are:

1. The concern and great pains to which Mathew went in pointing out the supernatural birth of Jesus. He said very pointedly, “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ [not just Jesus, but “Jesus Christ, the Messiah] came about.”
 - a. “Mary...was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit” (v. 18).
 - b. “What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (v. 20).
 - c. “All this took place to fulfill [the prophecy]... ‘The virgin...will give birth to a son. They will call Him Immanuel... ‘God with us.’” (v. 22-23)
 - d. “They will call Him Immanuel...God With Us” (v. 23)

Matthew was not interested in giving a detailed account of Jesus’ birth. His concern was simply to draw the reader’s attention to two important facts.

First, the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah’s birth were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Second, the Jews needed to know that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, especially those who misinterpreted the Old Testament prophecies and who were not expecting the Messiah to be virgin born. One of the slanderous reports facing the early Christian believers was that Jesus was born out of wedlock.

Isa 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

Isa 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Luke 1:31 *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.*

Luke 2:7 *And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Rom 8:3 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.*

Gal 4:4-5 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

Phil 2:6-7 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

1 John 4:2 *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*

2. The simple profession of Mary that shows shock and amazement: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Lk. 1:34).
3. Note the mystery of life about which man knows so little.

Eccl 11:5 *As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother’s womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.*

Psa 139:13-15 *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

4. Note the mystery of godliness.

1 Tim 3:16 *Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (see Gal.4:4; 1 Jn.1:1-3)*

Heb 2:14-17 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

Phi 2:5-7 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

2 Cor 5:19 *That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

John 14:9 *Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

John 10:33 *"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." □*

LUKE 01: 27 VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

*To a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **Luke 01:27***

In looking at the virgin birth of Christ, man needs to think deeply and honestly. Both are necessary: man must be honest, and he must engage in concentrated thought. One question needs to be asked. Why would God's Son have to enter the world through a virgin? Or more simply put, why was Christ born of a virgin? Why was a virgin birth necessary? (Note: Mary confirmed that she was a virgin, v. 34.)

1. The birth of God's Son required a miracle. He could not be born through the natural process as other men are. If He had been born as other men, His very birth would indicate that He was no more than mere man. Very simply, any person who enters the world through a man and a woman is a mere man or a mere woman. He or she can be nothing more. But this is not so with Christ. Christ already existed. Therefore, if God willed to send His Son into the world, He would have to choose another way. All Christ needed was a body. As He Himself said to God the Father: "A body you prepared for me" (Heb. 10:5).
2. The birth of God's Son required a combined act on God's part and on woman's part. If God's Son was to become a man and identify with men, He had to come through the process of conception through a woman. Why? Because man can only come through the woman. Therefore, if God willed to send His Son into the world as a man, He would have to perform a miracle, causing Mary to conceive by an act of His divine power.

Thought 1. A question needs to be asked. Why is it so hard to believe that God can cause Mary to miraculously conceive? Why is it so hard to believe that God exists and that, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16)?

Thought 2. Just imagine what science can do in the fertilization of female eggs today. Is God not able to do so much more? How foolish our unbelief causes us to act. The problem is not God, but our faith: “For nothing is impossible with God” (Lk. 1:37; 18:27. See Heb. 11:6, which is a warning to all.)

3. The birth of God’s Son required a miraculous nature — both a divine nature and a human nature.

=> He had to be born of a woman to partake of human nature. (Heb. 2:14-18.)

=> He had to be born by a miraculous act of God so as not to partake of man’s corruption. This was critical if we are to escape corruption and live forever. Think about it. Our faith must be in an incorruptible Saviour if we are to be covered by His incorruption. God had to identify with us by becoming one with us and by conquering our depraved and doomed nature. (See *Birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God*, Mt. 1:16).

4. The birth of God’s Son required the birth of a perfect nature. Why? Because a perfect life needed to be lived. Righteousness, that is, perfection, needed to be secured. An Ideal Life (that is, a perfect, righteous life) had to be lived so that it could stand for and cover all men in perfection and in righteousness. Honest thought confesses that no man has been or is perfect. Man comes short. His *coming short* of God’s glory is tragically pictured in the ultimate fate of life: death.

But God acted. God did everything to secure righteousness and perfection for man. He took every step and performed every act necessary to save His people from their sins and from death. He did it from beginning to end, from birth to exaltation. God sent His Son into the world, not through a man and a woman but through a miraculous act of His own upon the virgin Mary. Jesus Christ was thereby the God-Man. This says at least four things.

- a. As God-Man, Christ was able to consummate both the human and divine. He had the capacity and innate power not to sin (See *Birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God*, Mt. 1:16). Therefore His Godly nature empowered Him to live righteously, never doing wrong and always choosing and doing right (Heb. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21). By living a sinless life, Christ was able to secure righteousness, the Ideal Righteousness, that will cover and stand for all men.
- b. As God-Man, Christ was also able to bear the sins and the judgment of sin for all men. When He died, He died as the Perfect and Ideal Man. Therefore, His death is able to cover and stand for all men.
- c. As God-Man, Christ was able to arise from the dead. Note the phenomenal words: “regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and

who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 1:3-4). He lived a perfect and holy life by which He became the Perfect and Ideal Man; therefore, His resurrection covers and stands for every man.

- d. As God-Man, Christ was exalted to sit at the right hand of the Father — to live eternally in the heavenly dimension of being, in God’s very own presence. As the Perfect and Ideal Man, His exaltation into the heavenly or spiritual dimension is able to blaze the path into heaven for every man. He is the forerunner to heaven for every man (Heb. 6:20). His exaltation as the Ideal Man covers and stands for the exaltation of every man.
5. The birth of God’s Son required the creative Word of God. God created the world by simply speaking the Word. God always creates by the power of His Word and the power of His Word alone. Therefore, when God chose...
- to create a body for His Son, He created that body by simply speaking the Word (Heb. 10:5).
 - to send His Son into the world, He sent His Son by simply speaking the Word.

It is the same with the new birth or the recreation of man’s spirit. It is by the Word of God, God’s simply speaking the Word, that man is born again. The act of the spiritual birth, of the recreation, is not seen, felt, or touched. Nothing physical happens, but the recreation does occur. *It occurs by the Word of God* (see 1 Pet. 1:23).

6. The birth of God’s Son required the virgin birth because Christ is the *one and only* Son of God. He possesses all the nature and fullness of God Himself (Phil. 2:6-7; Co1. 2:9). Therefore, His birth had to be different. He had to enter the world differently from others, for He is different by the very nature, of His being. He had to enter the world in such a way as to proclaim His divine nature, yet in such a way that would allow Him to partake of human nature. This is critically important. His birth had to involve both the act of mankind and of God Himself. Why? Because the Son of God had to be proclaimed to be the Son of God.

=> There is no salvation apart from His *being* the Son of God.

=> There is no salvation apart from His being *proclaimed* to be the Son of God.

Man can be saved only if the Son of God *is*, only if He exists, and only if He is *proclaimed*. The Son of God must *exist*, and we must *hear* of Him if we are to be saved. He and His message are both essential. His virgin birth proclaims Him to be the *one and only* Son of God, the only Son sent into the world by the direct and miraculous intervention of God.

7. The birth of God's Son required a second Adam, a second man.

- born just like the first Adam, by the Word of God using natural substance.
- born to become what the first Adam failed to become: the Representative Man, the Ideal Man, the Pattern, the Perfect One in whom all men could find their Representative, their Ideal, their Pattern, their Perfection.
- born to be what Adam failed to be: the Man who always chose to love and obey God in all things, thereby passing on the nature of the ideal righteousness and perfection that can stand for and cover all men.
- born to become what the first Adam failed to pass on to man: the Way to God, the Truth of God, and the Life of God which all men can trust and follow (Jn. 14:6).
- born to offer what the first Adam failed to pass on to man: the nature of righteousness and life, both life abundant and life eternal (see Rom. 5:15-19; Jn. 10:10).

8. The birth of God's Son required an espoused state, and not a single or married state. Why?

=> Because a single woman would, cause far more questioning and heap far more contempt upon Christ and His followers.

=> Because a married woman would not be a virgin and God's Son had to be born of a virgin as indicated by the points above.

The espoused state provided the ideal marital relationship for God to use in sending His Son into the world (see Lk.1:27). The fact that Jewish society was using the espoused relationship as a preparation for marriage shows how God was preparing the world for the coming of His Son. (See *Fullness of Time*, Ga1. 4:4.)

Ga1 4:4 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law.* □