

THE PROOF OF SCRIPTURE

GALATIANS 03:06–14

Introduction

Some false teachers had arisen in the churches of Galatia. They were teaching that a man must focus his life upon the rituals and teachings of religion — upon the works of the law — instead of focusing upon Christ. Simply stated, they were saying that a man had to be *ritualized* (circumcised, church membership, baptism) and give his life to keeping the law in order to be acceptable to God. They placed ritual and law — their own works and effort — before Jesus Christ.

⇒ They focused upon what they had to do instead of Christ.

⇒ They concentrated upon themselves — upon what they could do to save themselves and make themselves acceptable to God — not upon Christ and His saving power.

⇒ They stressed the flesh, the physical and the natural, the strength of man instead of God's love given to the world in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The answer of Paul is forceful: Scripture proves that a man is justified by faith and not by observing the law.

- I. Scripture uses Abraham to illustrate the truth (vv. 6-7).
- II. Scripture “announced the gospel in advance to Abraham” (vv. 8-9).
- III. Scripture says “the law puts a man under a curse” (vv. 10-12).
- IV. Scripture says “Christ has redeemed us from the curse” (vv. 13-14).

I. Galatians 03:06–07 Abraham, Justification by Faith

Scripture uses Abraham to illustrate the truth that justification is by faith and faith alone. Abraham held a unique position in the Jewish nation, for he was the founder of the nation. He was the man whom God had challenged to be a witness to the other nations of the world — a witness to the only living and true God. God had appeared to Abraham and challenged him to leave his home, his friends, his employment and his country. God made two great promises if Abraham would follow God unquestionably: Abraham would become the father of a new nation, and all nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed (Gen. 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8, 15-19; 22:15-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 35:9-12). (See *Israel, God's Special People*, Jn. 4:22.)

Note two points.

1. Abraham believed God; therefore, he was judged righteous. He went out — left his home and risked all — not knowing where he was going (Heb. 11:8). He completely and unquestionably trusted God and took God at His word.

Now note: it was not Abraham's keeping of the law that pleased God. In fact, the law had not yet been given (Gal. 3:17). What pleased God and what caused God to justify

Abraham was Abraham doing as God had said. Abraham simply *believed* the promise of God that God would give him a new life — *in* a new nation — with a new people. (See *Abraham*, Gal. 3:8, notes, Gal. 3:16; Heb. 11:9-19.)

- a. Abraham and his “seed” were the only ones to whom God gave the promises. This is emphatically stated (Rom. 4:13-25; Gal. 3:6-16, 26, 29).
 - b. Only a promise was given to Abraham (Rom. 4:13- 21; Gal. 3:14, 18-21, 29). No other information whatsoever was given. God did not identify the country nor tell Abraham where he was to go. Neither did God tell Abraham when his wife Sarah would bear the seed (the male child) from whom the promised nation would be born. God made a simple promise, and all Abraham had to go on was that simple promise, that is, the sheer Word of God.
 - c. Only one condition was attached to the promise: Abraham had to believe God. No works whatsoever were involved.
 - d. Abraham did believe God (Gen. 12:4-5; Rom. 4:3, 11-22; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8f).
 - e. Abraham was *counted righteous* because he believed God (Rom. 4:3-5, 9-13, 19-22; Gal. 3:6; see Gen. 15:6). God did not count him righteous because of who he was or what he had done. He simply believed God. Therefore, God took his faith and counted his faith as righteousness (see notes, Rom. 4:1-3; *Justification and Faith*, Rom. 4:22; note, Rom. 5:1).
 - f. The proof that Abraham really believed God was that he did what God had said. His faith preceded his obedience. He believed God and then he obeyed God. If he had not believed God, he would not have left his home or his employment. He would not have left his surroundings and friends, his meaningful relationships and personal attachments. The fact that he did as God asked was evidence that he believed the promise of God.
2. Those who are of faith are the true sons of Abraham. The person who believes God is the person who receives the promises of God (Rom. 4:5-12, 16-17, 23-25; Gal. 3:7-9, 14, 22, 26, 29). Paul argues that neither heritage nor nationality, neither merit nor works, neither the law nor the rules of the law have anything to do with the promises of God (Gal. 3:6-7). The true sons of Abraham are those who believe God — any person of any nation. In fact, God’s promise that a nation would be born to Abraham and “his offspring” (his seed) was the promise of an eternal nation. This eternal nation is to be of another world, of another dimension of being: the spiritual dimension, a dimension just as real as the physical dimension. But it is to have one distinction: every citizen is to be a believer — one who has believed God and His Word. This is exactly what this passage is saying: “They who believe are the children of Abraham, the children of God’s promise. They are to be blessed along with faithful Abraham. They are to be the citizens of God’s Kingdom, ‘the new heavens and the new earth.’” (See Heb. 11:8-18; 2 Pet. 3:10-14.)

II. *Galatians 03:08–09 The gospel of Faith*

Scripture “announced the gospel in advance to Abraham.” To Paul, Scripture was the Word of God, the very voice of God Himself. Therefore, Paul could just as easily say that Scripture spoke to Abraham as he could that God spoke to Abraham. (Note Paul’s high view of Scripture.)

1. Scripture declared the gospel of faith long before Christ ever came: Scripture declared the gospel to Abraham. As stated in the former note, God told Abraham that He would accept him and bless him if Abraham would believe (love and follow) the promise of God. What was the promise?

“All nations will be blessed through you.”

Abraham believed God; he separated himself from the world and gave his life totally to God; therefore, God accepted and judged Abraham righteous.

2. Those who are of faith are judged righteous with Abraham. Abraham was justified by believing God. What happened was this. Abraham believed God, and God took Abraham’s belief and counted his belief as righteousness. It was not Abraham’s works, but his faith that God took and counted as righteousness. It was all an act of God; therefore, all glory belonged to God, not to Abraham. Man is saved by faith; in other words, God takes a man’s faith and counts that man’s faith as righteousness. This has to be the case:

=> God is perfect; He is perfectly righteous. No man can achieve perfection; therefore, no man can live in the presence of God.

=> God is love; therefore, what God does is take a person’s faith and counts that faith as righteousness and perfection. Therefore, a man is able to live in God’s presence by faith or justification

Mat 7:22-23 “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

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.

Gal 2:16 Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

Eph 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3:4-5 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

GALATIANS 03: 08, 16 ABRAHAM

The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." ... The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. The scripture does not say "and to the seeds," meaning many people, but "and to the seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 03: 08, 16

The Scripture...announced the gospel to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). What does this mean?

God had promised Abraham an earthly son and a great earthly nation. But behind God's promise lay something more than just an earthly, human fulfilment. Abraham's son, Isaac, was a type of the real offspring (the *real seed*) that was to come, and the Jewish nation was a type of the *real nation* that was to be born. (See *Abraham's Seed*, Rom. 4:1-25.)

Paul gives at least two proofs for this typology.

1. The word "seed" is singular, not plural (Gal. 3:16). God's promise does not point to a great crowd of people, but to one single person. That person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham. And the nation promised is the new nation of believers that God is creating to inherit the new heavens and earth (Gal.3:16; Eph. 1:9-10; 2:11-18; 3:6; 4:17-19).
2. The major events of Isaac's life parallel the life of Christ.
 - => First, Isaac was miraculously born (Gen. 15:2-3; 18:11; see Rom. 4:18-22; Heb. 11:11).
 - => Second, Isaac was to be offered up as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, and God accepted his willingness and motive as an actual fact. The word of Heb. 11:17 tells us this: "by faith Abraham...[who] received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son."
 - => Third, Isaac was delivered from death by a miracle of God (Gen. 22:10-13). Abraham knew that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, in order to fulfil His promise, if need be (Heb. 11:19). □

III. Galatians 03:10–12 Law and Faith

Scripture says that "the law puts a man under a curse." Note a critical point: in this verse the word curse (kataran) means to be condemned and doomed to punishment by the righteous judgment of God. How do we know this? By verse 13 where it is said that Christ bore the curse of the law for us (the condemnation, doom, death and punishment due us for having broken the law). The law carries with it a curse. A person either

keeps the law or else he is cursed; that is, he is to stand before the Judge and bear the punishment of a lawbreaker. The curse (penalty or punishment) for violating the law is...

- the mark of death (2 Cor. 3:7).

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 7:5 *For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.*

- the mark of condemnation (2 Cor.3:9).

Rom 7:10-11 *I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.*

Heb 9:27 *Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

Why does the law put a curse upon men? There are two clear reasons.

1. The man who approaches God by law is cursed because he does not keep the whole law. Note a crucial fact: there is a righteousness that is of the law (Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:12). That righteousness promises life to any man who can obey the law perfectly. If a man can meet every requirement of the law during his lifetime and never once fall below God's holy standard, then that man can escape the penalty for sin, which is death. However, every thinking and honest man knows that he cannot keep the law of God in every single detail — not all the time. He knows that he sometimes comes short in...

- behaviour
- emotions
- motive
- worship
- service

Every thinking and honest person knows that he is nowhere close to being perfect nor to attaining perfection. He knows that he fails and comes short too often. He knows that what this verse says is exactly true: no man can *continue in and do all things* which are written in the law of God.

Rom 10:5 *Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them."*

Gal 3:10, 12 *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." The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."*

2. God's chosen way for approaching Him is to "live by faith." Scripture declares as clearly as it can: no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. As stated above, God is perfect; He is perfectly righteous. No man can achieve perfection; therefore,

no man can live in the presence of God. No matter how good he is or how much good he does, he cannot achieve perfection. The fact is evident, for if a man had achieved perfection, he would be perfect — living forever in a perfect state of being, even on this earth.

But note this: God is love. So what God does is take a person's faith and count that faith as righteousness, as perfection. Therefore, a man is able to live in God's presence by faith or justification. The point is this: God's way for a man to approach Him is the way of faith: "The righteous will live by faith."

Note also that the law is not of faith, but any man who attempts to live by the law will be allowed to so live. But the man must realize: he shall be judged by the law.

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.*

Gal 2:16 *Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Titus 3:4-5 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

GALATIANS 03:10 THE LAW

*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." Gal 03:10*

Chapter three of Galatians gives an excellent study of the law.

1. The law carries with it a curse (Gal. 3:10). The curse is the *mark of death* and the *mark of condemnation* or guilt: alienation from God both in this life and throughout all eternity (see Deu. 27:1f; 28:15; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 3:7, 9).
2. There is a righteousness which is of the law (Rom. 10:5-10; Gal. 3:12). That righteousness promises life to any man who can obey the law perfectly. If a man can meet every requirement of the law during his lifetime and never once fall below God's holy standard, then that man can escape the penalty of sin which is death.
3. Jesus Christ delivers man from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). What does this mean? Jesus Christ kept the law in every single detail. Therefore, He bore

no guilt; and He bore no penalty, no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life, the right to never experience death. He was perfect; He had secured incorruptible righteousness. The glorious gospel is that instead of claiming this right for Himself, He offered to give His perfection and righteousness to the people of the earth and to take their sins upon Himself. He offered to swap His righteousness for man's unrighteousness, to swap His life for man's life. This glorious expression of substitutionary love was the very purpose for which God had created the earth. God willed to show His great and unsearchable love that gave itself so perfectly (Eph. 1:5f). The great tragedy is that man has so much difficulty accepting so great a love (1 Cor. 1:18).

It also means another thing. Jesus Christ accomplishes the same purpose that God intended for the law, except much more. He not only sets the same ideals and standards before us, but He also relates Himself to us. Whereas the law is a set of cold letters with no power to give life (Gal. 3:21), Jesus Christ is a living person possessing the power to raise the dead to life again. He sets the standards and gives the power to keep the standards. He has replaced the law in showing men the awfulness of their sin (through His death), and He adds the extra dimension of strength to live as He lived (Gal. 5:22f; Eph. 1:19f; 3:20).

4. The law was only meant to be a temporary arrangement between God and man (Gal. 3:16). It was to extend only from Moses to Jesus Christ, for Jesus Christ is "the seed" to whom the promise of righteousness was given (see note, Mt. 5:17). God never intended the law to be *the way of salvation*. It was for the temporary purpose of showing men their sin and its awfulness. Since Jesus Christ has come, He (His perfect life and righteousness) is to be the standard for men.
5. The law was given to show men their sin and to instil within them a personal guilt for disobeying God and His law (Rom. 3:19-20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19). This guilt was to lead men to seek and trust God for salvation. Thus, the law stops every mouth from claiming self-righteousness and makes all the world guilty before God.
6. The law is inferior to God's promise of grace (Gal. 3:19c-20). Three arguments show this.
 - => First, the law was not given directly by God. The law was given by angels to men through Moses. Moses was a mediator. But God and God alone gave the promise of grace and righteousness to Abraham.
 - => Second, the law was between two parties — man and God. If man kept the law, he would receive the reward of righteousness. The gift of righteousness was conditional under the law. But the promise of grace is given by God alone. No one can break that promise. If man simply believes, he receives the promise of righteousness.

- => Third, the giving of the law came after the promise to Abraham — four hundred and thirty years after. The promise of grace was given first before the law. Therefore, the law cannot void the promise. The promise of God stands.
7. The law has no power to give life (Gal. 3:21). The law demands that each commandment be kept and obeyed. But it is mere words, cold and lifeless. It is entirely external to man. It has no energy whatever to help in keeping the law.
 8. The Scripture is conclusive: all men are lawbreakers and under sin (Gal. 3:22).
 9. The believer is no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 3:22). Man is unable to participate in the righteousness of the law, for he is totally incapable of fulfilling the law. But he can experience the grace of God by trusting the righteousness which Jesus Christ has secured. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ judges that man righteous. That man becomes a “participant in the divine nature of God” (2 Pet. 1:4).
 10. The law shuts man up under sin (Gal. 3:23). Man is a permanent prisoner under the law. Under the law he is put in bondage and held captive all the days of his life. The only avenue of escape is Jesus Christ, that is, faith in Him. If Christ fails to deliver, then there is no escape, for the law does not free man; it enslaves.
 11. The law was man’s guardian to lead him to see his need for Christ (Gal. 3:24). The *guardian* or *teacher* (*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 cannot secure righteousness by himself. He must look to Christ, the real Teacher, for righteousness and acceptance by God. And once faith in Christ has come, there is no need for the law nor for any other guardian, for Jesus Christ brings us face to face with God.
 12. The law is still in force for the unbeliever (1 Tim. 1:8-14). It remains in force to condemn and to lead the unbeliever to see his need for God.
 13. Men were not always transgressors (Rom. 4:15; 5:20). There is no transgression where there is no law, for there is no law to transgress. But men were still sinners before the law was given to Moses. They were just not as aware of their sin nor did they sense as much guilt as was necessary to show their need for God. For that reason the law was given, that men might be more and more aware that they were sinners before God (Rom. 5:19-21). □

GALATIANS 03:11 JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith." **Galatians 03:11**

This verse is used three times in the new Testament. A different point is emphasized each time it is used. It tells how a man can be righteous with God (see Hab. 2:3-4).

1. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Rom. 1:17). Who can live by faith? Only the righteous. People make two claims to justification. The man who says, "I am justified by doing the best I can" is simply saying that he expects God to excuse his sin. But God does not excuse sin; God forgives sin. Excusing sin is nothing more than license — allowing man to go on living as he wishes and always coming up short. Therefore, a man is not justified by doing the best he can — by living after the law. He is justified by faith, by trusting God to forgive him. Once a man has really trusted God, he is just. And *the righteous* then begins to live by faith. The former man, whether a legalist or a man of fleshly indulgence, has no opportunity to live by faith. Why? Simply because he never started the life of faith. It is the just, not the legalist or the man of sinful indulgence, who lives by faith.
2. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Gal. 3:11). By what rule does a person live? By the principle of faith, not by the principle of works. The person declared *just* by faith shall live apart from works. The believer is saved by faith, and the believer lives by faith (Gal. 3:11).
3. "*The righteous will live by faith*" (Heb. 10:38). By what power does a person live? By the power that is given us by God because of faith. The Christian believes God, believes in the promises God has made. Therefore, the believer does what God says. The power of faith *energizes* him to live a righteous life. Works have nothing to do with making him *righteous* nor with keeping him righteous. □

IV. *Galatians 03:13–14 Redemption from the Curse*

Scripture says that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." The word *redeemed* (exegorasen) means to buy back or to buy from or to ransom. Christ has bought man back and ransomed him from the curse of the law. That man has broken the law of God is unquestionable; every honest man knows this. Therefore, every man stands guilty before God and must be judged and condemned to bear the curse and punishment of the law. But this is the glorious news: Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. How?

1. Jesus Christ was made a curse for us. Simply stated, Jesus Christ took our condemnation, doom, death and punishment upon Himself and bore them all for us. Jesus Christ took our place as the lawbreaker and guilty party before God, and He bore the punishment of the lawbreaker for us. How was this possible?

- => Because Jesus Christ had obeyed and kept the law of God perfectly. He had never broken the law, not even once. He was sinless and perfect. He had secured the Ideal Righteousness and Perfection before God. Therefore. He bore no guilt, no penalty and no mark of death. He had the right to stand before God and claim eternal life, the right to be accepted by God and to never experience death. He was perfect; He had secured incorruptible righteousness.
- => Because God is love. The glorious gospel is that instead of claiming the right to live in God's presence, Christ determined to give His perfection and righteousness to the people of the earth, and to take their sin upon Himself. He was determined to swap His ideal righteousness for man's unrighteousness, to swap His ideal life for man's sinful life.

Stated as simply as possible, Jesus Christ substituted Himself, His perfect life, for man's sinful life. He substituted His obedience to God for man's disobedience. He bore man's sin and punishment so that man might stand righteous and perfect before God. Jesus Christ bore the curse of the law for us. (See notes, Gal. 1:4-5; 1:6-9; note and *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16; *Faith vs. Works*, Gal. 2:16; note, Gal. 2:19-21. Also cp. all the notes in Romans dealing with the subjects of Justification and Law.)

Note the Old Testament quotation: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Dut. 21:23). This does not mean that a man is cursed because he is executed upon a tree, but rather that a man who is executed upon a tree is there because he is cursed, having been judged as a lawbreaker. Jesus Christ took the sins of man, taking the place of the transgressor; therefore, He was cursed (condemned) to die as the unlawful and disobedient sinner died.

2. The purpose for Jesus Christ bearing the curse of the law was to open the door of blessing to all men. Christ bearing the curse of the law was the way God fulfilled His promise to Abraham: that all nations would be blessed in him. Christ bearing the curse of the law is also the way that God gives the promises made to Abraham to the world. Any man who believes in Jesus Christ — that Christ bore the curse of the law for him — is accepted by God and given the blessings of the promised land eternally.

In summary, the man who believes in Christ receives the promise of God's Holy Spirit, that is, the promise...

- of the divine nature.

2 Pet 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

- of the new birth.

John 3:3-6 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?"

Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

***1 Pet 1:23** For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

- of being made a new creation.

***2 Cor 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

- of being made into a new self, a new man.

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

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