

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**A1015 – April 11, 2010 – Galatians 3:15-18 – The Abrahamic Contract**

Alright, today we return to Galatians 3. Last time we saw verse 13-14, Christ has become a curse for us. All men are under the curse of the highest legal system ever known to man EXCEPT Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was born under this legal system but Jesus Christ fulfilled this legal system having no sinful flesh, having no personal sin, having been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin and therefore Jesus Christ on the cross was not under the curse of the Law. Jesus Christ was not being hanged on a tree because He had committed a capital crime, Jesus Christ was not a criminal. You and I were criminals, you and I committed a capital crime, and therefore Jesus Christ was hanged where you should have been hanged. Jesus Christ who is eternal life said I will be hanged for you; I will come under the curse of the Law and bear your sins in my body on the tree. This is the greatness of what Christ has done for you; this is the greatness of the gospel. Christ has done everything necessary to please God. And you have access to the absolutely free grace salvation by simple faith in Jesus Christ.

Now, if you have placed your faith in Christ then verse 14 tells of two benefits that accrue to you. First, “that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles,” and that blessing is the blessing of justification by faith alone and it is the death of Christ which ushered in a new era when the doors of justification swung open to the Gentiles. You can trace this through the Book of Acts. Early in the Acts it is in Jerusalem where the majority is Jewish and early on you have thousands and thousands of Jews responding to the gospel and being justified by faith. Then it spreads out into Judea and Samaria where more Jews and Samaritans, the half-breeds who were a Jewish and Gentile mixture, responded to the gospel and were justified by faith and then finally, starting in Acts 10 at Cornelius’ house the gospel

begins to go to the Gentiles and they too are justified by faith. By the end of Acts, as the gospel starts reaching the extremities of the Roman world, the Gentiles become the majority group which is the first blessing that accrues in this verse from the cross of Christ, the blessing of Abraham which is justification by faith; the doors really swing open and you have tremendous Gentile response. The second blessing that accrues directly from the cross of Christ is “that we would receive the promise of the Spirit” and this is a new gift that accompanies justification by faith, reception of the Spirit that Jesus Christ promised He would send on the day of Pentecost. And if you want to look at it this way, the Book of Acts has four Pentecost's: (the Holy Spirit is received by four different groups) the Jewish Pentecost, Acts 2, the Samaritan Pentecost, Acts 8, the Gentile Pentecost, Acts 10 and the Disciples of John the Baptist Pentecost, Acts 19. On each of those days the Holy Spirit was given to that specific group and by what means did they receive the Spirit? Verse 14 concludes, the last two words; “through faith.” And therefore the way a man is justified and the way a man receives the Spirit is through faith. They occur simultaneously at the moment of faith. Justification and reception of the Spirit are linked in time.

Now Paul, in verse 15-18, is going to argue that justification by faith comes out of the Abrahamic Covenant and therefore is totally by grace apart from the Mosaic Covenant which is works of the Law. The Judaizers were apparently arguing that in Abraham's day justification was totally by faith but then Moses and the Law came and when Moses and the Law came it changed how you were justified. Justification was now by faith and works of the Law and so Paul has to smash this. He's smashed it before, he's got to smash it, smash it and smash it because this is such a serious issue. The gospel is so serious that anyone who fools around with it is a heretic. Gal 1:6-9.

Now the way He's going to smash it this time is by using an illustration from human covenants. In verse 15 he will teach the basic principle from the human sphere and then in vv 16, 17 and 18 he'll move to the divine sphere and apply the principle. If you recall in 3:1 these Galatian believers have already been deceived. So they're out of fellowship and they're falling down into the deep recesses of depravity. Paul will say later you've fallen from grace, that is, not you've lost your salvation, but rather you have fallen away

from grace orientation into a system of legalism. And this is destructive to the Christian life, this is destructive to Christian growth.

Verse 15 introduces the concept of a covenant; Paul says **I speak in terms of man's covenant** so we want to answer the question, what is a covenant? The Hebrew word *berith* and the Greek word *diatheke* means a "contract." So if covenant is too religious for you then say contract because that's all it is. For some reason when we come to the Bible everything is shoved into a religious compartment. It's strange but if you say, for example, redeem, and you're standing in the checkout lane of HEB it means one thing and if you say it in a church it means something else. No it doesn't, it's an economic term for paying a price or purchasing something. Makes no difference where you're standing. But this secular/religious dichotomy has become such a problem that we have to unload the religious baggage. So when we say covenant we mean a contract just like you would make here in the real world when you buy a car, you buy a house, you take out a loan, you use your credit card; there's a legal contract involved, there's fine print.

Now, there are three preconditions for even having a contract. And this is a deeper issue; we're taking a step back from the contract itself and asking, what lies beneath a contract? What already has to be in place?

The first thing that must be in place is there must be a God who publicly speaks in human language that can be understood by human beings. Think about it just in terms of contracts you make with other men. This holds in both realms. You buy a car, you buy a house, and these are all contracts. Now could two people that can't communicate make that contract? Companies are going global now, what's the problem with that, what's the big demand now in all these international companies? People, who are multilingual, can go over there and talk their language. Now transfer the idea over to making a contract with God or rather God making a contract with man. If God is not a public speaking, verbally revealing God then how can He make a covenant with us? If God can't speak, and I mean verbal speaking in human language, I don't mean dreams and visions, I mean a God who you could tape record His voice, rewind it and play it back, that kind of speaking in human language that can be understood, how can you have a contract? This holds for relationships between man and man as well as between God and man. So precondition one, if you don't have communication you don't have contracts.

Second pre-requisite, these are preliminary issues, before we even talk about the contract itself there must be a God who is absolutely sovereign over history so that He can fulfill the terms. Think first in terms of just a human contract again. Are you going to come into a contract with a company on the brink of bankruptcy? Why not? Because they might not be able to fulfill the contract. And that means you are hung out to dry. You want to come into a contract with strong companies that have proven track records; companies who have the assets to fulfill the contract. Now we come to a contract with God. If God is going to make contracts with men that stretch down into the future corridors of time, and He's got all these things He's promising way out in the future, what does this God have to be like? He has to be absolutely sovereign over history. If there's something or someone that could interfere with Him bringing it to pass would you want to come into a contract with Him? If He's so weak who would even want to? Would you dare come into a contract with Him?

So we have two things so far, two pre-requisites. One, the God of Scripture must publicly speak in human language so we can have a contract that is understandable and two, a God that is absolutely sovereign over history so He can fulfill the contract. If you don't have those two preconditions, you cannot have a viable covenant.

Now, out of these two we have a third thing that follows. And that's the question why do you come into a covenant? Why do two businessmen lock into a covenant? Why, when you buy a car, do you sign an agreement? Think about this, because this is very important for our text today. Why do you have people making contracts with one another? To monitor behavior. It is to verify the faithfulness of the parties. Contracts always involve some form of verification. Is Joe making his monthly payment or not? Is Sally keeping her end of the bargain? Is Sally reliable? That's what these credit reports are all about. They're a measurement of a person's reliability. So what is a credit report telling us? It's telling us about the character of this person. If someone defaults on their loans, makes late payments, goes bankrupt how many people are going to come into a contract with them? Nobody if they are smart. We want to see a proven track record and then we'll make the contract. Now come to the God of the Bible. Is God reliable? Does God when He makes a contract keep His word in the contract? Is God faithful? How would I know if

God is faithful or not? I'd have to check the records; I'd have to look at the reports. Where's the record of God's activity? Some of you are smart enough to reason this out and see where we're going with this. Isn't it the Bible? What does this tell us about the Bible? If the Bible is a record of God's faithfulness to His contract, what does that say about whether the Bible is errant or inerrant? It compels a doctrine of inerrancy doesn't it? So this puts a whole new light onto the issue of inerrancy. By the way, what do we call these, the Old and New what? Testaments. What's a testament? It's a testimony; a legal court witness. That's why they're called Old and New Testaments. If the Bible is errant then what kind of a testimony is that? It's a poor testimony and in a court of law it's going to be thrown out. So what do you suppose Satan wants to do to the Bible? Destroy its credibility, because if he can destroy the Bible he has erased the tool that measures God's faithfulness.

So you have to have those three things even to have a contract. First, God has to be a public speaker; He has to speak human language that men can understand, otherwise, no contract; you don't make contracts with rocks. Second, He has to be absolutely sovereign over history because His word in the contract is sketching what He's going to do in future world history. So to get there He can't have any competition that could interfere. If He had an equal and opposite competitor -take Satan - let's say Satan were as great as God, an equal and opposite force as the eastern religions project, if that was reality then could God guarantee anything? No, it would be constant war. The Bible says no, good and evil are not equally powerful forces. Opposing forces yes, equal in power no, God is always greater. And third, over time as the contract unfolds what is revealed? Character; the character of God and the character of man if man has obligations. By the way, man does not always have obligations. Sometimes God alone has obligations and that has certain implications for our text today because if God is the only party then it rests solely upon Him to do it. And this would have powerful implications for justification, which it does. Is it man and God involved, or only God? On the other hand some contracts have God and man making obligations. So there are two kinds of contracts in the Bible, both are in our text today.

Now to the covenant itself. We've already said don't get religious, it's a contract. Now we want to observe that there are four parts to a biblical contract. There are parties, legal terms, a founding sacrifice and a sign or

signature. You can teach this to children, you should teach this to children, this is not too hard and you will teach them the structure of the Bible by doing this. The Bible has a structure to it, it is not loose pieces. The covenants will draw the Bible together for people, it will show them how God rules history, it will show them where history is going and it is very easy to teach children so we'll show point out how along the way.

Every biblical covenant has four parts. The first part of every contract is the Parties. There have to be two or more parties. So we'll use the Noahic or New World Covenant in Gen 9 as our model. Who did God enter into a covenant with in the time after the Flood? Noah, every descendant after Noah and all birds and animals that come out of the ark. So all humanity. Believers and unbelievers? Yes, all humanity, all bird kinds and all animal kinds that came off the ark. So we can sum it up this way, the parties of the Noahic Covenant are God and all flesh. You can teach this to kids by shaking hands with them. Some kids like to spit on their hands and then shake and that means it's more serious, but most kids 7-8 years old understand that spitting and shaking hands means two parties are making a deal here.

The second part is the deal itself or what we call the Legal Terms. Contracts have terms and normally its all in the fine print but in Scripture it's quite plain, no hidden agreements, no alternative arrangements made in dark, smoky rooms. It's all out in the open. What are the terms of the Noahic Covenant? What did God promise all flesh? I will never flood the earth again. Is that a promise of no local floods? If it is God's pretty poor at keeping His word. We've had hundreds of thousands of local floods; they have one every other week in India. It's not local floods He's promising to prohibit. It's a global flood. I will never send a flood to cover all the mountains of the earth again. I did it once; I'll never do it again. This is My word to you. Those are the terms of the covenant. You'll notice they're one sided terms. Do you have to do anything for God to keep that covenant? Absolutely nothing. It depends on God alone. You and I get the benefit, our pets get the benefit, and we have the security of no global catastrophe of water. Is God reliable? Has He kept His word? Absolutely. He's faithful. Can kids understand this? Of course they can. You can make certain promises to your kids and shake their hand and say, I will do this for you. I told my kids I would feed and clothe them till they were 18 years old and we shook on it. I'm not so sure I should have done that now, but I'm obligated to do it. And you can do it with yours, it's very easy,

you can do a one way covenant or both way covenant, you can only obligate yourself to do something for them or they can obligate themselves to do things for you too, but either way you can teach them that there are legal terms in a contract.

The third part of a biblical covenant is the Founding Sacrifice. Every covenant is made with sinful man, and therefore every covenant is grounded on the sacrifice. What was the founding sacrifice for the Noahic Covenant? Do you remember how many of the clean animals Noah brought on the ark, not two but how many? Seven. Why do you suppose he had more clean animals than unclean? Because when he got off the ark he had to use them immediately as sacrifice, therefore to keep these kinds alive on the earth he had to have a greater supply of them. So the third part is the founding sacrifice. By the way, I don't suggest you take your kid's pet out and sacrifice it. This one you'll just have to explain. But it's a serious part that looks forward to the cross of Christ, so it does have to be explained.

The fourth part of a contract is the Sign. When you make a contract what's the last thing you do? You sign your name on the dotted line. What does that mean? It means I am going to do everything written in the contract. What's the sign of the Noahic Contract? The rainbow. What's a rainbow? It's a light phenomena produced by the diffraction of light caused by visible light spectrum passing through a water droplet of the correct diameter. That's fine, that's a physical description of a rainbow but that's only half the story. Every time you see a rainbow in the sky that's God's signature on the dotted line. That's God writing His name in the sky for humanity to remember His word in Gen 9. No global flood. I may be upset with you but I'm not going to destroy you with a flood. That's My promise to you. And it's obvious enough how you can teach that one to your children, just take them out and show them a rainbow. Every time it rains take them out and look opposite the direction of the sun. Teach them the physics of it but also teach them the meaning of it. If you don't, you miss the point.

So we have these four elements and when you look at all covenants in the Bible, when you're studying along you can say, wait, where are these four elements, and it will help you to think through; where's the sacrifice here, what's the sign and by golly, if you keep looking you'll find them.

Now Paul is going to refer to two contracts in our text today. We've given the example of the Noahic Contract and we did that because the Noahic Contract is the basis of every other contract in Scripture. Isa 54 makes the argument that if God is faithful to keep His promises in the physical realm then He is faithful to keep His promises in the spiritual realm. Look at Isa 54:9, "For this is like the days of Noah to Me, When I swore that the waters of Noah Would not flood the earth again; So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you Nor will I rebuke you." He's talking to Israel and He says, I'm mad at you Israel but just like the Noahic Covenant guaranteed the physical security of all flesh, so I have made an Abrahamic Covenant with you that guarantees your survival Israel. So if the Noahic Covenant falls to pieces then, of course, Israel is finished.

Now turn to Gal 3:15. We've given the background to contracts. Paul now turns to the objection of the Judaizers that when God gave the Mosaic Contract He either set aside justification by faith or added conditions to it. Paul reminds them that even contracts made between human beings remain in force until the legal terms are fulfilled. Therefore, the covenant God made with Abraham remains in force until God fulfills the legal terms completely. Since this will not occur until the millennial kingdom the Abrahamic Contract remains in force and justification, which is implicit in the contract,, continues to be by faith. Why the Mosaic Law then? That's next week.

Gal 3:15, **Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.** He says, now even in the human sphere, when we're just talking about man's agreements, business contracts, marriage contracts and so forth, **when** these are **ratified** that's it. The thing stands until the legal terms are fulfilled, whether it's till death do we part, whether it's till you've paid off an item, whether it's till the job is done, when the contract is ratified it remains in force until it comes to completion.

No one comes along and **sets it aside or adds conditions to it.** Paul lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and if Paul had been living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century he might be surprised what's being done with contracts. But you get the point, the contract is a package deal and the package is complete and you don't come along and just throw the package out. Nor do you come along and start

adding to the package; I want to add this and let me change that and so forth. The thing is in stone as far as a genuine *bona fide* contract is concerned.

And so now Gal 3:16, Paul begins to move from the lesser to the greater. If this is true about contracts in the human sphere how much truer it is when it's God's contract. **Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.** Now what promises is he talking about? Verse 14, the blessing of Abraham we said was justification by faith. Paul says that justification by faith was implicit in the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant promised a land, a seed and a worldwide blessing and it's that blessing aspect that Paul is referring to here, the blessing that the world would receive through Abraham is justification by faith. This has nothing to do with the land aspect of the covenant; this has to do with the worldwide blessing aspect. The land of promise, that specific real estate is not in our context, justification by faith is. The only promise the church gets involved in is the worldwide blessing aspect of the promise because from Abraham came one seed, that seed is Christ Jesus and by faith in Him we become joint or co-heirs with Christ. We partake of these blessings but we do not take-over the blessings.

Now let's finish the verse. He says **the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.** Now this is a difficult verse that has caused a lot of problems, but Paul is right. In the Hebrew text of Genesis the word "seed," *zera*<sup>1</sup> is the singular "seed," even though in most of your translations it will say "seeds" or "descendants" plural. In the original it doesn't say that, it says "seed" or "descendant." I cite Gen 13:15; 15:18; 17:8, 19; 18:18, 22:18; 26:4; 28:14. So what does this mean? Notice we have a seed promise bracketed by two people; **Abraham** on one end and **Christ** on the other. Paul could go earlier and talk about the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15, that's where the seed promise begins, but since justification by faith is so clearly taught with Abraham he starts with the promise to Abraham where it says **"And to your seed," Abraham, that is, Christ.** So we have Abraham on one end of the promise, we have Christ on the other end of the promise. In between we have others to whom the promise was made. There are actually six direct recipients of the Abrahamic Covenant starting with Abraham, ending with Christ. Here they are. Watch how the seed promise narrows until it finally

centers on none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It starts broadly with the number one man, Abraham, Gen 13:15, then it is narrowed to Isaac, Gen 26:4, then it is narrowed to Jacob, Gen 28:14. Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was named Judah, and the promise came to rest upon him, Gen 49:10, then from the tribe of Judah came the number five man, David, Ps 89:4 and finally Jesus Christ, Matt 1:1. The first verse of the NT centers on this promise that began with Abraham went down through David and rested upon Christ, the ultimate recipient of the Abrahamic promises.

Now you ask why is he making this point? For two reasons as far as I can tell. Verse 16 is in your Bible to show us two things. One, it is to show that Jesus Christ is the basis of all justification. Even those who believed in the OT were credited with righteousness that stems from the cross. There is no righteousness apart from the cross of Christ. Gal 2:21, if righteousness comes from the Law, Christ died needlessly. So the seed, that is, Christ, is the only basis for righteousness. Apart from Christ we have nothing. The OT saints had nothing. They looked forward to righteousness being generated in space and time by the Christ. When they believed it was applied retroactively on the certainty of the condition being met, that Christ would generate the righteousness. For the NT saint we look back to the righteousness that was generated in space and time by Christ on the cross. And when we believe it is applied proactively on the basis of the finished work of Christ. And so number one reason Paul points this out is because the righteousness, which is credited to a person's account, is totally provided by Christ, Abraham's seed par-excellence. Reason two, because the Mosaic Covenant had no such provision. It did not promise a righteousness based on Christ. Where in the Mosaic Covenant, is there any promise of righteousness? Where is there any promise in the Mosaic Covenant of Christ? Never. Only in the Abrahamic Covenant.

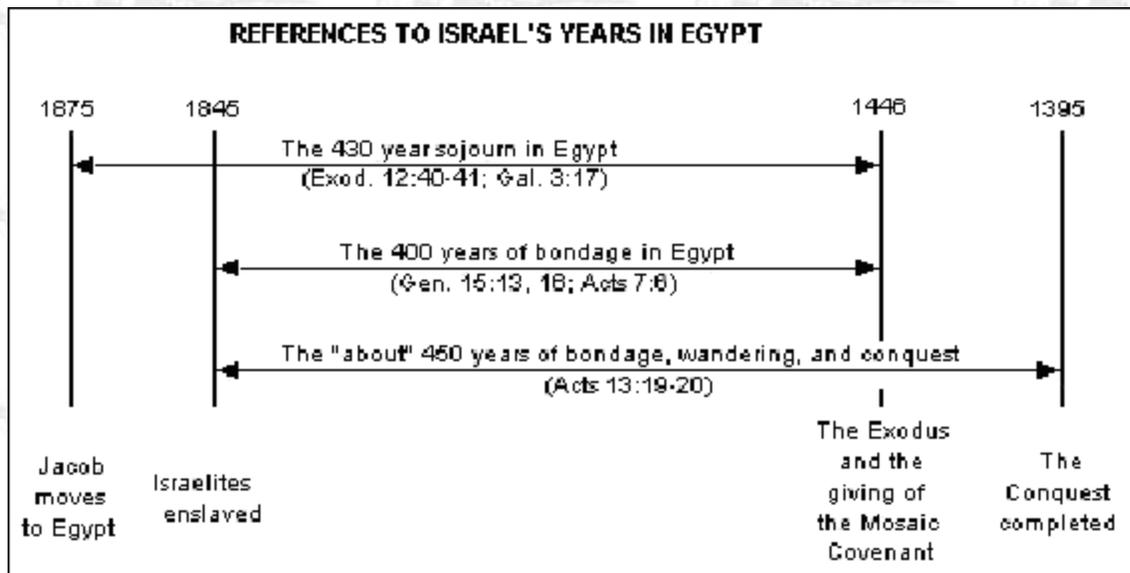
Some words about the Abrahamic Covenant. First, it's a covenant of grace. God says I will do this and I will do that. There's nothing there about what Abraham must do. In Gen 15 when the founding sacrifice was made you have this strange thing where these animals are brought, they're cut in half and you've got blood all over the place and then this strange smoking oven passes between the pieces. People debate this very terrifying moment. What is going on? What was going on was what is called a maledictory oath. This was the most serious kind of covenant you could make. And what a maledictory oath

communicated was that if I do not do what I have said, let me be damned, let me become as these animals, let me be cut in half. And that's what God is saying to Abraham, if I don't do this for you then let me be cut in half like these animals. Friends, that's a heavy promise. Question: did Abraham agree to the terms of the covenant? Did Abraham walk through the pieces? Answer, absolutely not. Abraham was conked out on a rock. Only God passed through the pieces and therefore only God was obligating Himself to fulfill the legal terms of that contract. It is a one way contract. And therefore we call the Abrahamic Covenant a covenant of grace. And that's why Paul points this out that the ultimate heir of the Abrahamic Covenant was Christ. He's saying you don't bring works into this justification thing. If you bring in works you destroy grace. In contrast, the Mosaic Covenant is a covenant of works. God gave this covenant at Mt Sinai. And in that covenant God said I will bless you if you bless Me and I will curse you if you curse Me. It was a two way covenant; both parties were obligated to keep up their end of the deal. And therefore it is a works covenant. Israel had to perform in order to get the blessing of God. And they didn't perform, they failed miserably and they came under the curse of the Law and therefore the Law couldn't possibly be the source of righteousness. And so all they had to fall back on was the grace covenant of Abraham. Friends, there is no hope apart from the Abrahamic covenant promises that centered on Christ, no hope whatsoever. Christ is the only hope. It is His righteousness that is imputed to us by faith. All the Mosaic Covenant could do was show you didn't have any righteousness. Which is verse 19. But it could never provide the righteousness. Only the ultimate heir of the Abrahamic Covenant could do that. Only Christ.

Now before we go to Paul's explanation in verse 17 I just want to point out one thing, sort of as a sidelight. Here's Paul, when did Paul write Galatians? AD49. Where's he quoting from? Genesis? When was Genesis written? Genesis was written by Moses during the Wilderness Wanderings, 1400BC. So we have a gap of how long? 1,500 years. And how does Paul build his case? He builds it on the singular tense of the noun *zera*. What does that imply about the preservation of the text? That it was very well preserved, so well-preserved that Paul can build his whole argument on a singular tense. That's how well-respected the OT text was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. And yet they had more textual variation than we do today. Today we have more texts and we've done more research and even without all this research you didn't have people saying, now Paul, are you sure a translation error didn't creep into

Genesis, that's an old text, can we really trust Genesis? Yes, we can trust Genesis. The boloney that we have to listen to today - people saying, well, the Bible's been translated from this language to that language to that language, who knows if what we have even approaches the original, it's a bunch of garbage. If that's the case then we better throw out Homer, gotta chunk Plato, forget Aristotle. We have five manuscripts of Aristotle, all we have is five. And yet we never question, "do we really have Aristotle," everybody just supposes we know what the guy thought, from five manuscripts. Here we've got for the NT alone, almost 6,000 manuscripts and we run around doubting it. Why doesn't someone doubt Aristotle? The number of manuscripts we have of the NT is unheard of in the ancient world. The next closest ancient text has 600 manuscripts. These people haven't a clue how little variation we have in the NT, haven't a clue. What about the OT? Jesus and the apostles didn't have a problem with the OT. Why gee Paul, Genesis is an old book, maybe it was plural and somebody changed it. No, sorry, that won't work. We have hundreds of manuscripts that show fantastic preservation of the OT. The only thing that outdoes the OT is the NT. No other document is even in the game as far as manuscript evidence is concerned.

Now let's finish Gal 3:17-18, very easy verses - Paul says, now if you don't understand let me explain what I mean. **What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.** <sup>18</sup>**For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.** Alright, so he's comparing two covenants separated by 430 years. Covenant 1 is the Abrahamic Covenant, Covenant 2 is the Mosaic Covenant.



Covenant 2, he says, came 430 years before Covenant 1. So 430 years after what? 430 years after Jacob went down to Egypt, that's Gen 46:2-4, the Abrahamic promises were repeated to Jacob on the border of the land just as he was leaving to go down to Egypt. 430 years later the nation Israel came out of Egypt, that's the Exodus, and they went to Mt Sinai where God gave Covenant 2. So Covenant 1, on the chronology is 1875BC, Covenant 2 is 430 years later which brings us to 1446BC. And Paul says, just because Covenant 2 came along 430 years later, that doesn't invalidate Covenant 1. Covenant 1 was already **ratified by God**, so Covenant 2 doesn't **nullify** Covenant 1. And therefore, **the promise** of justification by faith is not nullified just because of Covenant 2. Once a promise is made that's it, God doesn't renege on His promises. God fulfills His promises. God is faithful. And so Covenant 1 must be fulfilled according to its terms 100%. This is a contract guys and contracts are tight, every thing down to the fine print has to be fulfilled. That's why we're so insistent on a normal reading of Scripture. The Scriptures are controlled by these contracts. And we have people running around allegorically interpreting the text, bringing meaning to the text. I never saw a contract that allowed me to allegorically interpret it. It might be nice on occasion to do that. When a bill of \$1000 arrives just write a check for \$200; oh, today I don't feel like paying \$1000. Go ahead and try it, see how that works for you. That's not how contracts work. That's why we insist that God means what He says and says what He means in these contracts. This isn't loose, this is tight, and this is a legal document. And Paul says, you can't interpret the Abrahamic promises loosely, it's a contract. What God says He will do He will do and He said in the Abrahamic Contract that justification is

by faith and so He justifies by faith, bottom line. So who cares if a Mosaic Covenant comes along 430 years later, doesn't change a thing about how a man is justified. Justification is always by faith.

Verse 18, **For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise;** now that's just biblical logic. Paul says, follow the logic. Inheritance is a gift you receive and he says, if the gift is based on works of the law it's no longer based on a promise, that is, it's no longer based on the promise that was given to Abraham and fulfilled in the seed Christ. **But God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.** And therefore justification is by faith and not by works of the Law. Paul couldn't be clearer. The nature of a covenant proves the point.

Well, what can we take away from this by way of application? Now think how Paul started off the passage, a very meager illustration from human contracts. There's our application. Christians in our society need to think long and hard about contracts. We live in a society full of contract-breakers - people who have not enough integrity to keep up their end of the deal. We have Christians as well as non-Christians defaulting on their loans, sticking their neck out so far they're just asking for someone to chop it off; Christians going bankrupt all over the place. Does this text apply in any way to the phenomena we observe in our society today? Friend, if God keeps his end of the bargain, shouldn't we, of all people, keep ours? Who else is going to keep up their end of the bargain? Society has no set of absolutes to follow, other than the dictates of their own flesh. Who else is going to come through on their contracts? If Christians don't do it then society collapses and further, if we don't do it then we lose our witness. Try witnessing to someone you broke contract with. They're not going to listen to you. Who's going to listen to a big fat liar? Alright, fine, what can we do? We can be smarter with our money and stop playing the keep up with the Jones' game for one. Don't stick your neck out farther than you can yank it back if bad times come. And if bad times come and your head gets cut off what then? I know one Christian man who was in the construction business and he had to file bankruptcy in the early 1980's and you know what this man did? He paid back every one of those people he owed money. One by one he went down the list and paid Joe and Mark and Jane and all the rest of the people on that list. That is a Christian testimony. That is a person who has integrity. And that is a person that has the right to be listened to when he proclaims the gospel. Do you?

---

<sup>i</sup> This is what we call a collective singular. For example, the word “sheep” can refer to one sheep or to many sheep. I can talk about one sheep or I can talk about a group of sheep but I use the same word either way. And that’s the way this Hebrew word is. It’s the Hebrew word *zera* and it can refer to Abraham and all his descendants. It can refer to Isaac and all his descendants, it can refer to Jacob and all his descendants and it can refer to Christ, the descendant *par excellence*.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2010