

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians

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Chapter Eight -

THE ABRAHAMIC AND THE MOSAIC COVENANTS

In chapter three, verses 15 through 25, we study about these two covenants:

Verse 15: **"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto."**

In GOD's economy even a covenant between two men (when such covenant has been confirmed, signed, sealed, and recorded) is binding upon both parties, neither of whom has the right to make any change in the agreement.

Certainly a covenant between GOD and man is more important than any contract between two men could be. GOD's covenant with faithful Abraham has been confirmed, and GOD will not set it aside. GOD will not change it or break it until every promise in it has been completely fulfilled.

Verse 16: **"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; BUT AS OF ONE, AND TO THY SEED, WHICH IS CHRIST."** I want you to carefully note here that the covenant referred to was between GOD on the one hand, and two men on the other. The two men were Abraham and CHRIST. The language is self-explanatory and to the point. The covenant was not to Abraham and his natural seed of the flesh - the children of Israel in general; nor was it to his heavenly seed in the church of the living GOD - believers in general. **THE PROMISE WAS MADE TO ABRAHAM'S SEED (singular) . . . CHRIST, THE SEED OF THE WOMAN, WHO WOULD BRUISE THE HEAD OF THE SERPENT.**

The devil did everything in his ungodly power to frustrate the plan and the program of GOD, and to corrupt the seed. There are many chapters in the Old Testament that vividly tell the story; but in spite of all Satan did, JESUS came - the Seed of the woman, conceived of the HOLY GHOST. He came to make good every promise GOD had made to the faithful.

Verse 17: **"And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in CHRIST, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."**

The covenant GOD made with Abraham was unconditional - it could not be broken. Since the promises of GOD to Abraham have not yet been fulfilled, it stands to reason that the Abrahamic

covenant could not be set aside by the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. You may rest assured that the Law did not set aside the covenant between GOD and Abraham.

Verse 18: **"For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise."**

GOD's promises in the Abrahamic Covenant were promises based upon pure grace; there were no conditions attached to them. The fulfillment of the promises did not depend upon anything Abraham did or did not do, nor upon anything his seed did or promised to do. On the other hand, the Law of Moses made ALL of its promises conditional - that is, if Israel practiced obedience, then GOD granted the promise.

GOD uses the word **"IF"** for the first time in Exodus 19:5, in preparation for the giving of the Law. GOD said, **"IF ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people...."**

The people answered JEHOVAH by saying, **"ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO"** (Exodus 19:8). But if you will read the history of Israel, you will find that instead of doing everything JEHOVAH commanded, they did just the opposite! Time after time Jehovah GOD chastened Israel severely. This was entirely different from the covenant GOD made with Abraham. Abraham made no promise to GOD - either for himself or for his seed after him. All the promises were made by GOD, and carried with them no conditions whatsoever! Study carefully the Abrahamic Covenant and you will see that what I have just said is one hundred percent correct.

WHY, THEN, WAS THE LAW GIVEN?

Verse 19: **"Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."**

The question, **"Wherefore then serveth the Law?"** is a natural question in view of the statements Paul made in the preceding verses. Paul knew the question would be brought up, so he answered it before it was asked. In the first three chapters of Galatians, under the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, Paul proved that the Law of Moses was not given to save man, to make man righteous, nor to justify man. On the contrary, the Law was given to condemn the sinner, in order that he might realize his need for the grace of GOD.

Paul showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that the death of CHRIST is the final argument that salvation cannot come by the Law. **"If righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain"!**

The minister who preaches salvation by the Law, or salvation by grace plus Law, denies the finished work of CHRIST. He also denies the necessity of the death of the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

- The Law cannot save,

- the Law cannot sanctify,
- the Law cannot redeem.
- The Law cannot make man better.
- All the Law could do was to show man how exceeding sinful he was, and how hopeless he stood before GOD without the grace of GOD.

Paul preached to the Galatians that the Law could neither justify, sanctify, nor satisfy the sinner. He knew they would ask, "**Wherefore then serveth the Law?** What is the Law for? Why did GOD give it, if the Law cannot save a man or keep him saved?" Paul answers: "**[The Law] was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come.**"

In this brief verse we see clearly that the Law did have a specific and definite beginning... "**IT WAS ADDED**"... it was added to something that existed before the Law came.

Then too, the Law had a definite purpose. GOD does not do anything unless He does it for a specific reason, a specific purpose. The Law was added "**BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS.**" The Law was added to reveal the true nature of unregenerate man. The Law had an end, just as truly as it had a beginning: "**It was added... TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME.**" When the Seed came (The Lord JESUS) the Law came to an end. "**Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth**" (Romans 10:4). There is no place in all the Word of GOD where the purpose of the Law is more clearly set forth than in the verse we have just studied.

I can almost hear someone saying, "Mr. Greene, the statement '**[the Law] was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come**' was made concerning the ceremonial laws, and not the Ten Commandments!" There is no doubt in my mind that such a statement will be made by many who will read these lines; but let me hasten to say that Paul (in speaking of the Law) was not speaking of the ceremonial laws, nor of the dietary laws, the laws of sacrifice nor of the laws of the land. Paul was speaking of THE WHOLE LAW, and he was speaking in particular of the Ten Commandments! Paul was speaking of the Law which cursed the sinner. He was speaking of GOD's holy Law.

Some men are very clever when they make distinction between the Law of Moses (so called) and the Law of GOD; but these clever religionists do not have Scripture to back up their argument. Their doctrine is self-invented, and it is a dogma of man, not of Bible doctrine.

If the Law was added, just when did the Law have its beginning? The answer is found in John 1:17: "**FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN BY MOSES, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**" Could anything be more plainly stated? Could anything be more understandable? The Law - ALL of the Law - was given to a specific people at a specific time. The Law was given to Israel, delivered by Moses exactly as he received it from Almighty GOD on Mount Sinai.

The last part of Galatians 3:19 tells us, " . . . **till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR.**"

The mediator here spoken of was Moses, the Lawgiver. Not even Israel knew anything about Law until GOD dictated the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. From Adam to

Moses - a period of more than two thousand years - there were no Ten Commandments. **"For until the Law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no Law"** (Romans 5:13). Man knew nothing of the written Law of GOD until GOD gave that Law to Moses on the Mount; but before the Law came, the grace of GOD was displayed for more than two thousand years.

- Adam lived under the grace of GOD - certainly GOD showed unmerited favor toward Adam in the Garden of Eden.

- Noah lived in a generation of wicked men - but he found grace in the eyes of the Lord: **"By faith Noah, being warned of GOD of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"** (Hebrews 11:7).

- Abraham lived under the grace of GOD - he believed GOD, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. GOD dealt in grace two thousand years before the Law of Moses, and GOD dealt in grace during the time of the Law of Moses.

He is still dealing in grace.

The Gospel is good news, and that Gospel was preached to Abraham. The good news of the Gospel is that by grace, hell-deserving sinners can become sons of GOD, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST. The Gospel is the good news that the sinner can be saved by grace, through faith, plus nothing! The Law is NOT good news to the sinner. The Law is bad news for the transgressor, because it condemns him and shows him how wicked he is. The Law accuses the sinner and declares him accursed and condemned. The Law demands the death of the sinner: **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!"** (Ezekiel 18:4). **"The wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23).

The bad news of the Law was added to the good news of GOD's grace. In other words, it was placed alongside GOD's grace to show the sinner how exceeding sinful sin is. The Law did not take the place of the grace of GOD - and it was not given to be mixed with grace. It was not intended to supplement the grace of GOD. It was added (or, as the Greek states, it was "placed alongside" GOD's grace). Therefore the Law was added (or placed alongside the Gospel of grace) to reveal to the sinner his true character, and his great need of the grace of GOD.

By the works of the Law no one has ever been saved, nor ever will be saved. By the deeds of the Law there shall be no flesh justified in His sight (Romans 3:20).

Notice these words: **"Is the Law then against the promises** (the promises of the Gospel) **of GOD? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that BELIEVE"** (Galatians 3:21-22).

GOD is love. GOD has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. GOD's judgment and fiery indignation is truly **"HIS STRANGE WORK"** (Isaiah 28:21). According to Micah 7:18, the Lord GOD Almighty is a GOD who **"DELIGHTETH IN MERCY."** GOD delights in mercy, and He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but He cannot acquit the wicked, nor can He

overlook sin. GOD forgives sin for JESUS' sake when the sinner exercises faith in the shed Blood of His Cross.

Verses 19b and 20: ". . . **IN THE HAND OF A MEDIATOR. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.**"

In the covenant between GOD and Abraham, there was only one party who made promises (or who was under obligation). That one party was Almighty GOD. Abraham made no promises to GOD, therefore there was no need for a mediator between GOD and Abraham. On the other hand, the covenant of Sinai was a conditional covenant. GOD made the promises, but His promises were conditional.

The people Israel must obey and follow GOD's command; therefore, a mediator between GOD and man was needed. It is true that the Lord JESUS CHRIST is declared in the New Testament as the ONE mediator between GOD and man (I Timothy 2:5), but JESUS is not a mediator separating two parties to a covenant, as Moses did. JESUS is One in whom the two parties (GOD and man) are united to become one in body.

When we are born again by faith in the shed Blood of the Lord JESUS, we actually become a member of His body - bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh (Ephesians 5:30). Believers are dead and their lives are hid with CHRIST in GOD (Colossians 3:3).

"For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Here we see the two mediators - Moses, during the Dispensation of the Law, and JESUS, who is now the one Mediator between GOD and man during this Dispensation of Grace.

"I (Moses) stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount" (Deuteronomy 5:5).

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5).

Verse 21: **"Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law."**

Paul raises another question: **"Is the Law then against the promises of God?"** In the same breath, he answers the question: **"God forbid!"**

The question is simply this: Is the Law which involves a mediator (Moses) contrary to the promises of GOD which are without a mediator, which promises rest entirely upon GOD for their fulfillment? The answer to that question, of course, is **"God forbid!"**

Paul clearly states the fact that if life can come through the Law, if there had been a Law given that could bring life, then certainly righteousness would have come by the Law and there would have been no need for the horrible death of JESUS on the Cross. I believe anyone who wants to be reasonable can understand the last part of verse 21.

What Paul is saying is simply this: It was impossible for GOD to give a law that could produce life. GOD is holy, He cannot look upon sin, He cannot acquit the wicked. Because of GOD's holiness, He demands holiness: **"holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."** Therefore it was impossible for a holy GOD to give to unholy men a law that would make them holy. The holy Law of a holy GOD could not make men better, but could only show them how sinful they really are. Therefore it was imperative that JESUS take a body, and in that body fulfill every jot and every tittle of GOD's holy Law in order that we in CHRIST might become the righteousness of GOD which is by faith.

It is true that the Law promises life to whosoever should perfectly obey it - but who on this earth except JESUS CHRIST ever perfectly obeyed GOD's holy Law? Let the Book answer: **"THERE IS NOT A JUST MAN UPON THE EARTH THAT DOETH GOOD AND SINNETH NOT."** Again, **"ALL HAVE SINNED, AND COME SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD!"** **"ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him (JESUS) the iniquity of us all."** Again we read, **"There is none righteous, no, not one."** And finally we hear the HOLY SPIRIT speaking through John, **"If we say that we have no sin... we make [GOD] a liar!"**

I ask, in the name of all that is high and holy, What man would dare suggest that he could live a life worthy of the salvation given by a holy GOD? Salvation comes only through the shed Blood of the Lamb of GOD. (Study carefully Romans 10:5-10.)

Verse 22: **"But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."**

Who would dare argue with the Word of GOD? The Scriptures declare that ALL are under sin . . . ALL are in the same category . . . **"that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them THAT BELIEVE."** Faith and believing cannot be separated . . . they are Siamese twins so far as spiritual matters are concerned.

If we believe in JESUS we have faith in Him; if we have faith in JESUS we believe in Him. The only way any person has ever been saved (or ever will be saved) is by believing the Word of the Living GOD. **"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"** (Romans 10:17).

We should remember that the Scriptures had not been written in Abraham's time. The Scriptures began to be written about the time the Law was given. The first five books, often referred to as the Books of Moses, were written by the mediator of the Law Covenant . . . and of course that was Moses. Thank GOD for the written Word today! Thank GOD for Galatians 5:1. We enjoy **"... the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free!"**

Verse 23: **"But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."**

In this verse we again have the words **"shut up."**

Greek scholars tell us this verse means, "But before faith came, we were kept in ward (in jail)

under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

Of course, the people who were shut up (or in jail) were the people of Israel to whom the Law was given. The Scripture states, "**We know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law**" (Romans 3:19). On the other hand, Gentiles are similarly condemned; for though they (Gentiles) do not have the Law, they "**are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another**" (Romans 2:14b-15).

"FOR WHEN THE GENTILES WHICH HAVE NOT THE LAW . . ." Could anything be more clearly stated? Could it be made plainer? I referred to the Council in Acts 15 a little earlier in this message. The big question there was whether or not the Gentiles were under the Law of Moses. After the apostles deliberated and discussed the question as to whether or not believers are under Law, they sent back this message to the Gentile Christians at Antioch: "**Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the Law: to whom we gave no such commandment**" (Acts 15:24).

In the same chapter Peter accuses the legalizers of "putting a yoke" on the shoulders of GOD's people, which no man could bear (or, which could not be borne by man). "**Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WE SHALL BE SAVED, EVEN AS THEY!**" (Acts 15:10-11).

GOD gave His holy Law to one nation (Israel) as a demonstration of man's inability to save himself by keeping that Law:

"Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: FOR BY THE LAW IS THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN" (Romans 3:19-20).

The Word of GOD clearly defines the reason for giving of the Law: The Law was given to Israel to stop the mouths of all men forever . . . that is, all men who teach salvation by Law . . . or by grace plus Law . . . or by grace plus Law-works.

For more than fifteen hundred years GOD gave Israel the opportunity to prove that man cannot keep the Law. GOD did not need proof . . . He knew that man would sadly fail. Man should need no further proof. If during the course of fifteen hundred years, Israel could not keep the Law (they broke every Law GOD ever gave them), we should face the fact that no one can be saved by keeping the Law. All must be saved by faith, and faith alone, without the deeds of the Law, without the deeds of the flesh. The Word of GOD clearly points out, "**By the Law is the knowledge of sin.**"

The Word of GOD does not say, "By the Law comes salvation." Salvation comes by faith in the grace of GOD: "**The grace of GOD that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,**

teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Verse 24: **"Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."** Greek authorities tell us that the Greek for "schoolmaster" - in the days when CHRIST walked upon the earth, and in the days when Paul ministered - was applied to a household servant who was put in charge of a child, to be a guide and tutor in that child's early years. When the child became of age the guide or tutor would turn him over to others.

The Law was Israel's guide (or tutor) until CHRIST came, and shed His Blood on the Cross that they might be justified by faith in His shed Blood. Every lamb that was slain and its Blood offered during the Dispensation of Law, pointed to the shed Blood of the Lamb of GOD on Calvary's Cross; but the poor Jews were so spiritually blind they could not see their Lamb. All they could see was tradition and the religion of their fathers.

The Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel in three parts:

The first part: The Commandments. The Commandments expressed the righteous will of GOD concerning the nation Israel (Exodus 20:1-26).

The second part: The Judgments, governing the social life of Israel (Exodus 21:1 through Exodus 24:11).

The third part: The Ordinances, which governed the religious life of the Israelites (Exodus 24:12 through Exodus 31:18).

Verse 25: **"BUT AFTER THAT FAITH IS COME, WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER A SCHOOLMASTER."**

Could anything be clearer? The Law was our schoolmaster - up to CHRIST. But when the Lord JESUS came, we were no longer under a schoolmaster. We now have another teacher - the HOLY SPIRIT. JESUS said, **"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come"** (John 16:12-13). These words were spoken by JESUS to the disciples before His crucifixion and before Pentecost; but hear these words after the HOLY GHOST was given:

"But ye have an unction from the Holy One, AND YE KNOW ALL THINGS . . . but the anointing which ye have received (the HOLY GHOST) of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (I John 2:20 and 27).

The apostles were not yet ready to receive the truth which the HOLY SPIRIT would reveal to them after Pentecost.

This special revelation was reserved by GOD to be given to the apostles (especially Paul) at the right time.

Before JESUS came to this earth, revelation was given in type and shadow: "**God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON . . .**" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Verses 26-29: "**For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

All believers, regardless of their color or nationality, are children of GOD. In verse 27 the baptism referred to is not water baptism. No one can be baptized by water into the body of CHRIST. I know you want proof for that statement so we will hear the testimony of the Scriptures:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:12-13).

From this Scripture we clearly see that all believers are baptized by the Spirit into the body of CHRIST. The baptizer is not the minister in the local church - but the risen CHRIST Himself. Read Matthew 3:11. He baptizes the believer in the HOLY SPIRIT and into Himself, thereby making the believer a member of His (CHRIST's) own body . . . a member of His flesh and of His bones. Read Ephesians 5:30. This makes CHRIST and the born again believer one flesh. Study carefully Ephesians 5:29-31. It is imperative to understand this tremendous spiritual truth, if we would ever appreciate our position in JESUS by grace. Many dear believers are losing out in abundant living because of ignorance concerning our position in CHRIST as a child of GOD, a son of GOD, an heir of GOD and a joint-heir with JESUS CHRIST, even now sitting with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

Paul goes on to point out that there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female . . . we are all one in Christ. All are baptized into one body by one SPIRIT. All are made to drink into one Spirit. We can say, "**YE ARE ALL ONE MAN IN CHRIST JESUS!**"

Then Paul points out that if we are CHRIST's, we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Since it is true that all believers are members of the body of CHRIST, and all believers constitute one man in CHRIST, then it is also true that those of us who are born again are the children of Abraham and will inherit the promise along with faithful Abraham.

We are in CHRIST, we are members of His body. Therefore, the inheritance is not by Law, but by promise! The inheritance does not come through good works nor by keeping the Law; but only by Grace, through faith in the finished work of the Lord JESUS - plus nothing. It is CHRIST, all CHRIST, totally apart from man's work or man's ability. "**Christ in you, the hope**

of glory . . . ye are complete in Him."

The saints in the Old Testament era could not see nor understand what we see and understand. The Old Testament saints since Moses were under the bondage of the Law. Thank GOD the New Testament saint (since JESUS came, paid sin's debt and became a curse for the sinner) is in the liberty that grace provides. During the Old Testament era, the believer, though an heir of GOD, was an infant (spiritually speaking). Today, when we embrace by faith the finished work of JESUS CHRIST and become a recipient of GOD's saving grace, we receive the position as adult sons.

We will see this very clearly in chapter four.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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