



Galatians 3:15-18 Notes

Is There Such a Thing as a Gift You Must Earn?

Even human covenants are not altered or set aside after they have been ratified (3:15)

- Paul is explaining the relationship between the Law and the Covenant by using an illustration from the Galatians' own personal experience.
- You can think of many examples of human covenants (mortgage payments, etc.) - even these types of agreements are not set aside or altered after we have signed on the bottom line!

How much more, then, is God's covenant secure? (3:16)

- By contrast with human covenants, *How Much More* does God's unilateral covenant with Abraham stand!
- This verse affirms that the promises God gave to Abraham were intended to apply to others in addition Abraham.
- Paul refers back to Genesis 22:17 and emphasizes that the noun "seed" in Hebrew is singular - it is a collective noun, however (like our word "sheep").
- There are four ways the word "seed" is used in the Bible:
 1. All of the physical descendants of Abraham - the Hebrew people.
 2. The physical descendants of Abraham who are believers and therefore qualify for the promised blessings (which come by faith).
 3. Those who are not physical descendants of Abraham, but who also believe and are part of the "all nations" aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:7).
 4. "THE SEED" - the Messiah - the ultimate descendant of Abraham who made it possible for the blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant to be realized (Gal. 3:16). Only those who are "in Christ" are able to participate in those blessings.

The Law (which came later) certainly did not invalidate the Covenant which preceded it (3:17)

- The Law did not change the Covenant in any way - the promises still stand!
- Invalidate (*akuros*) = to make of "no" (*a-*) authority (*kuros*).

The promised blessings cannot be based on both the Covenant and the Law - They are mutually exclusive! (3:18)

- The Greek text literally says, "For if by law is the inheritance - no longer by promise."
- "But God has granted it" (*charizomai*) = graced or gifted it to us. The Greek tense is the perfect tense, which indicates that this gifting occurred at some time in the past with consequences that extend out to the present time.
- The false teachers in Galatia were saying, "Salvation is a gift AND you must live in obedience to the law in order to receive it."
- Paul, however, is saying that adding rules to the gift actually negates the gift! Salvation is either based on God's gift OR on obedience to the law - but it cannot be both!
- The promised blessings cannot be based on both the Law and the Covenant - it's either one or the other - they are mutually exclusive.
- This verse tells us in no uncertain terms exactly how God granted salvation: the blessings come only as a result of God's unilateral activity in fulfillment of His promise (*His gift*) - not involving human effort of any kind.

There is no such thing as a gift that you must earn!

- You cannot have it both ways - you must either accept the gift of God or reap the wages for your works.
- Which will you choose?

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"I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

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for encouragement and support as we grow in faith;
for prayer and service to advance God's work in our own time.