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Faith Bible Church
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-76
Galatians 3:15-17 – God’s Permanent Covenant of Grace

Open your Bible to Galatians 3:15-17. In Galatians 3:15 Paul uses a human illustration to continue his argument about the permanency of God’s promise of salvation by grace. Note in this verse that he calls the Galatians “Brethren.” Even though he has been harshly criticizing them—even to the point of calling curses on them for distorting grace—he wants them to know that he continues to love them. Every communicator, at one time or another, battles with inner conflicts or tensions between his love and commitment to the Word of God and his love and personal feelings for believers under his ministry. There are times when the Word of God is very harsh on all of us and this harshness must be clearly communicated to believers, regardless of how much the pastor cares for their *personal* feelings. He must always be more oriented to the Word of God than to his personal feelings for those in his ministry. The problem in much of contemporary Christianity, even in the doctrinal movement, is seen in believers getting “all offended” and thus complain with “I surely did not need that . . . I feel all beat up . . . I did not come for that kind of message, I need encouraging, not rebuking.” Instead of being concerned about Truth, where one is in the plan of God, and making adjustments, such a believer is more into “uplifting psycho-Bible-babble” than living for the Lord and the spiritual life. What *every* believer “should come for” is truth, total truth. Not truth that is massaged to make believers feel better, nor worse. The believer who is more concerned with their psychological needs than the total truth of God and His Word has been psychologized by kosmos diabolicus and has major problems with God. Furthermore, the more arrogance and pride a believer has the more they will be offended as they reject admonitions from the Word of God because in their negative volition these admonitions are not viewed as good for them—they do not want to change, not really! Again, the more pride a believer has the more he will be offended and reject the Word of God as it is; he will always attempt to contort it to make himself feel better, which is really why they come to church in the first place: to feel better *about themselves*. You see it really is not about God unless they can *get* something out of it. Such an attitude among believers is precisely why they continue to have so many problems throughout their lives, all caused by “spiritual” narcissism coated with biblical or doctrinal language. The most vivid illustration of this is with the likes of Joel Osteen and the Rhema bunch who continue to push those psychologically-encouraging buttons, albeit with Bible verses, and thus continue a life of blasphemy in contemporary Christianity, which has all but lost its appetite for the whole truth. It has become all about them—again, that is why they reject total truth, and why they live such frantic, problem-filled lives, decade after decade, a life constantly punctuated by some need to trust God about some temporal matter. This is no way to live and it certainly does not glorify the Lord. We live in evil times where the spiritual life has been reduced to merely trusting God, rather than a life that lives and grows in awe, love, and worship of God because of who and what He is. Without total truth a believer never learns to really love God for

who and what He is. The focus is on self instead of God to such an extent that such a believer cannot even maintain fellowship with God for more than a few minutes.

In Galatians 3:15 Paul is making the point that the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants about justification by faith was not abrogated by the giving the newer Mosaic Law. God will never change justification by faith because His character never changes. God will never go back on His Word. God is always consistent with His promises regardless of how long ago they were made or the coming of any new dispensation like that of the Law. God promises eternal life by faith and faith alone in Christ alone. God's Word is His bond. For Him to go back on His Word would be to go back on His own character, which is impossible for He must remain truthful to Himself. God will never add anything to faith for salvation. The coming of the Mosaic Law never changed God's promises of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. On God's promises of eternal salvation, read John 3:16; 5:24; 6:35-40, 47; 10:28-30; 14:16; 19:30; Rom. 6:23; 8:28-34; Heb. 7:25; 10:10-14; Col. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; 1 John 2:1-2; 5:13.

In Galatians 3:16 Paul gives another reason why the Mosaic covenant of Law did not do away with the Abrahamic covenant. The fact that the promise to Abraham concerning His seed was fulfilled in Christ demonstrates the ongoing validity and permanence of the grace in the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional and unilateral: it only depended upon the faithfulness of God. This verse shows that the promise of salvation by faith ultimately depends upon the person and work of Jesus Christ, not the works of the Mosaic Law. The blessings for the Jews did not come simply because they were racially Jews, the blessing of salvation only comes by faith in the Messiah, the Promised Seed.

Galatians 3:17 goes back to verse 15 (verse 16 is a parenthesis) to drive home the point that the Law that came 430 years after the grace promise to Abraham and his descendants. Again, once God made the grace contract in the Abrahamic covenant, it is permanent. The Mosaic Law coming later did not and could not invalidate His earlier grace covenant with Abraham and with all who would simply believe.

It is unfortunate that many believers have thrown out the grace blessings promised for everyone by opting for the Mosaic Law, which was a temporary covenant of works for a nation. To throw out grace for law (or any form of legalism) is about the dumbest thing any believer could do. Why would anyone want to live by the works of the law instead of by grace? Why would anyone rather live a life governed by rules and regulations than governed by a living grace relationship with Jesus Christ? Legalism comes in many flavors and colors. Just because one talks about grace does not mean he is not legalistic or have strong religious proclivities. One way to tell whether you are living by religion or a relationship with Christ is to examine your motives. The legalistic life is oriented to rules and regulations and even doctrines rather than being oriented to the Lord first and foremost, and then being committed to His mandates and doctrines. The grace spiritual life is always oriented to the Lord Jesus Christ. When faced with a temptation, the legalist will either give into the temptation or refrain based on right or wrong whereas the believer who lives for the Lord will refrain because of a personal desire to please Jesus Christ. There is a world of difference between facing a temptation and considering it based on what doctrine teaches (refrain because of what the Word says or, do it and confess it later), or considering it in light of it pleasing or displeasing the Lord. While doctrine is crucial, our orientation must always be to the person of Christ to the extent to where our actual motives for

doing something or refraining from some sin is based on that relationship and not just because of what the Bible or Bible doctrine teaches. On the importance of living to please Christ, read Col. 1:10; 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10; 6:5-6; 1 Thess. 2:4; 4:1. Every believer gets distracted from time to time, fewer will make the necessary adjustments that are necessary for thriving, and growing Christ-centered life. The grace opportunity is always available.

In 'Ehyeh,

Pastor Don Hargrove