

A Promise Is a Promise. And God made a Promise ...

God made a promise. Believe in Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life and right standing before God.

How can God keep this promise?

1) **A SATISFACTORY PAYMENT: CHRIST PURCHASED OUR WAY OUT FROM UNDER THE CURSE OF THE LAW, 3:10-14.**

- All who rely on the works of the law—doing—are under a curse because the law demands the person to follow perfectly and completely, 3:10.
- It is obvious that no one is made right before God by doing because doing is not faith, 3:11-12.

People are only redeemed by believing in Christ and what he has done on the cross, 3:13.

- On the cross Christ provided the payment that enables the Father to fulfill his promise to Abraham and then to us, 3:14.

2) **A UNILATERAL COVENANT: GOD MADE AN IRREVOCABLE COVENANT, 3:15-18.**

- This covenant is based on the finished work—the purchasing work—of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- A person's last will and testament cannot be voided or revised once it has been ratified, 3:15.
- The covenant promise of salvation was to Abraham and through Jesus Christ, 3:16.
- Absolutely nothing—including the law—can void the promise of God, 3:17.
- If the covenant is revised to include the law, then it no longer comes by God's promise, 3:18.

3) **A COMPLEMENTARY COUNTERPOINT: THE LAW PREPARES HEARTS FOR THE GOSPEL BY COUNTERPOINT AND JUXTAPOSITION, 3:19-22.**

COUNTERPOINT: an argument, idea, or theme used to create a contrast with the main element; a contrasting or interacting element.

JUXTAPOSITION: the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect.

- The law was added because of transgressions until Christ came, 3:19.
- There is no conflict as God is the one who planned and implemented both the law and the promise, 3:20.
- The law is complementary, not contrary, to the promise of God, 3:21a.
- The law was never a rival to the promise because the law was not given to bring life, 3:21b.

» **THE LAW IMPRISONS ... AND THAT'S GOOD ...**

The law locks down everyone under sin—shutting up everyone—proving our total depravity and demonstrating our complete inadequacy and absolute failure as far as being able to do anything ourselves to make us right before God.

» **THE LAW IS THE COMPLEMENTARY COUNTERPOINT TO THE GOSPEL OF GRACE.**

The law, if correctly understood and accepted, is an “option remover”—a religion defeater. The law helps us to trust God for the promise because the law causes us to see that there are no other options—religious or otherwise.

» **THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW ...**

On the wrong side of the law you have all of the religious efforts by which people try to make themselves acceptable to God. But for these people things do not get better but worse. The demands of the law keep them under the curse of the impossible—unholy man trying to make himself acceptable to a holy God.

The religious people on the wrong side of the law never come to understand this, so they continue to misread and misunderstand the law, falling further and further into the darkness, working harder and faster but never able to do enough.

And they don't know ...

The tragedy and irony of living on the wrong side of the law? You don't know ... you think you know ... but in fact you are deceived ... and might even think you know better than everyone else ... but you don't ... because if you live on the wrong side of the law, you are living in the darkness.

And you can't see in the dark.

» **THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE LAW ...**

The law is holy and good. The law is not a curse. When we understand the purpose and place of the law, we praise God.

- (Romans 7:12 ESV) So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

God's holy law breaks up the hard soil of self-effort and prepares the soil for belief ... at least for some. It is a sharp, comprehensive instrument which devastates self-righteousness and prepares hearts to receive God's grace.

It may help us to understand if we bring to mind our earlier studies where we spoke of the comparative scarcity of law for the first 2,500 years of earth history.

» **WE BEGAN IN GENESIS WITH ONE “LAW” ...**

- (Genesis 2:16–17 ESV) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not

eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

» **INSTRUCTIONS AFTER EDEN ...**

After the fall we know that there was some instruction on worship and sacrifice given in the time of Cain and Abel. And then God gave his instruction on vengeance after Cain murdered Abel.

- (Genesis 4:15 ESV) Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

» **NEW RULES AFTER THE FLOOD ...**

We then studied in Genesis how God gave Noah and his family new rules for living when they emerged from the ark after the flood. Nothing extensive. Just some general guidelines in the first six verses of chapter nine.

» **THE RULE OF CIRCUMCISION ...**

Circumcision was introduced to and through Abraham in Genesis seventeen as a covenant sign. But still nothing extensive. This might be hard for us to accept and understand, especially if we have wrongly understood the majority of earth history as under the law. But we have seen that was not the case.

- (Genesis 17:10 ESV) This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

And, then, 430 years after God's promise to Abraham, and about 2,500 years after Eden, God gave Moses the law. Generally speaking then there was very little recorded in Scripture as far as law and rules until Moses and the law.

» **AND THEN CAME THE LAW ...**

So how does this help us? It sheds great light on the complementary purpose of the law. The law was never given to save, but it does have an important part in God's salvation plan—to shut up our man-made attempts to save ourselves.