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## The Proof That A Man Is Justified By Faith Alone And Not By Works

Study 3: Galatians 3:15-18

—Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

<p><b>1. God gave a covenant that is permanent, lasting</b></p> <p>a. The illustration: A human covenant stands</p> <p>b. The point: God's covenant stands even more</p> <p><b>2. God made His covenant with Abraham &amp; his seed</b></p>	<p><b>C. The Proof of God's Covenant &amp; Promise, 3:15-18</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.</p>	<p>a. Stated it emphatically</p> <p>b. The seed is Christ</p> <p><b>3. God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law</b></p> <p><b>4. God gave His covenant or inheritance by promise—not by law (the inheritance of righteousness, of being acceptable to God)</b></p>
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### Section III

## THE PROOF THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ALONE AND NOT BY WORKS

Galatians 3:1-4:7

### Study 3: THE PROOF OF GOD'S COVENANT AND PROMISE

**Text:** Galatians 3:15-18

**Aim:** To cling to the assurance of God's promises.

### Memory Verse:

"For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Ga. 3:18)

### INTRODUCTION:

Do you *really* believe that God will keep His promises to you? Have you ever felt that God has forgotten you?

When God made a covenant with Abraham, it was more than just a few legal terms pasted on a piece of paper. God chose to take full responsibility for Abraham's destiny. God guaranteed His commitment to him, unconditionally.

As Christian believers, we also benefit from the Abrahamic Covenant. How? It guarantees our justification. What justification?

That we are made righteous and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. With that guarantee set in place, we need to do something: live our lives like we belong to God. Living a justified life affects the total person. Myron Augsburger speaks toward this gripping truth:

*The words holiness and sanctification are not prominent in much of Protestant theology. We have tended to speak of justification without [an] emphasis on sanctification...Holiness means that one belongs wholly to God. This is also the meaning of sanctification, being set apart as God's own possession. When this begins internally, with the heart, the transformation becomes something that affects the total person. (From *The Christ-Shaped Conscience. Selected from Christianity Today, (March 8, 1993), p.45.*)*

Some teachers in the Galatian churches were teaching a false doctrine, a very dangerous doctrine. They were saying that a person was not saved by the grace of God through faith alone; a man had to keep the rituals of the church and focus his life upon the law and upon doing all the good works he could possibly do. Very simply stated, if a man wanted to be acceptable to God, he had to be the very best person he could, be as religious as he could, and keep all the laws of God that he could.

This, of course, is totally wrong. A person is justified by faith alone; he is not justified by being religious and doing good and keeping the law. Religion, good works, and the law all have their place in the plan of God and in the life of man. But man is not saved and made acceptable to God by his own effort. Man cannot earn, win, or merit God's acceptance; for no matter how good and disciplined man may become, he is still short of God's glory which is perfection. Despite all of man's goodness and achievements, man is still too often polluted with...

The list could go on and on. The point is that no matter how good we are, we are still guilty of sin and failure—we are short of God's glory, ever so short of perfection. Our goodness just cannot earn or merit acceptance with God. If God is going to accept us, it

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|------------------|-----------------|
| • selfishness    | • bitterness    |
| • injustice      | • unkindness    |
| • transgressions | • favoritism    |
| • pride          | • lust          |
| • lack of love   | • evil thoughts |
| • envy           | • immorality    |
| • anger          | • prejudice     |

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| • impatience       | God                     |
| • being puffed up  | • failure to worship    |
| • anger            | • unbecoming behavior   |
| • hatred           | • being easily provoked |
| • failure to hope  | • failure to endure     |
| • greed            | • failure to pray       |
| • trespasses       |                         |
| • aloofness        |                         |
| • failure to honor |                         |

will be because we *believe Him*, truly believe that *He will accept us* and that He loves us enough to honor that belief. If God does not love us enough to accept our faith in Him, then we are hopelessly lost forever. Faith in Him—in His love and in His promise—is our only hope for salvation and acceptance by God.

This is the point of the present passage. God's covenant and promise to Abraham proves that justification is by faith and not by works of the law.

#### OUTLINE:

1. God gave a covenant that is permanent, lasting. (v.15)
2. God made His covenant with Abraham and his seed. (v.16)
3. God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law. (v.17)
4. God gave His covenant or inheritance by promise—not by law (the inheritance of righteousness, of being acceptable to God) (v.18)

#### 1. GOD GAVE A COVENANT THAT IS PERMANENT, LASTING. (v.15)

There is the illustration of a covenant between men. A covenant is an agreement made between two parties, a special relationship set up and established by two or more persons.

The point is that once a covenant has been made and executed, it stands: it cannot be annulled or added to. By law, the promises of the covenant are sealed; both parties are bound to keep their word, their promise.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

*We live in a society where promises are expected to be*

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broken. Are you a man or woman of your word? Or are your commitments made or broken as a matter of “convenience”?

Years ago a department manager, Harry, in a retail store seemed to be bound for a steady rise up the corporate ladder in the company. As he worked faithfully and kept his witness for Christ before all of the employees, he was offered a position as a youth leader in a local church. With great excitement, he accepted the offer and turned in his notice to his manager. After he turned in his resignation, he asked for permission to select and train his replacement.

Tim was a non-Christian friend who had been an end-of-Christmas-layoff casualty. Harry had befriended Tim and had shared Christ with him. Sensing an opportunity to reach out in a practical way, Harry chose Tim to be his replacement. Harry had it all figured out: Train Tim for a month and then start at the church the next day.

Along the way, something went wrong. Either Harry was a good trainer or Tim was a fast learner, but Tim learned the job in two weeks and not four. Observing this, the store manager called Harry in his office and said, “Harry, I can’t afford to pay two men to do the same job. Are you sure this church job is a guaranteed position? If not, I’ll keep you and release Tim.”

There was no struggle for an answer in Harry’s heart. He had given both his job and his word to Tim. He quickly remembered the words of King David, **“He swears to his own hurt, and does not change.” (Ps.15:4b, NASB)** It turned out that the church position fell through. But did God honor Harry’s integrity? Of course, God always takes care of those who are promise keepers. Did it make a difference in Tim? You bet! Years later, he became one of the key employees in his company. And to this day, he still remembers what Harry did for him.

## 2. GOD MADE HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM AND HIS SEED. (v.16)

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God made His covenant with Abraham and *his seed*. Note that the promise was not given to Abraham alone, but it was also given to the *seed*, the descendants and offspring of Abraham. The promise or covenant with Abraham is covered in the Book of Genesis:

### QUESTIONS:

1. Are you in the habit of keeping promises that you make to others? What are the hardest promises for you to keep? Why?
2. For you, what is a stronger commitment: your word or your name written on a contract?
3. Do you think that God would ever break His covenant with you? What factors brought you to your conclusion?

**“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” (Ge. 17:7-8)**

The important question is: Who is meant by the seed of Abraham? Scripture declares that it is Jesus Christ. The word “seed” is singular, not plural. Therefore, God’s promise points to one single person, and that person is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is...

- the *seed* promised to Abraham.
- the *seed* who is to receive the promises made to Abraham. This is a phenomenal truth, and it means three significant things.

1. It means that the promises made to Abraham have passed down to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the descendent who is to inherit the *promised land*, the land of Canaan for an *everlasting possession*. Canaan, of course, is a type of heaven and of the new heavens and earth which God has promised to recreate. The point is that Jesus Christ is to inherit the world and be exalted as the Sovereign Majesty of the universe, ruling and reigning forever and ever.

2. It means that believers, too, shall inherit the world and reign with Christ through all eternity. Abraham was promised that he would be the father of many nations or of many children, and believers are those children.

**“Blessed are the meek [the humble, trusting, believing]: for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt.5:5)**

3. It means that faith is the way men become justified and acceptable to God.

**“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” (Ro.4:13)**

In summary Abraham believed God, and because he believed, God kept His covenant and promise.

- ⇒ Abraham has been given a seed, a descendent who has blessed the whole world, that is, Jesus Christ.
- ⇒ Abraham has also been given nations of people who are heirs of his and of Christ. And there is only one condition to receiving the inheritance: believing God, that is, following in the “steps of that faith of our father Abraham” (Ro. 4:12).

**“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” (Ro. 4:3)**

⇒ He, Christ, and his descendants are to receive the promised land—a new heavens and earth that will be perfected eternally.

**“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the**

*promise made of none effect.” (Ro. 4:13-14)*

### 3. GOD GAVE HIS COVENANT OF FAITH BEFORE HE GAVE THE LAW. (v.17)

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God gave His covenant of faith to Abraham before He gave the law to Moses. The covenant of faith preceded the covenant of law. The law of God did not even appear upon the scene until four hundred and thirty years after Abraham. Note two significant things.

1. When the law was given, the promise to Abraham had not yet been fulfilled; therefore, the law could not void or change the covenant of faith with Abraham. The promises of God to Abraham and his descendent, Jesus Christ, still stood. As Lehman Strauss points out:

⇒ The covenant of faith finds its roots in eternity past.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Who is Abraham’s seed? Why is this important to know?
2. Do you think any of the promises made to Abraham have lost their power over the course of thousands of years? What is the secret behind the enduring quality of God’s promises?
3. What part, if any, does the believer have in God’s promises to Abraham?

*“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (Jn. 1:17)*

⇒ Since Jesus Christ, who is eternal, existed before Abraham, the covenant of faith was given to Christ even before it was given to Abraham. (Lehman Strauss, *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians*, p.45.)

2. The covenant made with Abraham told man how he was to follow God and receive the promises of God, that is, by faith. Therefore, when the law was given, it must have been given for a different purpose entirely. It could not have been given to show men how to follow God, for that truth was already established in the covenant of faith given to Abraham.

The point is clear: no man is justified by the law, that is, by self-effort and works, trying to become good and righteous through obeying the law. That was not the purpose of the law. A person is justified by faith and by faith alone.

#### APPLICATION:

God’s covenant of faith or of grace is sure. It cannot be revoked or changed. *Believers* shall inherit the promises made to Abraham and Christ.

*“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” (Lu. 21:33)*

### 4. GOD GAVE HIS COVENANT OR INHERITANCE BY

### PROMISE—NOT BY LAW (THE INHERITANCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, OF BEING ACCEPTABLE TO GOD) (v.18).

How do we know that a person is justified by faith alone? Because God gave His covenant or inheritance by promise, not by law.

William Barclay sums up this passage in a most descriptive way.

*Again and again Paul comes back to the same point. The whole problem of human life is to get into a right relationship with God. So long as we are afraid of God, so long as God is a grim stranger, there can be no peace in life. How can we achieve this right relationship? Shall we try to achieve it by a meticulous and even self-torturing obedience to the law, by performing endless deeds, by observing every smallest regulation the law lays down? If we take that way we are forever in default, for man’s imper-*

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Which is older: the law or God’s covenant? That is, the law given to Moses or God’s covenant given to Abraham? Why is this significant?
2. Why did God not “change the rules” when He gave the law regarding how to follow Him?
3. What difference does it make how God wants you to follow Him?

*fection can never fully satisfy the perfection of God; we are forever frustrated, forever climbing up a hill in which the peak never comes in sight, forever under condemnation; but if we simply abandon this hopeless struggle and bring ourselves and our sin to God, then the grace of God opens its arms to us and we are at peace with a God who is no longer judge but father. Paul’s whole argument is that that is what happened to Abraham; it was on that basis that God’s covenant with Abraham was made. And nothing that came in later can change that covenant any more than anything can alter a will that has already been ratified and signed. (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*. “The Daily Study Bible.” (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1954), p.30.)*

The inheritance given to Abraham is that of righteousness, of being accepted by God and given the privilege of living forever with Him in the new heavens and earth. The inheritance was not given to Abraham by law, that is, Abraham could not earn, win, or merit it; but as Scripture declares: “God gave it [the inheritance] to Abraham by promise.”

#### APPLICATION:

The same promise is given to believers, that is, to all those who walk in the faith of Abraham: the promise of being counted righteous and acceptable to God, and of being given the privilege of living forever in the new heavens and earth.

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God,*

*believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (Jn. 14:1-2)*

### ILLUSTRATION:

We should be thankful that God kept His promise after the law came to Moses. Can you imagine what life would be like if our justification came because of our ability to keep all of the rules—perfectly?

Booker T. Washington describes meeting an ex-slave from Virginia in his book *Up from Slavery*:

*I found that this man had made a contract with his master, two or three years previous to the Emancipation Proclamation, to the effect that the slave was to be permitted to buy himself, by paying so much per year for his body; and while he was paying for himself, he was to be permitted to labor where and for whom he pleased.*

*Finding that he could secure better wages in Ohio, he went there. When freedom came, he was still in debt to his master some 300 hundred dollars.*

*Notwithstanding that the Emancipation Proclamation freed him from any obligation to his master, this black man walked the greater portion of the distance back to where his old master lived in Virginia, and placed the last dollar, with interest, in his hands.*

*In talking to me about this, the man told me that he knew that he did not have to pay his debt, but that he had given his word to his master, and his word he had never broken. He felt that he could not enjoy his freedom till he had fulfilled his promise. (Craig B. Larson, editor. Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching, p.190.)*

The law did not change this man's commitment to keep his promise. Even more so, the law did not change God's plan for man. As Malachi 3:6 says: **“I am the LORD, I change not.”**

### SUMMARY:

The Christian believer has no reason to doubt God's promises. In particular, His promise to justify us has been guaranteed by His covenant to Abraham. The major points of our lesson reinforce this great truth:

1. God gave a covenant that is permanent, lasting.
2. God made His covenant with Abraham and his seed.
3. God gave His covenant of faith before He gave the law.
4. God gave His covenant or inheritance by promise—not by law (the inheritance of righteousness, of being acceptable to God).

### PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES

(Reflection & Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:

2. The area that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Statement of Commitment:

### QUESTIONS:

1. Can you really trust God to give you an inheritance—even through you sin and fall short?
2. How can you back up what you believe about God's promises?
3. Do man-made laws have any bearing or effect on God's promises?

**This article was taken from the Teacher's Outline and Study Bible (TOSB) Commentary, Galatians? Did you know—you can buy the whole New Testament commentary set? To order, please go to the back cover (page 11) and use the ordering form.**

**If you have missed our previous studies in the Book of Galatians, please let us know and we will send them to you. Call (419) 962-1515 or write the Amish Voice, PO Box 128, Savannah OH 44874**

In *Separation from the World, Part I*, I wrote: “One of the [main] beliefs maintained by the plain people surrounds separation from the world. In fact, while studying our rich culture, I discovered that if you look past that one belief, the average plain person isn’t [all that] different from any other person alive.”

In this article, we’re going to look closer at our plain culture’s practice of “separation from the world.” The “world,” if you stop and think of how we tend to view it, is considered primarily to be men, women, and children who do not visibly look or act differently from those who do not profess to be Christians. Often people who claim Christ as their Savior, but dress in non-Amish and Mennonite clothing, are considered “in the world.”

**Amish and Mennonite Symbols of Separation from the World**

Clothing is one of the biggest concerns in the plain culture’s separation from the world. In Amish communities, all clothing must be custom made just for them, and the colors and styles are different enough that it’s impossible to mistake an Amish man for anything other than an Amish. I remember a preacher saying that plain clothing is a plain person’s uniform, much like a policeman, fireman, doctor, etc. would wear to separate themselves from others. He stated that the plain person’s clothing is a confession to God and man, showing separation from a worldly lifestyle.

Other forms of separation from the world include the belief that a person should work with their hands, not own large businesses, not interact too much with non-plain people, drive horse and buggy, and various other rules which clearly mark the plain lifestyle.

**Consequences of the Plain Structure**

All of these rules of separation make plain communities a much tighter group, a kind of world in and of itself, though it unfortunately doesn’t always draw the members closer to each other in friendship. In that regard, many are no closer to each other than those of the world might be. While there is some lack in close friendships, however, plain people make it up by assisting one another when help is

needed in barn raising, repair, etc. My heart’s cry to the plain people is the same as Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 1:10: *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

In a similar way, we see an unfortunate amount of peer pressure among the plain people as a result of the religious lifestyle they live. As stated in Galatians 3:10, if a person attempts to live up to a standard,



when he fails, as we all will, that person will be rather miserable. In fact, Paul says it’s a curse to not live up to all the laws. This is true because we are held to the law if it is what we trust in, instead of surrendering to Christ: *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* (Galatians 3:10)

Our inability to live up to Christ’s standards is clearly stated in Acts 15: 10 *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?* My friends, even the best of the best in the Bible weren’t able to live up to God’s standards and, I confess, so much more are we unable.

But, we who accept Christ’s righteousness in place of our own are no longer under the curse of the law: *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*

(Romans 7:6).

We are free indeed and now **do serve**, but we serve in the **life of the spirit** rather than according to the law – works which produce no life. *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* (John 8:36)

**Plain but Living in the World**

It is true that plain people separate themselves from the world, and that is a good thing. However, based on Matthew 13:22, we know that plain people do face a very real reality of being part of the world unless their focus is on Christ alone ...**and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful:**

When Jesus speaks of the world, He’s speaking not as much of particular habits, but of the *things of this world* - as He mentioned in the previous verse, the **cares of this world**. We all, whether plain or not, have only one of two things to focus on: earthly things or heavenly things. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* (Matthew 6:24)

We can see that even the plain person’s separation from the world, alone, cannot keep a person from living according to the world’s standards. Christ’s standard is set in Matthew 6:24 - we either care for things of heaven (serving God) or things of earth (serving mammon or self).

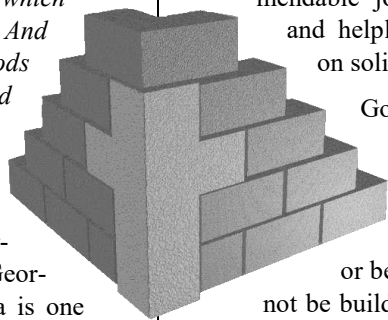
Religion, whether plain or otherwise, will even lull oneself to sleep as he starts thinking he is living the “right way,” as he thinks God intends that he live, and forgets that Christ alone can atone. May we all be firm in accepting Christ’s righteousness first, in order to live our lives righteously as the Life of Christ brings fruit.

**World Perspective**

When I read an article or book, I like stories and examples and would like to add one here to help explain a world perspective. Nearly all Mennonite denominations (whether they are driving a car or horse and buggy) associate red cars as worldly; I personally associated red cars

—continued next page—

Matthew 7:24-27 says: *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*



Recently, we had the opportunity to visit a cottage in the Georgian Bay area. The entire area is one large rock, solid granite with some soil on top. Trees cover most of the landscape which is dotted with numerous small lakes. The entire shorelines are lined with cottages where Toronto residents come to escape the rush of the city.

As I looked around, I noticed that our cottage had no foundation in the expected way of digging down and pouring concrete. Just a small glob of concrete in a few places and some cement blocks formed the underpinnings of the cottage.

I wondered *is this a good way to build?* But when I consider that the entire area, as far as the eye can see is one huge rock, I understand. The support underneath us has not moved in many thousands of years and is more permanent than the houses or anything else built on it.

Jesus, when teaching, spoke about the importance of building on a rock. He was not referring specifically to building houses, but building your life. What is of value? Houses may decay, burn or blow away, but never have I seen a solid foundation such as rock destroyed by fire, decay or wind.

As we go through life, we are in fact building a “house”, or something we consider valuable. Jesus was of course teaching about more than building a house. He said that his words were more permanent than life.

One of the substitutes for building on a rock is our tendency to lean on traditions, teachings, and philosophy of men. This is

true in every type of church. Many people who follow the teachings of their church and hope that God will accept their works of service. I once heard a person say, “I am doing my best-what more does God expect of me?” As long as we hope to achieve peace of the conscience and fulfillment through what we do for God, we will never get there. Many of these people do a commendable job of serving the poor and helpless. But, is it building on solid rock?

Good as it is to belong to a church, it is not the Rock. The church may refer to the Rock (Jesus), but adhering or belonging to a church will not be building on the Rock. If that were so, then it would depend on adhering or belonging to the right church. There are plenty of churches claiming to be the right church. Who knows which one to choose? If God selected His people He was going to save based on their choice of a church, then we are all in trouble. Also, the Bible would

stress how to choose.

So then, I shall live my life in a church that promotes my well-being by pointing me to what Jesus says. I need to keep the teachings of Jesus always before me and put into practice what He says. He says He is the source of everything and will give the Spirit to anyone who asks. He is the head and, therefore, able to direct anyone to wherever He needs them. If He says I am needed in Africa or any other remote place, then I have to obey, or I am just pretending to be a believer and building on sand.

Will your house stand the test of a storm? When the storm winds blow, make sure you are built on the Rock that cannot be moved.

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## Separation from the World (Part 2)

—continued from page 6—

—by J. Martin

with being wild and worldly. Later, though, I realized if there aren’t any rules concerning color of cars, it becomes a matter that few people even think about. In fact, the average red car owner isn’t even aware that his color choice is any different than what any other color might be. In reality, it isn’t any different. What can be different is our motive for wanting a particular color, and we can even have pride in what we call a “conservative color.”

Because it’s “where we draw the line,” our rules are what we tend to think about most. If a person only focuses on Christ, all of a sudden that person starts to think about Him and His way of Life. Suddenly, we are all-consumed with following Him and disregard all comfort and thought of ourselves. If we are bearing our cross and following Him, we will even give our life for Him alone – all because we understand that it’s about Him, not about us.

### The World is Wrong

To conclude, I wish to emphasize that plain people are right in recognizing that the things of the world are sin and, in fact, contrary to God. To live only for Christ is a tall order, and we can only do this by denying self. May we all deny ourselves and follow Christ recognizing that our only hope is in truly denying the world, choosing instead Christ who is our righteousness indeed.

—J. Martin

Does the thought ever occur to you that, as a parent, you are doing more than just raising ONE generation of children and then you're done? The point I'm making is: what you **do** or **don't do** with your children will have a direct impact on the outcome of your grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.

So the question is: how do you want your great-great grandchildren (people you will never meet on earth) to live and believe?

- Do you want them to live for and serve God with a passion? Then teach your own children to live for and serve God with a passion.
- Do you want them to focus on money, work and material things? Then teach your own children to focus on money, work and material things.

The point is that you and I are not only teaching and training our own children, we are teaching and training future generations, even though we will never meet them face to face on this earth. This truth should cause us to be even more concerned how we teach and train our children today.

With that said, let's do a Bible study on how God says our lives will affect our children up to a third and fourth generation. Let's start with three questions.

1. What would you feel like if you knew that God was going to make your children pay for a sin that you committed?
2. What if the punishment for your sin carried through to four generations?
3. How would you feel if you learned that you were being punished by God for a sin that your great-great grandfather committed?

My guess is you would answer those three questions the same way I would by saying, "That does not seem fair at all!"

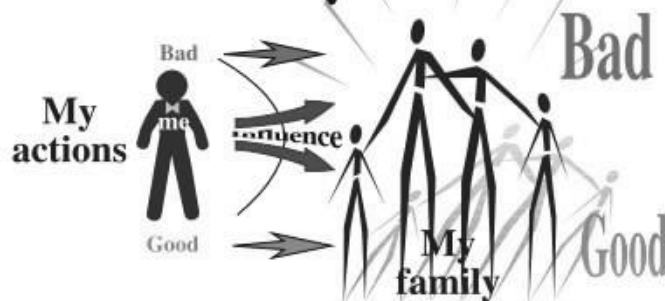
**In Exodus 20:5, the Bible says** *...I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting (punishing) the iniquity (sins) of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation*

Since the context of this Old Testament Scripture is specifically talking about the sin

of bowing to graven images and following other gods, let's discuss it. Some would say, "I have never bowed to a graven image, nor have I followed anyone other than the one true God."

Before you become too comfortable with that thought, let me ask you to consider some other facts. People very seldom think of money and possessions as a god; however, Jesus was very quick to point out that our material things can replace God and become our master.

## Accountability To Our Families



"...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation..." Exodus 20:5

**Matthew 6:24:** *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [material things].*

Friend, Jesus speaks about two masters, God and materialism. And as the Scripture points out, when it comes to serving one or the other, there is no middle ground. It is either one or it's the other. You cannot serve both at the same time.

When both masters call upon the man at the same time, he has to make a choice. He favors, serves, helps, and loves one; and while he is doing so, he is disfavoring, rejecting, and showing disrespect and hate for the other. A man cannot serve two masters.

You see, there are only two treasures for us to latch onto in this world: the earth and its treasures or God and His treasures. Which one are you latched onto? You can tell by becoming totally honest and asking yourself: which one do I get the most excited about? Which one do I know best?

People who follow and serve the material god more than the Lord God make God so

jealous and angry that He promised Moses He would punish the sin all the way through to a fourth generation.

I would like to go a step further and say that there are many other types of sins (or sometimes known as curses) that can be passed on to our children and beyond.

- Have you ever seen a family where the father has a problem with uncontrollable anger, his son seems to have "inherited it," and the grandpa had the same problem?
- Have you noticed that not only do some suffer from fears and/or depression, but so did the mother and/or father.

- Do you know someone who struggles with sexual lust, abuse and addiction? Chances are, if you know the previous generation well enough, you will find that this curse was a hand-me-down.

**Lamentations 5:7** says *Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne [been punished for] their iniquities [sins].*

**Exodus 34:7** says *The Lord... visiting (punishing) the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

The previously mentioned patterns are not a learned behavior but rather hand-me-downs from generations as far back as our great grandparents. Consider for instance: often people who were adopted end up with the same negative patterns as their birth parents, not because they were around their birth parents to learn how they behaved, but because they inherited their spiritual bondage.

Some other types of symptoms that are passed on from previous generations are:

- Family illnesses, such as cancer and heart disease.
- Financial difficulties.
- Mental problems.

**What is the purpose of a generational curse and punishment?**

I believe the reason God punishes future generations with the sins of their fathers is because of God's bitter hatred of sin. He

—continued on next page—



## Readers Respond

**In the July issue, we asked our readers the following question: Why did God allow dogs to eat the body of Queen Jezebel?**

**Response from MO:** I read your question with interest about the woman named Jezebel. Being Amish, I too had been told as a child the dogs didn't eat her face because she had been painted, nor her hands because of her evil doing. The most emphasis was that she painted her face, "wore make-up."

I love reading the New Testament and studying it in English so I can understand it better. When I saw your question on Jezebel, I studied the book of Kings as you mentioned. What I learned was that I had never before understood truly why she was killed. She wasn't even killed by dogs, but eaten by dogs. I understand she was a very wicked Queen and did not believe in the Lord. She may have worn make-up or wore stylish clothes, but the reason she was killed was because of her cold, wicked, evil acts. Her whoredoms and witchcrafts were

many.

Jehu became King through the Lord and was told to destroy the house of Ahab. He had Jezebel thrown out of a window; blood splattered, and Jehu trod her underfoot with his horses. After he ate and drank, he ordered them go bury her, but all that was left was her skull, her feet and the palms of her hands.

— Name withheld

*"...whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

— John 3:15

## Generational Patterns and Punishment – (Continued from pg. 8)

knows that one of the most prized possessions we have is our children. Therefore, it makes (or should make) living in a continual sinful lifestyle harder to do, knowing that you are not the only one that is being punished for it, but also your children are going to pay the price for your foolishness.

**The price for generational curses has been paid!**

Do you have to carry the curses and punishment from previous generations or is there a way out? I have good news for you. The answer is you can be delivered and freed from every negative pattern (curse) you are dealing with. Why? Because God said so! You see, the apostle Paul writes that Jesus Christ was made a curse for us.

**Galatians 3:13:** *Christ hath redeemed (delivered) us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

Once you give your life over to Christ and believe in Him alone for the salvation of your soul, you will immediately be freed from every curse and stronghold that was transferred to you from previous generations.

**Jeremiah 31:29-30:** *In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity:*

The very moment you are born into God's family, you are also given power to overcome any and all strongholds and curses, no

matter how great and powerful they are. Note however, the power to overcome is not in your own might, but rather in the might and strength of Christ.

**Philippians 4:13:** *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

**2 Corinthians 12:9:** *"...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."*

**Romans 8:37:** *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*

**2 Corinthians 9:8:** *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

**Confess what is rightfully yours.**

Here's a great sample confession prayer you can use to do just that:

*In the name of Jesus, I confess the sins and iniquities of my parents, grandparents (name specific sins if known), and all other ancestors. I declare that by the blood of Jesus, these sins have been forgiven, and Satan and his demons can no longer use these sins as legal grounds in my life!*

*In the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood, I now declare that all generational curses have been renounced, broken and that I am no longer under their bondage!*

*In the name of Jesus, I declare myself and my future generations loosed from any bondage passed down to me from my ancestors.*

AMEN!

**In conclusion, I would like to share the flip side of generational curses and punishments.**

What if God was so honored by your life of obedience to Him that He decided to go beyond just blessing you personally? What if He also chose to extend those blessings on your children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, great-great grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren, all because of YOU! Well, I would like to assure you; that is exactly what God said He would do.

**Exodus 20:6 says:** *And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*

Joe Keim  
PO Box 128, Savannah OH 44874  
(419) 962-1515

1. Does remembering a particular hurtful event trigger a strong emotional reaction? If thinking about a hurtful situation causes strong negative emotions or even physical shuddering, that suggests forgiveness is not complete. The hurt is still alive.

2. Does the stress of remembering hurtful events trigger physical reactions or discomfort? If remembering hurtful situations results in physical symptoms, then unforgiven issues most likely remain lodged in the heart and spirit.

3. Does the painful experience bring to mind anything for which God can be praised? We often deliver misdirected blame towards God when we think what happened to us was unfair. We need to be honest by confessing to God our anger against Him. Of course God is not guilty of anything, and He is not in need of forgiveness. Our anger and unforgiveness are our own. When unforgiveness is lodged in the heart, it is difficult to see any way God may be using the situation to bring blessing or to write wisdom to us. Afterwards, when we have achieved forgiveness, we can verbalize lessons learned and thank God for bringing us through painful experiences with a positive outcome.

4. Can the offending party be thought of with a sincere wish that good things will happen in his or her life? Forgiveness holds no grudges and wishes no penalties of retribution. It wipes clean the slate on which we formerly kept score and allows us to wish only the best for the other person.

5. Do you have a complete sense that forgiveness really has been accomplished?

Are you being honest with yourself how you really feel? Is forgiveness coming

from your heart, or do you find yourself saying something like, "I did it Lord. You told me I had to do it. I made that choice, and I am a loving and forgiving person." You need to check your feelings and symptoms.

6. Is forgiveness producing positive results? When a lifestyle of forgiveness is effectively achieved, it will produce wonderful fruits in the ways we feel about ourselves and in the quality of relationships we are able to have with others.

*The importance of forgiving ourselves.* We characteristically have the most difficulty with others when our relationship with them triggers issues for which we have not forgiven ourselves. Usually, weakness we see and criticize in others (and find most difficult to accept or forgive) are those things about which we have not forgiven ourselves, or in which we most fear being deficient. Look at what angers you in others. Look at the kind of person you just can't abide, and you will likely see something in yourself that you have been unable to forgive. Letting go of our denial and facing the truth about ourselves is a fearful step.

*Forgiveness overcoming blame.* Most marital problems are rooted in unforgiveness of parents. We transfer onto our marriage partner the job of fulfilling needs that were unfulfilled by our parents. We misdirect our angers and accusations that truly belong against our parents towards our spouses.

<http://administrator.christianblogsites.com/blog/category/daily-devotional> ©

Finishing the Course - Keeping the Faith

—Continued from back page—



As Dan and I continued talking, he said, "Joe, I am not sure why, but there has always been four empty pages at the end of my gospel booklet. Do you have an idea what we can put there?"

It was as if the Lord just gave me the answer. "Dan," I said, "you need to

let the people of this world know that you finished well. You fought the battle of life and refused to give in to Satan. You clung to God and you raised your family in a Christ honoring church."

"Ah yes," he said, "I walked with my Lord and did not give up, even though many of my friends and relatives from back home spread rumors about me and my family."

"Well," I said, "Dan, the truth is, you finished well! You never left the faith and your readers need to know that."

When I said that, the tears just started running down Dan's feeble cheeks. Finally, he looked up and said, "Joe, that's it; I must tell the readers that I kept my eyes on the finish line all the way to the end. Please fill the last

four pages in with the fact that I finished well."

Finally, it was time for me to leave and go home, knowing that I would never again talk with my friend on this side of heaven. We hugged, said our goodbyes and I left.

Exactly two weeks later on July 31, 2009, my phone rang, and it was Dan's daughter. She said, "Joe, dad passed into eternity last night." She went on to explain how dad had awoke up from his coma, just long enough to tell the family that two angels were at his bedside to take him home. Soon after that, Dan Byler drew his last breath and went to be with the Lord forever more.

Since then, my thoughts went to II Timothy 4:7-8 where Paul writes, ***I have fought*** a good fight, ***I have finished*** my course, ***I have kept*** the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and ***not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.***

My friend, if you do not know for sure that your sins are forgiven, can I urge you to repent and let Jesus save you from your sins and the lake of fire? You cannot do it on your own. Please don't wait one more minute.

**In Romans 10:9, God says:** *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath*

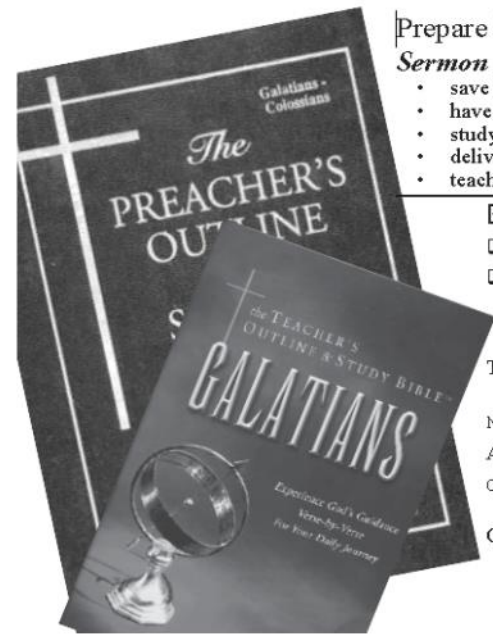
*raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

The Bible goes on to say in verses **12 and 13 of the same chapter:** *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. **For whosoever (your name) shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***

Here is a model prayer that you can use to call out to God:

*Today, I call upon the name of the Lord for my salvation. I believe in my heart that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead in order that I might have eternal life. I now declare Him to be the Lord of my life. I renounce any effort on my part to save myself. I stand with God's Word and believe that I have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of His beloved Son. In Jesus' name I pray and believe. Amen*

—Joe Keim, Editor



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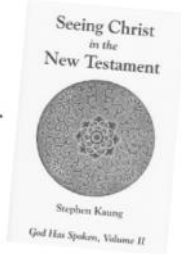
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### God's Father-Heart of Love

—Lynn Miller

We have five beautiful children. Our youngest is a very active, wiggly, nine-month-old little man. I would love to have some of his energy! He could do with a little less, and I with a little more - especially when I am trying to put him to sleep! We have quite the little motions we go through until he is finally sleeping. Often I would simply love to be able to relax and rest, but no, we have to have our wiggles and jiggles, and fights first!

Recently, as he has been teething, the struggles have increased. I often tell him, "Your name means 'he fights for his people,' not 'he fights his mama!'"

I have had some conversations with God about this.

"God," I say, "I would LOVE to be able to have some rest."

"Yes, he reminds me of you sometimes," God responds.

"What? Me?"

"Yes, you," He chuckles.

I sigh. I have all kinds of excuses for this, but I won't bore you with all the details of that conversation, or those conversations, I should say, because they still seem to happen from time to time.

I am quite sure I don't fight God as hard as my little boy fights me....well, I don't THINK I do...do I? I blush. I guess do remember a few times...

It is hard as parents when our children fight us, resist our love, don't understand we are trying to help them. But we often do the same thing to God. We don't honestly believe, deep down, that He has our backs, that He has our best interest in mind, that He wants us to succeed and enjoy an abundant life. And so we lengthen the process by fighting Him. (Kinda like a little girl kicking and screaming

as she is over her daddy's knee getting a spanking for being naughty.) You get the picture? As long as we fight, He will need to wait until we are ready to give in before He can work the situation to our benefit.

God's Word tells us in Matthew 7:9-11 *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?*

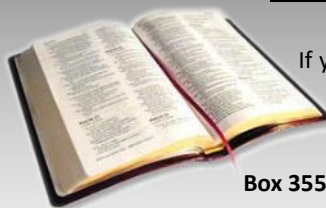
This verse shows God's heart toward His children. His love is above and beyond what we are capable of or can even imagine.

We are being ridiculous, even ludicrous, to think God doesn't know what He is doing or doesn't know what is best. He is a loving Father, the most loving Father ever. He knows best. He wants us to trust Him and allow Him to surprise us with all the things He wants to do on our behalf. But we need to let go: let go of the reins, let go of control, let go of the need to manipulate our surroundings and those around us, and give Him the control. He is more than capable!

— Blessings, Lynn.



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## Current Resident

### Finishing the Course - Keeping the Faith

— by Joe Keim

The first time I met Dan Byler, I knew right away he and I would be friends for life. He was a man on fire for God who burned with a passion to reach the world for Christ. You see, he understood all too well what it was like to be lost and searching for true meaning in life. And he never forgot what it felt like when Jesus reached down from heaven, loved him unconditionally, forgave him of his sins and freely gave him everlasting life.

On numerous occasions, Dan would call and talk for hours if I let him. Once, he came to our house and shared his testimony with a bunch of youth. He not only shared about his troubled life as an alcoholic, but also about the time he was asked to take the community water tower down.

Before beginning the task, he sat down in his rocking chair one evening and figured out exactly how he was going to do it. Soon thereafter, he got a cutting torch, crawled all the way to the top of the tower and, piece by piece, brought the tower down. People were overly impressed by his way of dismantling the tower, and soon pictures and

stories started appearing in newspapers everywhere.

Dan also had a business mind. He owned a campground, a train, a small zoo of exotic animals, and an upholstering business. House churches and campers from all over the United States came to see him.

In late 2008, Dan called me one day and said, “Joe, the doctors say I have cancer.” Then he went on to say, “But don’t you worry a bit; God will not let me die.” In fact, he was totally convinced that he didn’t even have cancer. But as time went on, it became quite clear that his body was slowly dying away.

One day in early 2009, Dan called me to say goodbye. He had finally given up and was preparing to die. That day, we both wept on the phone. I had never seen or

heard Dan give up on anything. Never! It was not like him. But now he was surrendering and making preparations to die and go be with Jesus.

At the end of our phone conversation, I said, “Dan, I want you to hang on to life long enough for me to come and see you.” He promised he would. Several days later, I headed for Jackson, OH to see Dan Byler, the man who had impacted my life like few others.

When I got to Dan’s house, he was barely able to raise his head off the pillow. But even then, he was filled with excitement and could hardly wait to see Jesus. As we talked, I asked him if it would be ok if I continued printing and handing out his life story—

Unshackled.

“Oh,” he said, “that would be absolutely awesome.”



—continued on page 10—