

## The Antithesis between the Law and Grace in Galatians 5:4

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### *Abstract*

In Galatians 5:4b and 5:4c Paul tackles the issue of justification by setting the law in antithesis with grace as two mutually exclusive soteriological sources or foundations for justification. In contrast to the agitators who argue that the identity of God's people is determined by the law and circumcision, Paul upholds that it depends upon God's saving activities, such as calling, promise, sending of Christ and the Spirit, and knowing. What Paul intends the Galatians to realise by the antithesis between the law and grace is that they do not have to undergo circumcision nor to observe the law in order to become full members of the covenant community not only because they became God's elect people by God's act of calling and knowing but also because they are heirs and God's children by God's promise and his sending of Christ and the Spirit. The antithesis (i.e. justification through the law vs. justification by God's grace) is both a substantial feature of and an interpretive clue to understanding Paul's theology in Galatians.

### **I. Introduction**

The Galatians were willing to depend on the law for their justification because they were persuaded by the agitators' teaching that Gentiles can be full and genuine members of the covenant community through Torah-observance, in particular circumcision. There is little doubt that the agitators argued for justification on the basis of the law (2:16, 21; 3:11, 18, 21). In Galatians 5:4b and 5:4c Paul tackles the issue of justification saying, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσάτε ("You who want to be justified in the sphere of the law have fallen away from grace"). Τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσάτε denotes that the Galatians' attempt to depend upon the law is resulting in their separation from grace. Thus Paul contrasts the law with grace as two mutually exclusive foundations of justification.

Paul attempts to solve the issue of justification by setting the law in antithesis with grace as two mutually exclusive soteriological sources or foundations for justification.<sup>1</sup> The two terms (law and grace) seem to represent larger complexes of belief and praxis and the larger complexes are summarised in the antithesis.<sup>2</sup> While many scholars have rightly observed this antithesis,<sup>3</sup> they have not satisfactorily expounded its force, function, and significance with special reference to the issues at stake in Galatia, in particular the Galatians' desire to accept the law for justification.

There are several questions for us: What does Paul intend to achieve through the antithesis? Why does Paul hold that grace is sufficient for justification of the Gentiles in Galatians? What is the significance of the antithesis both for Paul's opposition to the law as the soteriological basis of justification and for his critique of covenantal nomism? In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to explain the meaning of χάρις.

## II. The Meaning of Χάρις

What did Paul have in mind by the χάρις from which the Galatians have fallen? Without attempting to investigate the full range of χάρις in Paul's letters,<sup>4</sup> it is sufficient to focus on Galatians not only because

<sup>1</sup> While the theme of grace seems to include the idea of Christ and the Spirit, as we shall see below, in this antithesis Paul focuses on the theological aspect, not the Christological or pneumatological one.

<sup>2</sup> J. Moffatt, *Grace in the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), 182, notes the significance of the antithesis by saying, "Law and Grace are viewed as incompatible systems of religion. To toy with the former is to invalidate the latter . . ."

<sup>3</sup> This is properly pointed out by H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 261; É. D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&TClark, 1921), 275, 277; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 269; R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 223-24; F. Mußner, *Der Galaterbrief* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 349; A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (THKNT; 3d rev. ed.; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1973), 119.

<sup>4</sup> For the word study of χάρις in Paul, see K. Berger, "χάρις," *EDNT* 3.457-460; H. Conzelmann, "χάρις κτλ," *TDNT* 9.373-376, 387-402. For recent study, see B. J. Eastman, "The Significance of Grace in the Letters of Paul," (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1995). For the central role of χάρις in Paul's theology, see H. Conzelmann, "χάρις κτλ," *TDNT* 9.393; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 319-20; S. Westerholm, *Israel's Law*

χάρις with the article (ἡ) probably refers back to that grace of God, of Christ, or both, which Paul explained to the Galatians in the previous section,<sup>5</sup> but also because ἡ χάρις seems to summarise Paul's previous argument about grace. In Galatians χάρις occurs seven times (1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18). It is proper to deal with each occurrence in order to clarify the meaning of ἡ χάρις in 5:4.

The word χάρις is employed in the opening salutation (1:3) and closing benediction (6:18) as in Paul's other letters.<sup>6</sup> When χάρις is used in relation to his greeting and benediction, it normally refers to the "favour" of God or Jesus Christ toward believers which sustains and empowers them. So χάρις (1:3; 6:18) refers to God's or Christ's continuous mercy, spiritual benefit, and enabling the edification of believers, not to God's past redemptive act in and through Christ.

What is the meaning of χάρις at 1:6? In order to clarify its meaning, it is necessary to define the meaning of the phrase ἐν χάριτι [Χριστοῦ]. First of all, we should decide what the original reading among the five variant readings is.<sup>7</sup> As Metzger indicates, "the absence of any genitive qualifying ἐν χάριτι has the appearance of being the original."<sup>8</sup> The absence of Χριστοῦ from P<sup>46vid</sup> and some Western witnesses is hard to explain and may well indicate that copyists added the other readings.<sup>9</sup> In other words, transcriptional probability prefers the shorter reading.<sup>10</sup> Thus it is fair to say that ἐν χάριτι is original.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the preposition ἐν. There are two possible ren-

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and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 165-169.

<sup>5</sup> Burton, *Galatians*, 276.

<sup>6</sup> χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2; Phlm 1:3; cf. Eph 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4); ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ μεθ' ὑμῶν (Rom 16:20; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 13:13; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; 1 Thess 5:28; Phlm 1:25; cf. Eph 6:24; Col 4:18; 2 Thess 3:18; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Tit 3:15).

<sup>7</sup> See B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 520.

<sup>8</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 520.

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 38.

<sup>10</sup> J. L. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 109; F. J. Matera, *Galatians* (SP 9; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Metzger mentions that a majority of the committee that worked on the UBS<sup>3</sup> was unwilling to adopt a reading that is supported by only part of the Western tradition, though Χριστοῦ was included with reservations due to its omission by P<sup>46vid</sup> and other Western witnesses (*Textual Commentary*, 520). Cf. Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 55.

derings. 1) It may be taken in an instrumental sense (cf. 2 Thess 2:16) in light of Galatians 1:15 where Paul says that God called him διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ.<sup>12</sup> 2) It could be rendered in a locative sense,<sup>13</sup> which would mean that God called the Galatians to be in grace. The latter is preferable because when the expression καλέω ἐν occurs, ἐν is normally used in a locative sense. The preposition has as its object a state, such as peace (ἐν δὲ εἰρήνῃ κέκληκεν ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός - 1 Cor 7:15), holiness (ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλ' ἐν ἀγιασμῶ - 1 Thess 4:7), one body (ἐκλήθητε ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι - Col 3:15), and hope (ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι - Eph 4:4).<sup>14</sup> It is thus fair to say that ἐν (1:6) should be understood in a locative sense,<sup>15</sup> and thus Galatians 1:6 probably means that God called the Galatians to be “in the realm or state of God’s grace” in which they exist. Here χάρις is depicted as the realm in which God’s grace rules and where Christians may find their existence and enjoy God’s rule.<sup>16</sup> This suggestion can be strengthened by Paul’s understanding of grace as the realm of God’s saving benevolence. This is reflected in Romans 5:2 (δι’ οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχίκαμεν τῇ πίστει εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν).

In Galatians 1:15 χάρις is used as the basis of Paul’s own calling to apostleship among the Gentiles.<sup>17</sup> In light of Isaiah 49:1 and Jeremiah 1:5 Paul probably understood himself as the apostle to the Gentiles called and commissioned by God.<sup>18</sup> With a view to God’s grace as the grounds for calling, “grace” in 1:15 probably refers to God’s generous salvific act of God.

In Galatians 2:9 the “grace” given to Paul seems to refer to God’s entrusting τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας to Paul (2:7). When James,

<sup>12</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 79; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990), 15; Matera, *Galatians*, 45; NIV.

<sup>13</sup> Burton, *Galatians*, 21; Fung, *Galatians*, 44; Martyn, *Galatians*, 109; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 55; H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (MeyerK; 5th rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 37; B. Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary of St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 79.

<sup>14</sup> See Burton, *Galatians*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> So rightly Betz, *Galatians*, 48; Burton, *Galatians*, 21; Fung, *Galatians*, 44; Martyn, *Galatians*, 109.

<sup>16</sup> The same usage appears in 2 Tim 2:1, Acts 13:43, 1 Pet 5:12, and 2 Pet 3:18.

<sup>17</sup> Most commentators render the pronoun αὐτοῦ in the phrase διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ referring to God, not Christ. E.g. Betz, Burton, Dunn, Martyn, Matera, Mußner, Schlier. *Contra* Longenecker.

<sup>18</sup> See Martyn, *Galatians*, 155-157; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 82. The concept of “grace” as the basis of God’s calling is reflected in 2 Tim 1:9.

Cephas, and John recognised the “grace” given to Paul, they approved the gospel that Paul proclaimed among the Gentiles (2:9-10). What is the grace of God that “the pillars” (2:9) recognised in Paul? What is the grace of God that convinced them to approve the gospel? It seems that the grace recognised by the pillars refers to the grace of God manifested in Paul’s successful missionary work among Gentiles with the gospel.<sup>19</sup> It does not, however, necessarily exclude God’s commission of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας to Paul,<sup>20</sup> Paul’s privilege of apostleship,<sup>21</sup> or Paul’s own apostolic office (Rom 1:5; 15:15-16).<sup>22</sup>

What is the meaning of ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ in 2:21? Scholars are divided. Some claim that it refers to God’s special gift of Torah to Israel.<sup>23</sup> For instance, Longenecker argues that “Probably the Judaizers were picking up on one of Paul’s favorite terms, ‘grace’, and turning it against him, asserting that his doctrine of grace apart from the law is really a denial of God’s grace to the nation Israel.”<sup>24</sup> Some argue that it refers to Paul’s apostolic commission to the Gentiles.<sup>25</sup> For example, Dunn says, “here Paul obviously has in mind ‘the grace of God’ manifested in his calling and in his successful missionary work (1:15; 2:9).”<sup>26</sup> However, the majority of scholars think that it refers to God’s salvific grace in Christ.<sup>27</sup> Notably, Lambrecht suggests, “God’s grace is basically the gift of Christ, his person and all that he did, especially dying out of love.”<sup>28</sup> Although it is conceivable that Paul is answering the agitators’ criticism that he had destroyed God’s grace manifested in God’s giving of the law to Israel, the first view is unlikely because there is no clear indication that Paul is reacting to such an accusation here.<sup>29</sup> Rather it is most likely

<sup>19</sup> Burton, *Galatians*, 95; Dunn, *Galatians*, 147.

<sup>20</sup> B. R. Gaventa, “Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 316; T. D. Gordon, “The Problem at Galatia,” *Int* 41 (1987): 35.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce, *Galatians*, 121; Fung, *Galatians*, 99; Schlier, *Galater*, 78.

<sup>22</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 99; Matera, *Galatians*, 77; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 126; Bruce, *Galatians*, 146; Burton, *Galatians*, 140; Fung, *Galatians*, 125; Schlier, *Galater*, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 94-95.

<sup>25</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 147; J. P. Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 40.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 147.

<sup>27</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 126; Bruce, *Galatians*, 146; Cole, *Galatians*, 126; C. B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Louisville: John Knox, 1982), 52; D. Guthrie, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 91; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (3d rev. ed.; London: Macmillan, 1869), 120; Martyn, *Galatians*, 260; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 184; Witherington, *Grace*, 192.

<sup>28</sup> J. Lambrecht, “Transgressor by Nullifying God’s Grace: A Study of Gal 2,18-21,” *Bib* 72 (1991): 228.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Guthrie, *Galatians*, 91; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 184 n. 80.

that Paul states his present position, in contrast to his previous attempt to destroy God's grace given to the Gentiles (cf. 1:13, 23). Unlike Peter in Antioch and the agitators in Galatia who were nullifying the grace of God, Paul declares, "I do not nullify the grace of God" (2:21a). Although it is difficult to rule out the second view, in our opinion, the third view is preferable because the immediate context supports it: Paul's new life anchored in the Son of God who loved and gave himself for Paul (2:20); Christ's death which is considered by Paul as the central manifestation of God's grace (2:21). In a word, ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ refers to God's saving grace in Christ and through Christ's death, which justifies the Gentile believers.

What then is the reference of ἡ χάρις at 5:4c? It is uncertain whether it refers to the grace of God or the grace of Christ. It is probable that ἡ χάρις refers generally to God's salvific benevolence and act<sup>30</sup> in and through Christ and the Spirit in the light of the following observations. 1) With a view to "grace" as the foundation of the justification of the Gentiles at 5:4, χάρις denotes God's salvific act for the Gentiles which welcomes the Gentiles into the people of God (2:21). 2) If 5:4 summarises Paul's previous argument, χάρις with the article (ἡ) refers back to God's salvific benevolence and act for the salvation of the Gentiles which Paul explained in the previous section (1:1-5:1). 3) God's calling the Galatians to be in the state of God's salvific grace (1:6) suggests that the grace from which the Galatians have fallen is God's saving favour in which they were called to be. 4) The antithesis between the law and the grace of God as two contrasting grounds of justification (2:21) suggests that "grace" set in opposition to the law (5:4) in terms of the basis of justification refers to God's salvific act for justification. As it shall become clear below, God's grace in Galatians is described as a salvific power to redeem his people and to make the Gentiles God's children.<sup>31</sup>

### III. *Sola Gratia*: Paul's Theological Rationale for Opposition to Justification on the Basis of the Law

On the basis of the exegesis above it is clear that what Paul argues for based on the antithesis between the law and grace is that it is not

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 231; Dunn, *Galatians*, 268; Martyn, *Galatians*, 471; Matera, *Galatians*, 182.

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 31, notes "in Paul's usage it [grace] is not merely a disposition in God, but something dynamic, the generous output of his power to achieve what is best for his creation." Cf. For χάρις as power, see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 202-205; J. L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 279-297; J. Nolland, "Grace as Power," *NovT* 38 (1986): 26-31.

the law but instead God's saving benevolence and act that is the sufficient soteriological basis or source for the justification of the Gentiles. In order to appreciate the force and significance of this antithesis we must clarify what Paul intended his readers to understand by his summary reference to χάρις.<sup>32</sup> How does Paul attempt to convince the Galatians of the sufficiency of God's grace for justification? In order to answer this question, first we need to know what God's saving benevolence and activities for justification of the Gentiles are. The prominent salvific favour and activities of God appearing in Galatians are as follows: God called the Galatians (1:6; 5:8; cf. 5:13). God promised to bless the nations (3:8, 15-18, 21, 23, 29; 4:28). God sent his Son in order to redeem those who were under the law (4:4). God sent the Spirit to make the Gentiles God's children (4:6; cf. 3:5). God knew the Galatians (4:9). In what follows we shall investigate the significance of each saving activity of God both for Paul's persuasion of the Galatians not to depend on the law for justification and for his opposition to the agitators' message of justification on the basis of the law.

### *God's Calling*

When he rebukes the Galatians' apostasy,<sup>33</sup> Paul says, Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον (1:6). In 5:8 Paul seeks to persuade the Galatians to reject the agitators' gospel by saying that the agitators' persuasion does not come from the one who calls them (τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς – 5:8). There is little doubt that "the one who calls" refers to God.<sup>34</sup> Why is God's act of calling the Galatians so important for Paul when he tries to urge them to reject the agitators' message, in particular justification on the basis of the law?

<sup>32</sup> As we shall see below, the term "grace" sums up what Paul said earlier about the saving benevolence and activities of God.

<sup>33</sup> B. J. Oropeza, *Paul and Apostasy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 225, understands the Galatians' apostasy as accepting the agitators' gospel which contradicts the essence of the Gospel.

<sup>34</sup> Having translated ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι as "from Christ who called you in grace," some older commentaries rendered Christ as the subject of calling. For a list of the older commentaries which agree or disagree with this position, see Burton, *Galatians*, 19. But Paul's general use of the verb καλέω encourages us to take God as the subject of τοῦ καλέσαντος (Gal 1:15; Rom 4:17; 8:30; 9:12, 24; 1 Cor 1:9; 7:15, 17; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:24). So most commentators: e.g. Betz, Bruce, Burton, Dunn, Fung, Longenecker, Martyn, Matera, Mußner, Schlier. Particularly, Martyn, *Galatians*, 108, suggests that ὁ καλῶν virtually functions as a name for God (Gal 5:8; 1 Thess 2:12; 5:24; Rom 9:12).

In order to answer this question, first we need to clarify the soteriological significance of God's calling.<sup>35</sup> Paul's understanding of God's calling of his people probably derives from the OT, particularly from the striking language of Isaiah (Isa 41:8-9; 43:1; 45:3-4; 48:12, 15),<sup>36</sup> where God's calling is described as the soteriological cause of Israel's election. Presumably, it is with this background that Paul speaks of God's calling as the cause of salvation. This point can be substantiated by Paul's statement of God's calling in Romans. Paul understands that God summons Gentiles as well as Jews into the right relationship with himself (Rom 9:4-26; cf. 1 Cor 1:24). He regards God's calling of the Gentile believers as God's making of them as God's elected people (cf. 1 Cor 1:26-29). Paul understands God's calling of the Gentiles as the fulfilment of Hosea's prophecy (Rom 9:25-26; cf. Hos 2:23; 1:10). In Rom 8:28-30 he also emphasises God's calling of all believers to salvation.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, God's call is the means of election (Rom 9:12). Most importantly, the divine call is closely related to God's justification (Rom 8:30). Thus it may be reasonable to claim that for Paul God's calling is the cause of election and to be called by God means to be justified and to become the people of God.<sup>38</sup> In consideration of the close relationship between God's call and salvation (esp. election), it is clear, therefore, that God's calling of the Galatians denotes that God elected them to become members of the people of God and called them to salvation (cf. Rom 9:25-26; 1 Cor 1:9; 2:17). Once again the point is clearly expressed by God's calling of the Galatians to freedom (ὁμοίως γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε – 5:13). This text means that the Galatians are not "the children of the slave" (i.e. Ishmael) but "the children of the free woman" (i.e. Isaac), as is explicitly expressed in 4:31 (ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἔσμεν παιδίσκης τέκνα ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρως). In other words, as a consequence of God's calling, the Galatians are the descendants of Abraham (4:28) who are free from the slavery of the law (5:1).

On the basis of the observations above we can easily answer the question raised earlier. For Paul, just as Israel's own election was a con-

<sup>35</sup> In the Pauline letters God's calling is described in three different connections: God's calling of all believers (Rom 1:7; 8:28-30; 9:24; 1 Cor 1:2, 26; 1 Thess 2:12; 5:24), God's calling of Paul as an apostle (Gal 1:15; Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 15:9), and God's calling of Israel (Rom 11:28-29; cf. 9:11). Cf. C. G. Kruse, "Call, Calling," *DPL* 84-85.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *TDNT* 3.490; Dunn, *Galatians*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> God's calling as the basis of salvation is indicated in 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 2:14 (cf. Eph 1:18; 1 Tim 6:12).

<sup>38</sup> Martyn, "The Abrahamic Covenant, Christ, and the Church," in *Issues*, 171, correctly notes that Paul's use of the verb καλέω describes the genesis of the church by God's election. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 109.

sequence of God's calling so too is the election of the Galatians. God's gracious calling is available to Gentiles as well as Jews, not to Jews exclusively (cf. Rom 9:24-26; 1 Cor 1:24). Since God called them as God's people, in practice the Galatians do not have to undergo circumcision nor to observe the whole law in order to have membership within the people of God. This is one of Paul's theological rationales upon which he urges the Galatians to reject the agitators' message of justification on the basis of the law. Because the identity of God's people is determined by neither circumcision nor the law but God's salvific act of calling,<sup>39</sup> justification on the basis of the law must be rejected.

### *God's Promise*

Another significant aspect of God's justifying grace in Galatians is God's promise,<sup>40</sup> from which Paul argues against the agitators' teaching of justification on the basis of the law. In Galatians there are several texts where Paul argues that God's promise is primary and sufficient for justification (3:15-26; 3:29; 4:28).

Before discussing the texts, however, we need to know what the reference of God's ἐπαγγελία is. In Galatians the word ἐπαγγελία is used 10 times (3:14, 16, 17, 18 (2 times), 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28). There is no consensus concerning the content of the promise.<sup>41</sup> There are two major views. The one is that the promise refers to God's blessing of the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18) cited in 3:8.<sup>42</sup> The other is that the Spirit itself is the promise.<sup>43</sup> It is true that Paul understands the eschatological coming of the Spirit as the fulfilment of God's promise (Isa 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29) in light

<sup>39</sup> The point is well expressed in Rom 9:10-12, where Paul argues that God's election depends not on "the works" (of the law) but on God's call.

<sup>40</sup> The interlocking relationship between grace and promise is presented in Rom 4:16 (ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι).

<sup>41</sup> For the various views regarding the content of the promise, see S. K. Williams, "Promise in Galatians," *JBL* 107 (1988): 709 n. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Most commentators: Betz, Bruce, Burton, Dunn, Howard, Martyn, Mußner. In particular H.-J. Eckstein, *Verheißung und Gesetz* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 95, 97.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Williams, "Promise in Galatians," 716, suggests that promise "on the one hand . . . refers to the divine pledge to Abraham that he would have innumerable descendants. But since God keeps his word, fulfills his pledge, through the operation of his Spirit, the promise of many descendants is, at the same time, the promise of the Spirit – that is, the promise of the *means* by which sons of Abraham would be created out of people who had been enslaved." This is followed by Matera, *Galatians*, 143; Witherington, *Grace*, 244.

of Christian tradition (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:17, 33). But it is more probable that the content of the promise is primarily God's blessing of the nations<sup>44</sup> for the following reasons. First, although Paul does not use the term ἐπαγγελία at 3:8, the two words (προϊδοῦσα and προευγγελίσατο) seem to indicate that he considered "all the Gentiles shall be blessed in you" as the promise of God which would be fulfilled in the future. Second, the fact that God made the promise before the law came (3:17) indicates that the promise is God's blessing promised to Abraham. Third, that the Gentile Galatians are heirs according to the promise (3:29) and children of the promise like Isaac (4:28) reflects that they become the heirs of the Abrahamic blessing because the promise that ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη was fulfilled. Fourth, Paul's use of the word ἐπαγγελία (the plural of ἐπαγγελία – 3:16) seems to suggest that ἐπαγγελία refers to God's promise given to Abraham.<sup>45</sup> Fifth, if Galatians 3:10-4.7 is Paul's elaboration of the implications of the promise of 3:8,<sup>46</sup> the promise points to God's promise to bless the nations. Thus it is fair to say that the ἐπαγγελία refers to God's promise to bless the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18; cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Pss 72:17; Jer 4:2)<sup>47</sup> which Paul quotes in 3:8. In light of the parallel between δικαιοὶ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός and ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, it is probable that ἐπαγγελία refers to God's promise of justification of Gentiles (3:8).<sup>48</sup> Let us then turn to the passages where Paul deals with the theme of God's promise of justification of Gentiles.

<sup>44</sup> It is commonly recognised that God's promise to Abraham contains three primary strands (i.e. land, descendants, and blessing for the nations). For a detailed discussion, see J. R. Wisdom, "Blessing for the Nations and the Curse of the Law," (PhD diss., University of Durham, 1998), 27-49. In Galatians, however, the promise refers to God's blessing of the nations (Gen 12:3; 18:18) which Paul quotes in 3:8. The reference to the land play no part in Galatians (cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 172). The promise of Abraham's innumerable descendants can be understood in association with Gentiles' justification as a result of the fulfilment of God's promise, "I have made you a father of many nations" (Gen 17:5), i.e. blessing of the nations. The relationship is expressed in Rom 4:16-25.

<sup>45</sup> The word ἐπαγγελίαι (the plural of ἐπαγγελία – 3:16, 21) probably refers to God's promise to bless the nations that God repeated several times in different occasions (Gen 12:3; 18:18; cf. Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14), not the three different blessings (i.e. land, descendants, and blessing for the nations). Cf. Martyn, *Galatians*, 339. *Contra* Betz, *Galatians*, 156, 157, 159; Schilier, *Galater*, 143.

<sup>46</sup> The term ἐπαγγελία appears in the section intensively (3:14, 16, 17, 18 (2 times), 21, 22, 29; 4:23, 28). Cf. Longenecker, *Galatians*, 125.

<sup>47</sup> See particularly Bruce, *Galatians*, 172.

<sup>48</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 355.

In 3:15-18 Paul elaborates the idea of God's promise to demonstrate that the justification of Gentiles is based not on the law but on God's promise. This is clearly summed up in 3:18 (εἰ γὰρ ἐκ νόμου ἢ κληρονομία, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας· τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός). It is widely recognised that with the antithesis between the law and God's promise,<sup>49</sup> Paul argues that not the law but God's promise is the sufficient means of the inheritance, i.e. Abraham's sonship.<sup>50</sup> In view of the criticism from the side of traditional Jewish covenantalism that Paul treated the law of the covenant too lightly, Paul argues that the law does not nullify a covenant previously ratified by God (i.e. God's promise to Abraham). In other words, God's promise of the justification of Gentiles cannot be nullified by the law because God's promise to Abraham precedes the law which came four hundred and thirty years later (3:17).<sup>51</sup> Paul makes the point that just as a human διαθήκη, once signed and witnessed, could not be set aside by another document claiming to represent the will of the testator and could not be added to by another authority (3:15),<sup>52</sup> so with the διαθήκη God made with Abraham (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant).<sup>53</sup> It is also to be noted that the inheritance of Abraham's sonship is a matter of divine initiative and grace.<sup>54</sup> Paul's

<sup>49</sup> See Betz, *Galatians*, 158; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 144; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 134; Martyn, *Galatians*, 337; Matera, *Galatians*, 127; Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 242; Witherington, *Grace*, 245.

<sup>50</sup> While Paul is not explicit about what the content of κληρονομία is, in the light of the argument of the letter it must be becoming Abraham's heir. Although κληρονομία is primarily concerned with land (Gen 15:7-8; 28:4; Deut 1:39, 2:12), the crucial Genesis passage include the idea of being Abraham's heir (Gen 15:2-4; 21:10). Cf. Dunn, *Galatians*, 186. Note that the territorial and material features of the Abrahamic inheritance are not mentioned here by Paul. Interestingly some (Martyn, *Galatians*, 343, Mußner, *Galaterbrief*, 242, Matera, *Galatians*, 127; Williams, *Galatians*, 97) suggest that it refers to the promised Spirit in 3.14. Z. A. Ziesler, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: Epworth, 1992), 44, thinks that it refers both justification by faith and the gift of the Spirit. Betz, *Galatians*, 159, says, "Inheritance' includes all the benefits of God's work of salvation."

<sup>51</sup> See Dunn, *Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 87-88; R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 109.

<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, according to Roman law, testators were allowed to cancel or modify their will at any point during their lifetime (Bruce, *Galatians*, 170). For a summary discussions concerning legal technicalities, see Bruce, *Galatians*, 170-171; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 128-130.

<sup>53</sup> Paul links closely the terms ἐπαγγελία and διαθήκη.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 187. Note the verb κεχάρισται – "God showed favour." For the close relationship between grace and God's saving act, see Betz, *Galatians*, 160 n. 62.

insistence on the priority of God's graceful promise effectively relativizes the idea that Gentiles can become the descendants of Abraham only through the observance of the law, in particular circumcision. In short, the point of Paul's argument in 3:15-18 is that since God always intended, from the time of the promise to Abraham, that the Gentiles are to be blessed,<sup>55</sup> the inheritance of Abraham's sonship (i.e. justification) comes to the Gentiles not from the law but from the gracious promise of God which cannot be modified or nullified by the law given subsequently.

In 3:19-22, Paul continues to explain God's promise as the sufficient soteriological basis of justification. Without attempting to tackle the relationship between the law and the promise,<sup>56</sup> it is sufficient to focus on God's promise of justification of the Gentiles ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, which was given to those who believe (3:22). Contrary to the agitators' ethnocentric covenantalism maintaining that righteousness comes through the law, Paul argues that the law has no function to "make alive" and thus righteousness cannot come through the law (3:21).<sup>57</sup> Although the law regulates life within the covenant for the people of Israel (e.g. Lev 18:5; Deut 6:24; Prov 3:1-2; 6:23; Sir 17:11; Bar 3:9; 4:1; *Pss. Sol.* 24:2), the law does not make one alive because God<sup>58</sup> did not intend the law to play such a role.<sup>59</sup> From a Jewish perspective, rather, the role is ascribed to God (2 Kgs 5:7; Neh 9:6; Job 36:6; Pss 71:20; *Jos. and As.* 8:3, 9; 12:1; 20:7; *Ep. Arist.* 16; John 5:21; Rom 4:17; 1 Cor 15:22).<sup>60</sup> Paul also argues that the law is not the means of righteousness because

<sup>55</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, "The Theology of Galatians," in *Pauline Theology Vol. I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon* (ed. J. M. Bassler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 125, rightly argues that the "initial expression of God's covenant purpose was in terms of promise and faith and always had the Gentiles in view from the first."

<sup>56</sup> For the discussion, see Eckstein, *Verheißung und Gesetz*, 190-212; M. A. Kruger, "Law and Promise in Galatians," *Neot* 26 (1992): 311-327.

<sup>57</sup> Righteousness is used as the equivalent of "life." Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 493-495.

<sup>58</sup> The subject of the passive verb ἐδόθη is God (divine passive).

<sup>59</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 27, argues, "God sent Christ; he did so in order to offer righteousness; this would have been pointless if righteousness were already available by the law (2:21); the law was not given to bring righteousness (3:21)." I.-G. Hong, *The Law in Galatians* (JSNTSup 81; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 132, likewise argues, "The law was never planned to be the condition for entering the people of God at all."

<sup>60</sup> In NT the role is also given to the Spirit (John 6:63; Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:6; 1 Pet 3:18).

the law cannot set everything (τὰ πάντα [3:22] - including all humanity [both Jews and Greeks]) free from the power of sin. In other words, Jews and Gentiles alike cannot be accepted by God on the basis of the law (2:16; cf. Rom 3:20) because the law cannot deal with the problem of sin which prevents anyone from approaching God (cf. Rom 3:23). This implies that the privileged status of righteousness is not automatically guaranteed for the people of Israel by means of the law because they are not exempt from the power of sin (cf. Rom 3:9; 11:32) to which the law provides no real answer. For Paul the solution to the problem of sin is God's promise. The promise as the embodiment of the divine power defeats the power of sin.<sup>61</sup> It is thus fair to say that 3:22b means that God's unconditional promise, which precedes the law and breaks the power of sin, is given to those who believe, Jews and Gentiles without distinction ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.<sup>62</sup> In short, Paul opposes justification through the law on the basis of God's promise to bless nations given to Gentiles ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

In 3:23-29 Paul develops his point that not the law but God's gracious promise fulfilled in Christ and through πίστις is the soteriological basis for the justification of Gentiles. First of all, in 3:23-25 Paul expounds his earlier point that God's promise (i.e. justification of Gentiles) fulfilled ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is given to Gentile believers. Before the coming and revelation of πίστις Paul and the Galatians ("we") were imprisoned and guarded under the power of the law.<sup>63</sup> Paul implies

<sup>61</sup> Dunn, *Galatians*, 195.

<sup>62</sup> For the discussion of the meaning of πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, see Douglas A. Campbell, "The Meaning of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and ΝΟΜΟΣ in Paul," *JBL* 111 (1992): 91-103; idem, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3,21-26* (JSNTSup 65; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 58-69, 214-18; idem, "Romans 1:17 - A *Crux Interpretum* for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate," *JBL* 113 (1994): 265-85; Hung-Sik Choi, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Gal 5:5-6: Neglected Evidence for the Faithfulness of Christ," *JBL* 124 (2005): 467-490; J. D. G. Dunn, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," in *Pauline Theology Vol. IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 61-81; R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983); idem, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and Pauline Christology: What is at Stake?," in *Pauline Theology Vol. IV: Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. E. Johnson and D. M. Hay; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 35-60; M. D. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *NTS* 35 (1989): 321-42; R. B. Matlock, "Detheologizing the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ Debate: Cautionary Remarks from a Lexical Semantic Perspective," *NovT* 42 (2000): 1-23; idem, "Even the Demons Believe': Paul and πίστις Χριστοῦ," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 300-18; I. G. Wallis, *The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions* (SNTSMS 84; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); S. K. Williams, "Again Pistis Christou," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 431-47.

<sup>63</sup> It is likely that "we" in 3:23-25 refers to both Jewish and Gentile believers (in particular Paul and the Galatians) on the basis of the following: 1) In

that the coming of Christ and πίστις and the revelation of πίστις set them free from imprisonment of the law (cf. 5:1; Rom 7:6) and ended the interim role of the law as custodian. He also argues that πίστις came and was revealed so that Paul and the Galatians (“we”) might be justified by πίστις (3:23-25).<sup>64</sup> After making the point that God’s promise to justify the Gentiles through πίστις is the soteriological basis of justification, in 3:26-29 Paul argues that in Christ Jesus the Galatians are all children of God through πίστις. He further argues that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female because the Galatians are one in Christ Jesus (3:28). In other words, Jewish and Gentile believers are full and equal members of the covenant community as one people of God. Finally he concludes that if the Galatians belong to Christ, then they are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise (3:29). Since the benefit of becoming Abraham’s heirs was given to the Galatians by the promise, it did not come from the law. In short, the central point of Paul’s argument in 3:23-29 is that by means of God’s gracious ἐπαγγελία realised by the advent and revelation of πίστις, the Gentiles (e.g. the Galatians) have become heirs i.e. Abraham’s offspring (3:29), not through the law.<sup>65</sup> The point indicates that Paul realises that God’s promise to bless the Gentiles which was given to Abraham (Gen 12:3; 18:18) has been fulfilled by God’s justification of the Gentiles both in and through Christ and through the coming and revelation of πίστις.<sup>66</sup>

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3:23-29 Paul is addressing not Jewish believers as in 2:15-17 but the Galatians. 2) The parallelism between 3:22 (“all things” [Jews and Gentiles] were imprisoned under the power of sin) and 3:23 (“we were imprisoned under the power of the law” hints that “we” includes both Jews and Gentiles. 3) Paul does not contrast “we” (Jews) with “you” (the Gentile Galatians) in 3:23-29 because no contrast can be ascertained in the sudden shift from “we” (4:5b, 4:6b) to “you” (4:6a, 4:7a). Rather Paul grounds a statement about “us” on a statement about “you” (3:25-26; 4:6) or “you” on “us” (4:6b-7). See C. B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 115-118; Howard, *Paul*, 59-62; J. M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 155-157. Contra T. L. Donaldson, “The ‘Curse of the Law’ and the Inclusion of the Gentiles,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 94-112.

<sup>64</sup> It is likely that “we” includes Gentile believers (cf. 5:5) because in 3:10-29 Paul elaborates God’s justification of Gentiles by faith (3:8).

<sup>65</sup> So rightly G. W. Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (JSNTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 136-139; Howard, *Paul*, 65.

<sup>66</sup> While T. Söding takes πίστις (as the soteriological basis of justification) as the Christian’s faith, he rightly notes that Paul discovers that what God has promised to Abraham has been fulfilled in God’s justification of Jews and Gentiles [“Verheißung und Erfüllung im Lichte paulinischer Theologie,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 150-161].

The point that Gentile believers can become the descendants of Abraham not by the law but by God's promise is reinforced in 4:28. To the Galatians who were eager to become Abraham's descendants through Torah-observance (4:21), in particular circumcision, Paul says that they are children of the promise, in the pattern of Isaac (ὕμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ - 4:28). Identifying the child of Hagar (i.e. Ishmael) with Gentiles (including the Galatians) and the child of Sarah (i.e. Isaac) with Jews, the agitators argued that the Galatians could become the descendants of Abraham through circumcision.<sup>67</sup> On the contrary Paul identifies the Galatians with Isaac who was the child of the free woman (Sarah) born through the promise (4:23). The Galatians are children of the promise (4:28; cf. Rom 9:8). Paul's statement here is so radical as to deny traditional Jewish covenantalism maintaining that the Jews alone belong to the column of the covenant of promise. Why does Paul attempt to make a totally different exegesis of Gen 16-21 from the agitators? Paul's complete "turn-around" exegesis is based on his conviction that God's promise of justification of Gentiles was fulfilled through Christ and the Spirit and thus the Galatians became the offspring of Abraham and heirs without their becoming proselytes. Since the Gentile Galatians are children of the promise like Isaac and thus belong to the covenant community, they do not need to enter Israel through circumcision and depend upon the law for justification. This is a central point of the allegory of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31).

To sum up, with a view to the priority and sufficiency of God's promise, Paul argues that Gentile believers receive adoption as sons of God and become the offspring and heirs of Abraham and the children of God (4:5-7) and the promise (4:28) not in and through the law (3:11, 18, 21) but in and through Christ and the Spirit (3:14, 29; 4:4-6, 29). According to Paul, God's blessing promised to Abraham always had the justification of the Gentiles through Christ in view from the first. The gift of righteousness was to Gentiles as well as Jews. Since God's promise of justification of the Gentiles given to Abraham, which cannot be nullified by the law, was fulfilled at a preordained time by God's sending of his Son and the Spirit and the advent and revelation of πῆστις, the Galatians have become the children of Abraham apart from Torah-observance and circumcision. Thus, for Paul, to maintain the law as the soteriological basis of justification means to deny the eschatological fulfilment of God's promise. In short, the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant (i.e. God's promise of justification of Gentiles) through Christ

<sup>67</sup> C. K. Barrett, "The Allegory of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in the Argument of Galatians," in *Rechtfertigung* (ed. J. Friedrich et al.; Festschrift E. Käsemann; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1976), 1-16.

and the Spirit is Paul's theological foundation upon which he seeks to persuade the Galatians not to rely on the law for justification and rejects the agitators' message of justification on the basis of the law.<sup>68</sup>

### *God's Sending of His Son and the Spirit*

Without attempting to investigate 4:4-7 in detail,<sup>69</sup> it is sufficient to concentrate on the fact that God sent his Son and the Spirit so that believers receive redemption and adoption as sons through God (διὰ θεοῦ - 4:7).<sup>70</sup> Before the fullness of time (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου)<sup>71</sup> had come, both Jewish and Gentile believers used to be under the power of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3). The precise meaning of the phrase has been disputed among scholars.<sup>72</sup> Since it is impossible to discuss it here, it is sufficient to say that 4:3b (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι) means that Jew and Gentile Christians were enslaved under the influence or dominion of certain primal and cosmic forces.<sup>73</sup> It is significant for our present study that as a result of God's sending of his Son, all the believers (Jewish and Gentile) receive the salvific benefits of redemption and adoption. Notably God sent the Spirit of his Son into the Galatians' hearts (cf. 3:2-5), crying "Abba! Father!" (4:6). Since God has given the Spirit of his Son to them, they are the children of God. In 4:7 Paul concludes that since God sent Christ and the Spirit of his Son, the Galatians are no longer slaves but sons and heirs through God. In short, the force of Paul's argument in 4:4-7 is that the salvific gifts of redemption, adoption as sons of God, and becoming God's children and

<sup>68</sup> So rightly B. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God: The Transformation of Identity in Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 178-179.

<sup>69</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Scott, *Adoption*, 121-186.

<sup>70</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 388, argues, "the sentence comprising 4:3-5 is nothing less than the theological center of the entire letter." Martyn interprets God's sending of his Son and the Spirit as God's apocalyptic invasion into cosmos.

<sup>71</sup> In light of the parallel between τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός (4:2) and τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, the phrase means the time foreordained by God. Cf. Scott, *Adoption*, 161-162.

<sup>72</sup> C. E. Arnold, "Returning to the Domain of Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3, 9," *NovT* 38 (1996): 55-76; A. J. Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1964); Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God*, 47-58; D. R. Bundrick, "*Ta Stoicheia tou Kosmou* (Gal 4:3)," *JETS* 34 (1991): 353-64; E. Schweizer, "Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels," *JBL* 107 (1988): 455-68.

<sup>73</sup> Arnold, "Returning to the Domain of the Powers," 55-76; Dunn, *Galatians*, 213; Hong, *Law*, 162-166; Longenecker, *Triumph*, 46-58; Martyn, *Galatians*, 393-406.

heirs are given to Jewish and Gentile believers through God's saving act, that is, God's sending of his Son and the Spirit.

### *God's Knowing*

It is important to note that Paul attempts to persuade the Galatians not to turn back again to τὰ ἄσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα by reminding them of the fact that they were known by God (γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ - 4:9). Paul's swift correction (μᾶλλον δέ) from the Galatians' act of knowing God (γνόντες θεόν) to God's act of knowing them (γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ) stresses the divine initiative in the relationship between God and the Galatians. Why is it so crucial for Paul that God knew the Galatians when he discourages them from turning back again to τὰ ἄσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα and from keeping the festival law? There is little doubt that the verb γινώσκω here is employed not in the sense of either "to perceive" or "to acquire knowledge about" but in the biblical sense of "to experience."<sup>74</sup> Paul emphasises God's act of knowing here on the basis of Hebrew thought in which the idea that God knows someone is normally confined to the intimate, personal relationship with God (e.g. Gen 18:19; Num 16:5; Pss 1:6; 37:18; 44:21; 94:11; 139; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2). Most importantly, in Hebrew thought God's graceful act of knowing his people was the basis of the election of his people (e.g. Gen 18:19; Num 16:5; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2).<sup>75</sup> In light of this background Paul probably intends the Galatians to recognise that they became God's people and thus had come to the right relationship with God not through the observance of the law but by God's graceful act of knowing them personally. The point can be reinforced by Paul's use of God's knowing in the sense of election (Rom 8:29; 11:2; cf. 1 Cor 8:3; 13:12; 2 Tim 2:19); for Paul to be known by God means to be elected and accepted by God.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, being known by God means having a loving relationship with God (1 Cor 8:3). Thus for Paul the Galatians' being known by God means

<sup>74</sup> It is widely accepted that despite the fact that this meaning is strange against the background of broad Greek usage, it is natural in light of the use of γινώσκω in the LXX to translate the Hebrew יָדָע when it denotes intimate relationship. For a discussion of this OT relational sense of יָדָע, see R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 1.697-698; E. D. Schmitz, *NIDNTT* 2.395-396.

<sup>75</sup> Gen 18:19 – "for I have 'known' ('chosen' – NRSV, NIV) him [Abraham]"; Num 16:5 – "God will know who is his" [where 'know' is paralleled by 'choose']; Jer 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I 'knew' you" [where 'know' is paralleled by 'consecrate' and 'appoint']; Amos 3:2 – "You [Israel] only have I 'known' ['chosen' – NIV] of all the families of the earth."

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Galatians*, 202; R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 1.706; Mußner, *Galatierbrief*, 292; W. Schmithals, *EDNT* 1.250.

both that they became the elected people of God and that they are in a justified relationship with God.<sup>77</sup> It is on the basis of this point that Paul urges the Galatians not to turn back again to τὰ στοιχεῖα and not to observe the calendrical law, which would mean to deny God's election. In short, for Paul God's gracious act of knowing Gentiles is part of Paul's theological rationale both for his persuasion of the Galatians not to observe the law and for his opposition to justification on the basis of the law.

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

What Paul intends the Galatians to realise by the antithesis between the law and grace is that they do not have to undergo circumcision nor to observe the law in order to become full members of the covenant community not only because they became God's elected people by God's act of calling and knowing but also because they are heirs and God's children by God's promise and his sending of Christ and the Spirit. In contrast to the agitators who argue that the identity of God's people is determined by the law and circumcision, Paul upholds that it depends upon God's saving activities, such as God's calling, God's promise, God's sending of Christ and the Spirit, and God's knowing. For Paul to argue for justification through the law means to nullify and deny God's graceful saving acts welcoming the Gentiles into God's people apart from the law (2:21). For the agitators God's grace is for the Jews and proselytes, but for Paul God's grace is for both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>78</sup> The antithesis (i.e. justification through the law vs. justification by God's grace) is both a substantial feature of Paul's theology in Galatians and an interpretive clue to understanding Paul's theology in Galatians.<sup>79</sup> Justification *sola*

<sup>77</sup> Compare Martyn, *Galatians*, 412, who states, "to be known by God is to know that there are no holy times."

<sup>78</sup> This is certainly Paul's point of view in Rom 3:29 (ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν) and in Rom 4:9 (Ὁ μακαρισμὸς οὖν οὗτος ἐπὶ τὴν περιτομὴν ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκροβυστίαν;).

<sup>79</sup> The antithesis seems to serve the same role in Paul's letter to the Romans. The antithesis is clearly expressed in Rom 3:20-24. In 3:20 Paul says, ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. In contrast to 3:20, Paul says in 3:24, δικαιοῦμενοι δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι. The point of the antithesis is that for Paul a right relationship with God is wholly of God's grace, and thus justification through the works of the law must be rejected. The point is restated in Rom 11:6: εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων, ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις. The antithesis between the human endeavour of Torah-observance and God's grace is embedded in Rom 9-11. Moreover, the antithesis between the law and grace as two antithetical salvific spheres or realms in Rom 6:14 (cf. 6:15) indicates that Paul understood the law and grace as two contrasting ways

*gratia* is a central content of Paul's gospel (Gal 2:21; 5.4; Rom 3:24; 5:15-17).

What is the significance of the antithesis between the law and grace for Paul's denial of the law as the soteriological basis of justification? The law requires the one who wants to share God's covenant to obey the works of the law. Against this idea, Paul argues that God's saving grace is the primary and sufficient soteriological basis of justification. Thus to add the observance of the law and circumcision for the salvation of the Gentiles to God's grace means a perversion of the gospel of Christ (1:7) and a denial of God's grace (2:21), which results in ἀνάθεμα (1:8-9). In short, Paul rejects the law as the soteriological basis of justification not only because the exclusivistic law prevents the Gentiles from enjoying the salvific effects (e.g. righteousness, the Abrahamic blessing, sonship, election) of God's grace but also because God's eschatological salvific deeds (e.g. God's calling, God's sending of Christ and the Spirit, God's knowing) brought these salvific blessings to the Gentiles without Torah-observance.

The antithesis between the law and grace is also significant for understanding Paul's critique of covenantal nomism. According to traditional Judaism, the Jewish privileges (e.g. righteousness, the Abrahamic blessing, sonship, election) are restricted to Jews and proselytes and Gentiles are excluded from these prerogatives. On the contrary Paul argues that the blessings and God's grace are not exclusive to Jews and proselytes but inclusive of the Gentile believers because God's blessings and grace have been granted to Gentiles through God's saving activities through Christ and the Spirit. Paul rejected ethnocentric "covenantal nomism" because it denies God's grace welcoming Gentile believers as the offspring of Abraham, God's children, and equal and full membership of the people of God apart from the law (cf. Rom 3:21-26).<sup>80</sup> Furthermore,

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of salvation. Paul says, ἀμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἔστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν. Paul means that sin will no longer have lordship over believers because they are not under the law but under grace. In light of the observations above, it is fair to say that Paul's argument that the right relationship with God is no longer dependent upon the law but upon God's salvific grace is significant for the interpretation of Romans.

<sup>80</sup> Dunn rightly states, "And what he [Paul] denies is that God's justification depends on 'covenantal nomism', that God's grace extends only to those who wear the badge of the covenant" ("Perspective," 194). Compare Burton, *Galatians*, 277, who notes the significance of the antithesis for Paul's opposition to first century Judaism as follows: "Grace, by virtue of which God accepts as righteous those who have faith, itself excludes, and is excluded by, the principle of legalism, according to which the deeds of righteousness which one has performed are accredited to him as something which he has earned."

Paul denied covenantal nomism because it does not recognise that God's promise to bless all nations (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant) was already fulfilled eschatologically when God sent Christ and the Spirit. On the basis of the Abrahamic covenant, Paul refutes that the covenant on Mt. Sinai can be effective for salvation.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 551, writes, "Paul in fact explicitly denies that the Jewish covenant can be effective for salvation."