

Promise, Law, and the Gospel: Reading the Biblical Narrative with Paul

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible did not come to us as a catechism, or in a way similar to a systematic theology book. Even though it contains literature written in different genres, the Bible not simply a stitching together of stories, laws, proverbs, praises to God, words spoken by prophets, miracles stories, bizarre images of dragons, stars falling from the sky, and the battle of Armageddon.

As it is nowadays more and more recognized, the Bible presents a single story, from creation in the book of Genesis, to new creation in the book of Revelation. Words such as “meta-narrative,” or “the biblical storyline” and the like, are becoming more familiar. Bible readers and scholars alike acknowledge that each part of Scripture is to be read in light of its overall storyline to better understand its different components. Instead of readings paragraphs or

chapters in the Bible from the “street view” perspective, we slowly learn to scroll back to an overview of sections or entire books of Scripture and come to a more satisfying interpretation of more difficult passages.

No one denies that evangelical Christianity has its own fads, its popular tendencies, its buzz words that resonate for a few years, and then disappear almost as soon as they appeared. We see theological movements come to life, producing a few buds, blooming and then producing fruit, to finally dry up and perish.

For some readers of the Bible, this renewed emphasis on the “meta-narrative,” or “the biblical storyline” and the like, is but a fad, destined to pass by in a few years or in a few decades, just as others fads eventually disappeared from our theological radars or practices. For others, at the other end of the spectrum, reading Scripture through the lens of a grand plan is the only way to make sense of the diversity found in Scripture.

This school, since its beginning, has put an emphasis on reading the Bible through the lens of a metanarrative, namely through the lens of salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*, in German). In doing so, are we simply imposing our tradition on the Bible? Even though we recently hear more often about the biblical narrative, about the necessity of reading, understanding and preaching the Bible in light of a narrative framework encompassing the totality of the Bible, are we simply the slaves of yet a new fad which will disappear in a few decades? *Is there any biblical warrant for such a reading of the different biblical books?*

My article will demonstrate that reading the Bible in light of an overall narrative corresponds to the Bible’s intent from the beginning. This can be seen in many places. This will be demonstrated mainly from Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, namely Galatians 3 and 4.

Choosing that passage is important for two reasons: first, Paul’s epistle to the Galatians is not narrative material. As a letter written to a number of congregations, it belongs to what we call discursive material. Nonetheless, underlying Paul’s argument answering the specific circumstances these churches were facing, Paul appeals a number of times to the “truth of the Gospel” (Gal 2:5, 14), to resist what he calls “another gospel” (Gal 1:8, 9) which is no gospel at all. In Galatians 3–4, he especially focuses on the progressive revelation of God’s plan, starting with God’s promise to Abraham, moving to the time of the law, to finally arrive at the time of “faith” (Gal 3:23–25), or to what Paul calls “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4).

Galatians 3–4 is almost important for a second reason: in dealing with the difficult question about the relationship between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians and whether circumcision should be required for non-Jewish believers, Paul uses no less than twenty chronological markers to sustain his answer. As far as I know, this is the highest concentration of chronological markers in the NT in 35 verses (running from Gal 3:6–4:11). By focusing our attention on those, we will see that Paul’s argument runs along chronological lines, in a way similar to other arguments found elsewhere in the NT which also run along chronological lines. So, even though Paul is not unique in this way, it is certainly in this passage that we find the highest percentage of chronological markers in the NT.

My intent is to demonstrate that a warrant for reading Scripture in light of the metanarrative of God’s promise, law, and the Gospel, is found in many places in Scripture, Galatians 3–4 being one of those.

But before we focus on these two chapters in Galatians, we need to do two things: to define biblical theology (because this is a question related to our enquiry), and then to survey a few passages in the OT in order to note that this approach is common to both the OT and the NT.

WHAT IS BIBLICAL THEOLOGY?

I use the expression “biblical theology” to mean a chronological approach to the study of Scripture.¹ Biblical theology, according to Brian Rosner, in his article entitled “Biblical Theology,”

is principally concerned with the overall theological message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the various corpora, and with the interrelationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture.²

What distinguishes biblical theology from the other disciplines, in particular systematic theology, is recognizing the historical and progressive component of revelation.

D. A. Carson notes that “biblical theology, as its name implies, even as it works inductively from the diverse texts of the Bible, seeks to uncover and

articulate the unity of *all* the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves.”³

It takes into account the progressive aspect of this divine revelation, seeking to locate each biblical text according to its context and its location in redemptive history.

Biblical theology is eminently scriptural, historical, but also progressive, based on the progressive nature of God’s revelation and of his plan of redemption. The passage of time, the sequence of events, and history, are essential elements to biblical theology, but these play only a relatively minor role on systematic theology.⁴

This being said, let us look at a few examples of such a progressive and comprehensive approach, found in the Scriptures themselves.

OT EXAMPLES OF A PROGRESSIVE-COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE

The OT provides us with numerous examples of a comprehensive approach to God’s redemptive plan. Regularly, we can observe that the human authors of Scripture stood back and presented us with an overview of God’s redemptive plan for his people. Let us look at a few examples of a salvation-historical reading of Scripture from Scripture.

An Example from Deuteronomy

Looking ahead to the time when the children of Israel will have entered the promised land, Moses teaches the people how they will present their firstfruits before the Lord using the following formula:

⁵And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

⁶And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. ⁷Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. ⁹And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰And

behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.' (Deut 26:5-10a)

This text echoes back to three great events from the past: (1) God's revelation to Abraham; (2) the miraculous deliverance from Egypt; (3) the conquest of the land of Canaan. These events happened in fact as the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham, *gradually* revealed in the texts of Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 22 and 26, and repeated again and again throughout the Pentateuch. Indeed, an enlightening way to understand the Pentateuch is to read it as the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, and to all the people.⁵

Perceived through the glass of God's promise to Abraham, the biblical account of the Pentateuch takes on an enriched meaning, enlightened by a central thought. The almost unending passages from Exodus describing the preparation for and construction of the Tabernacle in the book of Exodus, the different offerings to be brought before the Lord now living among his people contained in Leviticus, the enumeration of the tribes of Israel in Numbers, and the repetition of the law to a new generation in Deuteronomy, all these narrative passages take on an enriched meaning under the light of God's promise spoken to Abraham, and repeated to Isaac and Jacob.

Examples from the Psalter

Other OT texts present us with a quick survey of the history of Israel—or more precisely, of the history of God's dealing with Israel. For example, many Psalms paint with a broad-brush some important moments in OT salvation history. In Psalm 77, Asaph remembers the "wonders of old," i.e., God's miraculous deeds in the past (v. 12), as God opened the waters and a way through the sea (vv. 16-19) under the guidance of Moses and Aaron.

In Psalm 78, the same author opens his mouth in a parable, and teaches to the coming generation "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (78:4). With one stroke, he surveys "dark sayings from of old" (or "hidden things from of old," NIV), presenting briefly six events or elements in connection with redemptive history: (1) The coming out of Egypt (vv. 12-16, 44-51); (2) The sojourn in the desert (vv. 17-43); (3) The gift of the law at Sinai (vv. 52-54); (4) The entrance in Canaan (vv. 55-58); (5) The period of the judges (vv. 59-64); and (6) God's

choosing David as the shepherd of Israel (vv. 65-72). All that content in just seventy-two verses!

These six elements are in fact key moments in salvation history. They are presented as momentous days in God's relationship with his people. Using the niph'al participle form of the Hebrew verb *pl'*, often translated by "miracles" or "wonders," Asaph refers to these grandiose events which bring about people to marvel. This specific term (*niph'l'hôth*) often occurs in the book of Psalms with reference to God's salvation and "marvelous deeds" for his people. In Psalm 78 therefore, the author invites his hearers and readers to take a step back and to behold, in a quick glance, key moments of salvation history, "marvelous deeds in our eyes" (Ps 118:23).⁶

Still in the Psalter, one finds surveys of God's intervention in the history of his people in Psalms 105-106 (and even 107), as well as in Psalms 135-136. Time prevents us to look at each of those in more detail. But just think of one of these Psalms, namely Psalm 136. It is a well-known text reminding us of God's steadfast love that lasts forever. Throughout the Psalm, the author presents an overview of God's actions for his people, from creation to "miracles" carried out in favor of his people, a beautiful recounting of God's unique actions in salvation history for his people.

Examples from Great Prayers in the OT

One also finds a presentation of salvation history (creation—promise to Abraham—coming out of Egypt—gift of the law at Sinai—sojourn in the desert—victories on Sihon and Og—entrance in Canaan—period of the judges—exile—return from exile) in those great OT prayers. I am thinking here of Daniel 9, Ezra 9, and Nehemiah 9. These surveys of God's dealing with his people serve also as a backdrop to Stephen's speech in Acts 7.

These are, therefore, ten OT texts which present a quick overview of God's interventions on behalf of his people, an overview which provide an interpretive grid to the history of Israel. Surely, God's plan follows its course, and biblical authors keep bringing it back to the memory of the children of Israel. And this they do, through a progressive and comprehensive approach to Scripture. It thus appears that biblical theology stands on a solid foundation, found in the OT.

A NT EXAMPLE OF A PROGRESSIVE-COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 3-4

When confronted with the problem of relationships between the law and the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, when confronted with his apostleship called into question by the Galatians to whom the apostle himself announced the gospel of grace, Paul addresses the issue of the relationship between faith in Christ and the law of Moses (including the difficult question about circumcision) through a chronological reading of the OT, namely the fact that God's promise to Abraham chronologically preceded God's giving the law to Moses.

Let us take note: Paul's presentation in these two chapters (Gal 3-4) relies essentially on a chronological, gradual reading of past events, based on an historical understanding of God's promise to Abraham, given 430 years before the law was ever given to Moses. Paul uses two images (slavery, and age of minority) to communicate the same idea, and the two images are based upon the passage of time.

Even though other authors have noted that Paul's explanation relies heavily on the passage of time, this essay brings to the surface the twenty temporal markers used in this section of Galatians.

General Context of Galatians 3-4

Contrary to popular understanding, these two chapters have little to do with the psychology of individual conversion. They present rather a chronological reading of key moments in the Old Covenant leading to their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Paul answers a false gospel, which in fact is no gospel at all. In order to demonstrate this, Paul specifies that Abraham was justified by faith, without works of the law or circumcision (strongly tied to the law in Jewish minds), long before the law.

The Importance of Temporal Markers in Galatians 3-4

What we find in these two chapters are at least twenty temporal markers. Paul justifies in this way his understanding about the relationship between the promise given to Abraham and the law given to Moses by presenting a right understanding of salvation history. Exegesis and biblical theology help one another at this point.

We will survey these temporal markers. But before we do so, here is a summary of Paul's argument for why Christians are not under the law in Galatians 3-4:

- God has made a promise to Abraham (Gen 12; Gal 3:8)
- Abraham believed in God's word, and was thus justified (Gen 15:6; Gal 3:6)
- God established a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15)
- Abraham received the sign of the covenant in being circumcised (Gen 17; cf. Rom 4:10-11)
- God promised Abraham that all the families/nations of the earth would be blessed in him (Gen 12:3, 22.18; Gal 3:8)
- The law of Moses came 430 years later (Gal 3:17)
- The law does not change the terms of the promise (Gal 3:15-17)
- The promise is given by faith, and not by the law (Gal 3:21-23)

The argument Paul presents is based on a chronological reading of the relationship between God and his people and he concludes that now that Christ has come, we are no longer under the law as a covenant. To those who overestimate the law (and hence the necessity of circumcision for the Gentiles; cf. Gal 5:2-4), Paul begins his argument with Abraham, moves on to the time period under the law, and concludes with the new people of God, composed of both Jews and non-Jews, united by faith in Jesus Christ.

To sustain his argument, Paul uses twenty chronological markers, showing how he understands the respective roles of the law and that of the promise given to Abraham.

Temporal Markers in Galatians 3

The first two temporal markers appear in Gal 3:8, where Paul says that Scripture, *foreseeing (prouidousa)* that God would justify the Gentiles, *preached the gospel beforehand (proeëggelisato)* to Abraham." Already the gospel was preached to Abraham, when God promised him: "In you shall all the families/nations be blessed" (Gen 12:3, quoted in Gal 3:6). Long before the law, the gospel was preached, in a way, to Abraham. This gospel would not only be for his own physical heirs, but for all the nations of the earth.

The next temporal markers appear in Gal 3:17, when Paul states, "The law, which came 430 years afterward (*meta tetrakosia etê yeyonôs*), does not

annul a covenant previously ratified (*diathêkên proekukrômenên*) by God, so as to make the promise void.” Not only was the promise given to Abraham first, but the law cannot cancel it. The promise was first given to Abraham; the law came much later. The chronological difference could barely have been said more clearly.

Why then the law? Paul answers that question, using two more chronological markers in Gal 3:19: “It was added (*prosetethê*) because (or: for the sake, or for the purpose) of transgressions, *until* (*achris*) the offspring would come. The law was thus *added* to something already given, for a specific purpose, and for a specific time period.

The promise spoken to Abraham finds its fulfillment, not in the law, but in placing one’s faith in the one who came to fulfill that promise, the coming of the Lord Jesus. Against the Jews who set the law as the interpretive key to the Scriptures, Paul sets as the hermeneutical key the promise given to Abraham now fulfilled in the person of Jesus.

Paul continues his argument with three more temporal markers in v. 23: “Now *before* (*pro tou de elthein tèn pistin*) faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned *until* (*eis*) the coming faith *would be* (*tèn mellousan*) revealed.” Far from being the end point in the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan, the law constituted in fact a temporary period, designed to be followed by what Paul calls the “faith,” that is, the content of this faith, namely Jesus Christ.

Paul states once again the temporary nature of the law in v. 24, using once again an important temporal marker: So then, the law was our guardian *until* (*eis*) Christ came (not as the NIV “to lead us to Christ”). The preposition (*eis*) should be understood here in a temporal way (“until”), not in a directional one, “to” (Christ).⁷

It should be noted that in the immediate context, Paul does not deal with the psychology of individual conversion (i.e., one has to feel the burden of the law in order to come to Christ). He speaks about the relationship between the promise given to Abraham and the law given to Moses. First came the promise, to which Abraham responded in/by faith, and then (and only then) came the law. Interpreting the preposition (*eis*) in a temporal way is based on the flow of the argument begun in Galatians 3:8, and supported by the presence of numerous temporal markers in the immediate context.

Paul further specifies this temporal aspect, twice, in v. 25. He first uses a temporal aorist genitive absolute “But *now that faith has come* (one single word in Greek: *elhousês*), and then follows with a unequivocal declaration: “we are *no longer (ouketi)* under a guardian.”⁸ In vv. 26-29, Paul explains the outcomes of this reality for this present time. Let us note that, throughout his demonstration, he has used twelve temporal markers so far.

Other Temporal Markers in Galatians 4

Paul continues his explanation in Galatians 4, using another eight temporal markers. Paul changes metaphors in Galatians 4:1, but the reality depicted is the same: if Israel was held captive under the law which served as a guardian until the coming Christ (Gal 3:23-29), likewise Israel has been under guardians and managers until the date set by the father (Gal 4:1-7).⁹

Thus, when Paul notes that “the heir, *as long as (eph’hoson chronon)* he is a child, is no different from a slave, but he is under guardians and managers *until the date (achri tês prothesmias)* set by his father” (4:1-2), he uses two more temporal markers, emphasizing that the argument continues along chronological lines.

Paul presses on with four new temporal indications in vv. 3-4: “In the same way, we also, *when we were (hote êmen)* children (let us note the verb in the imperfect, which in this context refers to a passed time), *were enslaved (êmetha dedoulemenoï ;* another verb in the imperfect) to the elementary principles of the world.”¹⁰ Paul adds in v. 4: “But *when the fullness of time (hote de elthen to plêroma tou chronou)* had come, God sent forth his Son.” Let us note that this last phrase contains two temporal markers: *when* and *the fullness of time*.

Paul thus compares the reality of the Jews under the Law to that of an heir who is still a child. Though an heir, he is no different from a slave, until the date set by his father. This speaks of the Jews under the law until the coming of Christ. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son; this echoes what Paul said earlier in Galatians 3:24: the coming faith is now revealed. This opens the door to a seventh temporal marker in this chapter in Gal 4:7: “So you are *no longer (ouketi)* a slave, but a son.”

The eighth temporal marker found in Galatians 4 relevant to our study appears in the form of a contrast in vv. 8-9: “*Formerly (tote)*, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But *now (nun de)* that you have come to know God.”

The multiple use of temporal markers clearly indicates that Paul's argument relies heavily upon a chronological reading of salvation history, a salvation history beginning (for purposes specific to Galatians) with the gospel spoken ahead of time to Abraham, moving in time to the time of the law 430 years later, and the promise spoken to Abraham now being fulfilled in the coming of faith, that is, in the coming of Christ, when the fullness of time had come.

The difficult question of circumcision to be required or not for Gentile believers finds its answer, not in a philosophical demonstration, or in an explanation using non temporal categories. This question finds its answer in a reading of salvation history and in revelation extending in time. This revelation came about progressively, though it existed from the beginning when God spoke his promise to Abraham.

Summary of Paul's Argument

Paul contrasts two temporalities (and even four!): then, and now. In order to carry his argument, Paul recalls two events: God's promise to Abraham, which came first (Gen 12, 13, 15, 17, 22), and the promulgation of the law to Moses which came later (Ex 19-24), as a matter of fact, much later, 430 years later!

According to the illustration used in Galatians 3:15, no one annuls or adds to a will once it has been ratified. Which comes first: the promise, or the law? The answer is obvious: the promise came first, and the law was added much later, and therefore cannot annul the promise given to Abraham.

But how was Abraham justified: by works of the law, or by faith in God's promise? According to what one can read in Genesis 15:6 quoted in Galatians 3:16, Abraham was justified by faith, not by the law or through circumcision. Why then was the law given? The law was added, with three limitations:

- It was given *for a specific purpose* (*tôn parabasêōw charin*), "because of transgression" (ESV).¹¹ This short phrase is diversely interpreted: (1) to keep sin in check (an explanation Paul himself refuses elsewhere in his letters); (2) to reveal sin (i.e., in order to reveal in order that sin might be recognized for what it is: a legal offense before a holy God—Rom 3:20, 4.15, 5.13); (3) in order to increase sin (Rom 7:7-8, 13); (4) to stir up one's conscience concerning sin and guilt associated to it (this interpretation is less likely,

because the immediate context deals with salvation history, and not the internal development of faith in an individual). Options 2 and 3 are both possible here. Whatever the case may be, the purpose for which the law was given appears clearly to be a negative one.¹²

- It was given to a specific people (Jews, as the mediator mentioned in Gal 3:20 certainly refers to Moses)
- It was given for a specific period of time (until the offspring should come— 3:19; until Christ came—3:24).

Therefore, clinging to the law means to go back in time, to a period of time which is obsolete, it means to become a Jew and thus go back under the curse of the law, to withdraw from being Abraham's true offspring (Gal 3:8-9); it means going back to a relationship with God mediated by the law, rather than being in direct relationship with God, by faith, through Jesus.

A right understanding of the relationship between faith and law is based on a right understanding of salvation history. Paul's argument stands thanks to a reading of the Scriptures along the lines of its historical storyline. This perspective is precisely the one put forward by biblical theology.

CONCLUSION

How do we know this is applicable to our reading of the NT? How do we know we are not simply imposing our understanding of Galatians 3-4 to all the Bible? In short, the answer is that this approach is used by other authors in the NT. Here is a short list of texts which could each be analyzed:

- Jesus himself used this approach when he spoke about divorce and remarriage, by going back to the starting point, marriage itself (cf. Matt 19:4)
- Acts 7 (Stephen's speech)
- Acts 13 (Paul's discourse in Pisidian Antioch) and Acts 17 (Paul's discourse in Athens)
- The author of Hebrews uses this approach more than once, when dealing with Sabbath issues (Heb 3-4, especially Heb 4:8), Jesus' priesthood (Gen 14-Ps 95-Heb 7:11-19), and the coming of the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah (cf. Heb 8:7).

Scripture cannot be simply reduced to a series of propositions, all standing on the same level, without taking into account their theological context, that is, where they stand in light of salvation history.

Let me say that this outlook on Scripture does not apply equally to all the literary genres of the Bible, but it helps us to read the biblical narrative in light of God's progressive, comprehensive plan of salvation, whether it is to the OT or the NT.

Rather than simply having the double "already and not yet," we thus find ourselves in the presence of the quadruple "back then, after, already and not yet, and lastly finally."

Biblical theology, far from being a fad, has a strong foundation in Scripture, as seen in many OT and NT texts. Reading the biblical narrative with Paul is reading the Bible as the progressive disclosure of God's redemptive plan, fulfilled though time, as we await its culmination in Christ.

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- ¹ For a survey of five approaches to biblical theology, see Edward W. Klink, III, and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012).
 - ² Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (afterwards abbreviated *NDBT*) (ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 3.
 - ³ D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *NDBT*, 100.
 - ⁴ See D. A. Carson, *The Gaggling of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 502.
 - ⁵ Readers will consult with profit the following: Elmer Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981); Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003). For more robust reading, see the work of Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).
 - ⁶ See Paul A. Kruger, "pl," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. William A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 3:615-617. Kruger does not mention every occurrence of the participial form of the verb (e.g., Ps 118:23), though he does note that this form rarely occurs in narrative contexts, but rather in poetic contexts, especially in the book of Psalms. See my doctoral dissertation for a more complete analysis: Pierre Constant, *Le Psaume 118 et son emploi christologique dans Luc et Actes: Une étude exégétique, littéraire et herméneutique*, Thèse doctorale présentée à la Faculté de la Trinity International University (Deerfield, Illinois, 2001), 153-154. For informational purposes, let us note that *niphl'hôth* is used with reference to God's covenant with Abraham (1 Chr 24, 12, 16:9; Ps 105:2), the birth of Isaac (Gen 18:14), the destructive miracles in Egypt (Exod 3:20), the coming out of Egypt (Jug 6:13; Ps 22, 106.7, 11, 78:4; Mic 7:15), the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and the destruction of Pharaoh's army (Exod 15:11), God's provision during the sojourn in the desert (Neh 9:17; Ps 78:1), the conquest and the defeat of kings Og and Sihon (Ps 136:4), the crossing of the Jordan river (Jos 3:5), God's providence and deliverance in Canaan (Ps 136:4), the reign of the king of Israel (Ps 72:18), the Babylonian invasion (Jer 32:27) and the restoration of Jerusalem (Ps 131:1?; Zech 8:8); all of these are spoken of in terms of being *niphl'hôth*.
 - ⁷ This preposition is used in a temporal sense also elsewhere in the NT: Matt 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13, 2 Tim 1:12, as well as in Phil 1:10. See Bauer, Danker, Arndt and Gingrich (*BDAG*), *Greek-English Lexicon*

of the Greek New Testament, s.v. “eis,” 2.a (289).

- ⁸ The negating adverb *ouketi*, also has a temporal sense, “not any more.” This is different from a logical sense (“we are not”); rather, it means “we are no more ...” See *BDAG*, 736 (s.v. *ouketi*).
- ⁹ See the useful analysis done by Paul McDonald, “An Introductory Study on the Usefulness and Necessity of Discourse Analysis: With Particular Reference to Galatians 4:1-7,” Senior Seminar Paper (Toronto Baptist Seminary, 2009).
- ¹⁰ The “we” in v. 3 refers the Jews. Paul will speak to the Gentile believers in v. 6. See Jean Calvin, *Épître aux Galates* in *Commentaires de Jean Calvin sur le Nouveau Testament*, tome 6 (1548; Genève: Labor et Fides, 1965), 82; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 193. For a contrary opinion, see Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 181; Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 260.
- ¹¹ The preposition *charin* expresses a purpose, not a cause. See 1 Tim 5:4; Titus 1:5, 11; Judg 16. See Fung, *The Epistles to the Galatians*, 159.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 159-60.

Paul attacked the Judaizers vigorously by defending his own call and the independence of the revelations of his personal apostolate. This is supported by reports of agreement between him and the Jerusalem church and by argument from Scripture. In these, he proved that the Law was given only a limited role in the total history of salvation. The letter ends with Paul pointing out that through the Spirit the Christian in faith is admonished to good behaviour and brotherly love. The freedom of the gospel is the theme developed in chapters 3-4 in a series of allegorical-typological interpretations based on the Law. Paul first recalled the covenant promise to Abraham: that he "believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" and that through Abraham all nations would be blessed. So Paul was arguing that Judaism is not a fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham and that Christianity is. This meant that it is not that Christians needed to become Jews to become sons of Abraham but that Jews needed to become Christians to become sons of Abraham. share | improve this answer | The works of the law represent the commands of the old covenant under Moses and the Aronic priesthood including the ten commandments. The law was never to provide righteousness but to cause sin to increase, to be a schoolmaster, and an impossible standard and to reveal the character of God which we cannot attain to by "the flesh" "the letter kills" the law kills us and with it a curse.