

# Galatians 3:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise:  
but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

## Analysis

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**For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.** Paul contrasts two mutually exclusive systems: Law versus promise. 'The inheritance' (hē klēronomia, ἡ κληρονομία) refers to the promised blessings—righteousness, Spirit, sonship, the land, eternal life. 'If the inheritance be of the law' (ei ek nomou, εἰ ἐκ νόμου)—if the source is Law—it is no more of promise' (ouketi ek epangelias, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἐπαγγελίας): promise and Law are incompatible origins. The adverb ouketi (οὐκέτι)—'no longer'—implies a logical exclusion: if one, then not the other.

The decisive statement: 'but God gave it to Abraham by promise' (tō de Abraam di' epangelias kecharistai ho theos, τῷ δὲ Ἀβραὰμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται ὁ θεός). The verb kecharistai (κεχάρισται)—perfect tense of charizomai (χαρίζομαι)—means 'freely gave as a gift of grace.' The perfect tense indicates an abiding reality: God's grace-gift to Abraham remains in effect. The inheritance came not through Law-obedience but through grace-promise, and that remains the only basis.

Paul's point: you cannot mix systems. If inheritance is by Law, it's not by promise; but since God gave it by promise, it cannot be by Law. The Judaizers' theology was incoherent—they wanted Law-based inheritance while claiming the Abrahamic promise. Paul insists: choose one—and Scripture clearly shows God chose promise, not Law. Romans 4:13-16 develops this same argument: the promise to Abraham was by grace through faith, not by Law.

## Historical Context

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The 'inheritance' in Abrahamic theology included the Promised Land (Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, 17:8), innumerable descendants (Genesis 15:5, 17:4-6), and blessing to all nations (Genesis 12:3, 22:18). Jewish theology saw Law-observance as the condition for retaining the land/inheritance; Paul insists the inheritance is by promise-grace, not Law-performance. Hebrews 6:12-18 and 9:15 similarly emphasize that believers inherit the promise through faith. The inheritance is not earned but freely given by God's gracious promise.

## Related Passages

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**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. How does verse 18's contrast between Law and promise expose the incoherence of any 'Jesus plus works' gospel?
2. What does the verb 'gave' (perfect tense: *\*kecharistai\**, 'freely gave as a grace-gift') reveal about the nature of God's covenant with Abraham?
3. In what areas of your Christian life might you be trying to 'earn the inheritance' through Law-performance rather than rest in God's grace-gift by promise?

## Interlinear Text

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εἰ	γὰρ	ἐξ	νόμου	ἡ	κληρονομία	ούκέτι	ἐξ
if	For	be of	the law	G3588	the inheritance	G3765	be of
G1487	G1063	G1537	G3551		G2817		G1537
ἐπαγγελίας τῷ δὲ Αβραὰμ δι' ἐπαγγελίας κεχάρισται							
promise	G3588	but	it to Abraham	by	promise	gave	
G1860		G1161	G11	G1223	G1860		G5483
ό	θεός						
G3588	God	G2316					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 2:21** (Word): I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

**Psalms 105:42** (Covenant): For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

**Romans 8:17** (References God): And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

**Galatians 3:29** (Covenant): And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.