

GALATIANS

3:1-29

Galatians 3:1-29

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 6th October 2024 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Genesis 15:1-6

Introduction

This morning we are continuing our verse by verse study of Galatians, and we're going to study all of chapter 3 — meaning we'll be half way through this letter by the time we go home today. And it's worth remembering that we don't get to study this letter every year, or even every decade — at least as a church family. As I noted a couple of weeks ago, the last time we studied this on a Sunday morning was in 2008 — before some of you were born, and before a number of you had committed to fellowshipping here — but make no mistake, the reason it has taken a while to come back to it is not because it isn't important, but because the rest of the Bible is important too.

But as for this book, I beg you, don't let this be the last time you study this in the coming years. Study it yourself. Talk through it as a couple, or as a family, and discuss what you find in it with your Christian friends. What Paul wrote here is too important to let it gather dust until the next time we have the privilege of studying this letter again. And it's too important to ignore this morning.

In fact, this chapter is essential reading for the Christian. Through it we're going to understand much about the law and grace. And if we care not *only* about our *own* salvation, but the salvation of *others*, then we need to pay attention to those things that it says.

As a quick reminder, we can break the 6 chapters of this letter down into three parts...

Chapter overview of Galatians

- **Chapters 1-2:** Personal
- **Chapters 3-4:** Doctrinal
- **Chapters 5-6:** Practical

And as we've seen in recent weeks, the first two chapters largely deal with Paul's personal testimony of grace, drawing on his own experience — from the road to Damascus, to Damascus itself, to Arabia, Tarsus, Antioch, Jerusalem and back to Antioch again. Next, in chapters 3 & 4, Paul will lay out the doctrine of grace most clearly for us, but also get the Galatians thinking about their own experience of grace. Then finally, in chapters 5 & 6, Paul will get very practical, showing us what the right response to God's grace looks like in our day to day lives.

Now, previously in Galatians, we first saw how Paul declared that Christ gave Himself for our sins (c1v4), and that we should not listen to anyone that preaches any *other* gospel (c1v8-9), for indeed there is *no* better news than God's grace. And he went on in chapter 1 to point the Galatian churches to his own experience, how he had experienced God's grace first hand, and had preached it widely. But, as we reached chapter 2 he noted how that when some questioned whether grace really *was* sufficient for our salvation, the matter was *settled* with the apostles in Jerusalem, who were found preaching the *same* gospel (c2v1-10) — all of them having received it from Jesus.

Yet, in the second half of chapter 2 we *read* how even the apostle Peter, fearing man more than God, erred in his actions, and needed to be corrected (c2v11-21). And what a warning that is for us, that we must not listen to man's opinion over the Bible's doctrine. So now, as we enter chapter 3, Paul moves from his own experience to that of these Christians in the Galatian churches, as he reasons with them about the law and grace;

Overview of chapter three

Overview of chapter three

- **v1-9** — Abraham's life shows that justification is by faith
- **v10-14** — Jesus death shows that the law requires justice
- **v15-18** — God's promise cannot be undone by the law
- **v19-25** — The purpose of the law
- **v26-29** — The effect of grace

And in the opening 9 verses we're going to see that first he presents them with 5 questions. Effectively asking; (1) what's got into you? (2) Were you saved and filled by the Spirit by the law or faith? (3) Since you were saved by faith, are you now made perfect by the law? (4) Was the persecution you suffered for believing in grace in vain? And (5) are you filled by the Spirit by the law or faith? And to answer all this he'll point them to Abraham, our example of faith.

From verses 10-14, Paul explains how the law is unrelenting — so much so, that our only possible escape from the clutches of it is through Jesus death on the cross. But even the law can only do so much, and in verses 15-18 Paul explains how the law, as demanding as it is, cannot change God's promises that preceded it. But that raises a question, which is what is the point of the law? What is its purpose. And he answers that in verses 19-25, before the final 4 verses show how God's grace is the ultimate leveller — that none of us can claim anything in light of it.

Chapter three

So then, let's zoom in closer to the details of this chapter. We read in verse 1:

Galatians 3:1

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

Paul's not holding back, huh?! Why is he calling them foolish? He's not saying that they are stupid, but rather, that they are making as little use of reason as those who have none, for they are behaving like fools. In what way? Because they are failing to follow the truth that had so clearly been set out before them. Paul, despite his background, hadn't used great swelling words when he was preaching. He hadn't tried to impress people with his speech. But rather, he simply taught the simplicity of the gospel, that Jesus had died in our place, to pay for our sin, that we might not have to. And that is what the Galatians had lost sight of. So he asks them:

Galatians 3:2

This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

So Paul is taking them back to the moment they were saved and God's Holy Spirit entered into them. And he asks, how did that happen? Did you have to do 10 good things, then at the 10th a bell rang and someone came and congratulated you on having made it? Or was it simply by faith in what Jesus had already done for them? Again, was it by *doing*, or by *hearing*? Hearing being key to receiving the gospel by faith, because the gospel is something God has done for you, and you need to know about it. He continues:

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Paul, knowing that they, if they were honest, would have to acknowledge that they were saved through faith, says "look, if you were only saved through *faith* in what *Christ* has done, do you really think *you're* now going to *live* in a way that commends you to God, through your own efforts, as if to earn your own salvation?".

In other words, what he's saying through this line of questioning is; having started in the Spirit, receiving salvation by faith, don't let people tell you more is required. Don't let them tell you that is not a complete gospel.

And he asks:

Galatians 3:4

Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

What's the point he's making here? Well, the Galatian church had been derided, mocked, even persecuted for the simplicity of the gospel they believed; that salvation wasn't through works, but simply through faith. And Paul says, *look — you've put up with these sufferings for what you believe, so was that suffering all for nothing, if indeed, you now believe works are necessary for salvation?*

And he asks them this fifth question:

Galatians 3:5-6

Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

So, having received God's grace, having started in faith, now being perfected through the Spirit, and having endured persecution because of grace, does God now give His Spirit to you, and work miracles among you because of your good deeds?

No, Paul says, it is *still* by faith, as it always has been. And he points us to Abraham, who he notes “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” — quoting from Genesis 15:6, as he had done in Romans chapter 4. You see, Abraham wasn't justified by the law, for as Paul will note later in this chapter, the law arrived hundreds of years after Abraham. And Abraham wasn't justified by his works, for circumcision wasn't to earn God's favour, but rather it was to be a *mark* of his faith and the covenant that God had already made with him (just as baptism for us isn't to earn our salvation, but to point to what God has already done for us, that we are not partaking of by faith).

But, rather, Abraham, being childless, was told by God that he would have a son through his wife who was barren, and not only that, but that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. And he believed God. There were no actions, no works, no law keeping. Simply faith. And we read, that *God accounted it to him for righteousness.*

And in that remarkable chapter, you may recall that God then made a covenant with Abraham — yet it wasn't a typical covenant that both parties signed up to, but instead we read how God told Abraham to “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”

Why? Well, as I noted in our study of that chapter, the custom of the day when entering into a legal agreement was to divide an animal, stand in the middle of those two pieces, and take hold of each others wrists to show they were deadly serious about keeping their side of the deal. A that custom is also referenced in Jeremiah 34:18.

And here, Abram (as he was called at the time), having literally divided each animal in two (except the birds), and ready to enter into this agreement, enters into a deep sleep. And we see this great object lesson, that what was happening here wasn't Abram's doing. Rather, it was God's doing, for He passed between these divided animals alone while Abram was asleep, with God Himself in the midst of this sacrifice, making a covenant with Abram that required only one party to adhere to — and that was Himself.

And in doing *this*, God not only established a covenant with Abram based on His *own* character, rather than Abram's, but He also foreshadowed the grace that He would show to you and I — that *our* salvation would not depend on our inclination, willingness or faithfulness to keep to any law. Rather, *all* the work necessary for our salvation would be completed by Jesus Himself on the cross in our place — establishing a newer and better covenant than that described here in Genesis 15.

So, let me put this plainly — just as there was nothing Abram needed to do, or could do, to be sure of this promise that God had given him, there is nothing that you need to do, or can do, to be sure of the promise of *your* salvation. If you have repented of your sins, and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then nothing you can do, or not do, will prevent you from inheriting eternal life — for the ability to save rests *solely* on God. You cannot contribute to your salvation any more than Abram could contribute to the covenant God made with *him*.

Galatians 3:7

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

That is, those that are saying salvation is by works, are not following after the pattern of Abraham. And if they are counting on their works to save them, and not faith alone in Christ alone, then they are not saved at all. And that must have been a shock to those Judaisers who were desperately trying to bring the gentiles under the law, thinking that keeping it was how they could be saved.

Galatians 3:8

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

What is Paul saying the Bible (and, indeed, God Himself) was pointing towards in saying "In you all the nations shall be blessed."? It's none other than Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for all, that as Jesus said "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him — (not does good works for Him) — should not perish but have everlasting life.*" What remarkable blessing that is!

But that being the case, what do we make of what James writes in his letter, saying:

James 2:20-24

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

Well, as one man put it, "Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone." In other words, faith leads to works. The two are inseparable, but the order is not negotiable. We cannot put the cart before the horse, or put the horse in the cart. J Vernon McGee puts it very well in his commentary on this passage, saying:

There is no contradiction when you examine passages like the ones written by Paul and James. They are saying the same thing. One is looking at faith at the beginning. The other is looking at faith at the end. One is looking at the root of faith. The other is looking at the fruit of faith. The root of faith is "faith alone saves you," but that saving faith will produce works.

J Vernon McGee

So, since whoever *believes* in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life, we read:

Galatians 3:9

So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

That is, we are saved on the same basis as Abraham — and that is by *faith*, and *not* by works.

How important is this to understand? *Very* important. In fact, it is of *critical* importance to us as individuals, *and* for every person that we share the gospel with.

Galatians 3:10

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Quoting from Deuteronomy 27:26, Paul is saying that those that want to keep the law don't realise the crushing weight of it — that is, they are not properly considering what they hold to. And Paul will keep making this point, writing in the next chapter "*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?*"

So, what is it that people who want to attain their own righteousness, or earn their salvation through keeping the law, are missing? Well, James writes this in *his* letter:

James 2:10-11

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

That is, you are not rewarded for keeping the law. Rather the only consequence to the law is when you break it. And it doesn't matter if you have kept most of it — if you have broken part of it, then the law is against you.

Consider how that works with civil law in our country — for you may have driven safely, not murdered anyone, not used any illegal substances, paid your taxes on time, and not committed any fraud; but that is not going to qualify you for a visit from a Police officer to congratulate you on *keeping* the law. However, if you have not broken those laws, yet you commit theft, you are going to be guilty, and it won't matter that you've kept those other laws. The law will still chase you, and you will not be able to justify your theft by pleading on the basis that you didn't murder anyone.

Standing before a judge, acting all self-righteous, saying "I have kept so much of the law!", won't acquit you of breaking the law you have been charged with breaking. Innocence in one area, does not cancel out guilt in another.

Now, that gives us a start to understanding the law. Yet, Jesus took it further, saying in chapter 5 of Matthew's gospel:

Matthew 5:21-22a

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

And He went on to also say:

Matthew 5:27-28

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

You see, there is a spiritual nature to the law that goes way beyond our actions. For God's law, His holy standard, deals with our thoughts too. And so, as we've just read in verse 10, those that are under the law, are under the full crushing weight of it, for they cannot keep it. And so Paul writes:

Galatians 3:11

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

That is, the law cannot help you, it can only leave you helpless. For the law can't acquit you, it can only condemn you. And thus there is no way out by keeping the law. And so if we're going to be saved, if our sin is going to be forgiven, if we're going to be justified (that is, just as if we had never sinned), then it has to be by some other route, and here Paul says that route has been clear all along, quoting from Habakkuk 2:4, which says *the just shall live by faith*.

And this verse changes everything. Indeed, it literally changed the course of history, for Martin Luther, wracked with guilt over his sin, often beating himself, came to realise that his hope wasn't found in works the works he had done, but through faith in what Christ had done. And this realisation sparked the reformation that shaped our country and much of the world as we know it.

So important is this verse that Paul quotes it here in Galatians, as well as Romans chapter 1, as does the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 10 (which is one of the reasons I believe Paul authored that letter too). For, you see, in just a few words, this verse makes clear the difference between *religion*, and *relationship*. For religion says *do*. Do this, do that. But Christianity, the gospel, says *done*.

That is, you don't need to keep a set of rules in order to enter Heaven. You don't need to serve God in order to be forgiven. And you don't need to spend time reading your Bible and in prayer, in order to be justified. But, you might wonder then, does that mean that I don't have to do those things at all. Well, that's the wrong attitude. For we don't view those things as things we *have* to do, but things that we *get* to do. Rather than dragging our feet that we have to serve God, we walk along with click in our heels that we *get* to serve God. What a privilege! We don't yawn at the thought of reading our Bibles, but look forward to doing so, for what a blessing it is to have God's Word to us in our hands, in our language, that we might know our glorious Saviour and His will for us more!

And now, Paul says; contrast that to the *law*:

Galatians 3:12

Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Quoting from Leviticus 18:5, Paul is saying; if you’re going to try and keep the law, you’re going to *need* to keep keeping it. It’s not just momentary. It’s not just “I think I can keep it today”. But keeping it when you are having a bad day. When it’s a Monday. When you’re had little sleep. When someone has treated you unkindly. When temptation is in front of you. If the law is your means of righteous standing, you’re going to have to keep it *all, all* the time.

But again, Christianity is not *do, do, do*. It is *done*. Indeed, our sin was paid for in full by Jesus on the cross, with Him exclaiming “It is finished”, which literally meant *paid in full*.

And so, the law and faith are two separate things, and you cannot be saved by both, in the same way that you cannot travel by plane and train at the same time. Yet, as we’ve seen, you cannot be saved by the law *at all*, for it doesn’t commend, it only condemns. Indeed, Paul wrote in Romans 7 “And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.”

And so where do we go? Well, we read on:

Galatians 3:13-14

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

So then, while we deserve the full, crushing weight the law to be laid on us for our sin, Jesus Himself became a curse for us, as Paul says, paying for our sin in our place, that rather than us be condemned by the law, we might be saved through faith. Not faith in merely anything, but as Paul wrote in chapter 2; *faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*.

Jesus literally stepped into our place, the innocent for the guilty, that the guilty might be seen as innocent — just as Paul would also write to the Corinthians, saying: “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” How? By faith. Just as God’s promise to Abraham was accepted through faith.

But, since the law came *after* the promise to Abraham, did it mean that God’s promise to him was effectively undone by the law of Moses? We’ll that’s what Paul addresses in the next few verses.

We read in verse 15:

Galatians 3:15

Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

In other words, Paul says “let me use an example you’re familiar with”, and that is, when you make a covenant, with someone, both parties have to abide by it — and they can’t change it at a later date.

And so he then writes:

Galatians 3:16

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

That is, the promise that God made to Abraham, that, in him — that is through him — all the nations would be blessed, wasn't about all of his descendants, speaking of all of the Jews, but rather the Seed — singular — which speaks of Christ. And he continues, writing:

Galatians 3:17-18

And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

In other words, the promise of God to Abraham was that all the nations would be blessed through Abraham's Seed, which was Jesus. But, if obtaining the promise of God was dependent on keeping the law of God, it would no longer be a promise.

So then, if the law cannot help us, and neither qualifies us for God's blessing, or nullifies God's grace, what's the point of it? Well, Paul now answers that, asking the direct question...

Galatians 3:19-20

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

The law, then, was not added to prevent sin, but because of it. You see, it was always wrong to murder, as we saw with Cain. It was always wrong to get drunk, as we saw with Noah. It was always wrong to worship idols, such as it was with Abraham's father, Terah. And it was always wrong to lie and deceive, as we saw with Jacob. So, sin is always sin, even without the law.

Let me give you an example. You walk into your lounge, and everything looks neat and tidy, everything looks clean as far as your eyes can tell. And then you pull the curtains to reveal the morning sunshine, and what do you see? Dust. Dust in the air. Dust on the coffee table. Dust on the TV screen. Did the sunlight create the dust? No, the sunlight *revealed* the dust. And that's what the law of God does in our lives — it exposes sin for what it is, that, as Paul says in Romans 7, it might be seen as exceedingly sinful.

And where does that leave us? In need of a Saviour, as we shall see. And that's why Paul is saying that the law was added until the Seed should come.

Now, since the law doesn't commend, but rather condemns us, Paul asks another question:

Galatians 3:21

Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

He says then, *look at how good, and righteous, and holy the law is. For if we actually kept it, this world would be a wonderful place! We would be living rightly! We would be a righteous people.*

But the problem is, none of us have kept it. As Psalms 14 and 53 say, and Romans 3 quotes, there is none who does good.

Galatians 3:22

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

That is, the law gives us no place to hide. I'm sure you're aware how cockroaches scuttle away when the light is turned on, finding a darker place to hide out. Well, the law doesn't afford us the luxury of a place to hide. So extensive is the law, so Holy is our God, that there is no room for manoeuvre — indeed, the 10 Commandments are aimed at us like 10 cannons ready to fire, as Spurgeon described it. And since even our thoughts are known to God, and as we've already read, God holds us accountable for them, we are indeed condemned by the law.

And the purpose of this is, we read, *that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe*. So, how does this work? Well, simply put, if we don't know we are sinners, if we don't understand our guilt before God, we will never run to a Saviour. And this is a point that the church at large has gotten very, very wrong, especially in the last 100 years or so.

For more and more, pastors, preachers, teachers, and Christians as a whole, have resorted to man made efforts to try and *attract* fish into the net, rather than use the law to *drive* them there. *Drive* them there? Doesn't that seem a bit extreme? Well, look at what some of the old preachers said... first, Charles Finney said:

It is of great important that the sinner should be made to feel his guilt, and not left to the impression that he is unfortunate. Do not be afraid, but show him the breadth of the divine law, and the exceeding strictness of its precepts. Make him see how it condemns his thoughts and life.

Charles Finney

While Charles Spurgeon said:

They must be slain by the law, before they can be made alive by the Gospel!

Charles Spurgeon

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, said:

Before I can preach love, mercy, and grace, I must preach sin, Law and judgement

John Wesley

Why did they say such things? Because trying to attract people to Christ based on benefits is not Biblical. In fact, it is dangerous, for it produces the kind of hearer that Jesus spoke of in the parable of the sower, who receive the Word with joy, but then the trials and difficulties of this life spring up and choke the word.

Let me give you an example. Imagine you are sitting on a plane, and along comes a polite air steward or stewardess, and says "Sir/Madam, I'd like you to put on this parachute because it's going to improve your flight". You look at them a bit sceptical at first, but ultimately decide you'll give this parachute a go. And what happens? You find it awkward to sit in your seat. In fact you're uncomfortable. Then you notice the other passengers are laughing at you because you're wearing a parachute to make your flight nicer, and as time goes on you begin to grow resentful to the parachute for it is not doing what you were promised it would. And you stand up and throw it to the ground and mutter "it'll be a long time before I try one of those again".

Now, let me paint a different picture. You're sitting on a plane, and along comes a polite air steward or stewardess, and says "Sir/Madam, I'd like you to put on this parachute because there's a problem with the plane, and any minute you're going to need to jump out of the plane at 10'000 feet, and if you're not wearing the parachute, you'll die." Your response? "Give it to me!". Now, as the flight continues, you don't notice the weight of it on your back, you don't mind that it's harder to sit in your chair. And you don't even care if the other passengers laugh at you, because you're clinging to that parachute for your life. Furthermore, if another steward comes along and, in the process of offering you a drink, spills boiling hot coffee over you, you might be in pain, you might jump up from your seat. But what you don't do is throw the parachute to the ground and exclaim "stupid parachute, didn't improve my flight at all!".

You see, the explanation given makes all the difference. And so it does with the gospel. For if someone is promised that coming to Jesus will give them a life of love, joy, peace and everlasting happiness, they will not merely be bitterly disappointed when the promised trials, troubles and persecutions come, but they'll want nothing to do with the Saviour they thought was going to improve their life. But if, on the other hand, someone is shown the seriousness of their situation, that they have sinned horribly against God, that there is no way that they can pay for their own sin, and that if they stand on their own before God as their judge they will be guilty, then they will cling to the Saviour — not for a better life, but for Salvation. And even when the promised trials, troubles and persecution come, even when those around them laugh at them, they will not turn from their Saviour, for they didn't come to Him for a better life.

And that is the function of the law. For as we read in Psalm 19:7, the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. That is why we must not neglect it. For the law makes the good news make sense. Let me give you another example.

You've not long arrived home from work and put the kettle on, and there's a knock at the door. You open it to find that a Police officer is standing there. And he says "You owe a £10'000 speeding fine, but someone you don't know has paid it for you, and you're free to go". How do you react? You probably look around wondering if it's some sort of joke, before saying "What do you mean, I don't owe a £10'000 speeding fine". And you close the door rather confused.

But picture this, you've just got home from work and put the kettle on, and there's a knock at the door. And you open it to find that a Police officer is standing there. But he says to you "On your way to work this morning you drove through the centre of town doing 50mph, when there were 10 clear signs saying you must not exceed 10mph, because there was a blind children's convention taking place. He then proceeds to show you photo and video evidence, and tells you that there are also witnesses to confirm what you did. How do you feel? Guilty. He then goes on to say "What you did was very dangerous, and carries a £10'000 speeding fine." And the seriousness of the situation starts to sink in. But then he says "But at the last minute, someone you don't know stepped in to pay your fine for you. You are free to go, for justice has been done — the law has no more claim on you".

Again, the explanation of the law makes the good news make sense. And we ignore this not only at our own peril, but that of others. The most unloving thing we can do is *merely* tell someone that Jesus loves them and has a great plan for their life. While that's true, that's not the gospel. The gospel is that we were guilty before God, confined under sin by the law, with no room for manoeuvre — but that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The bad news of the law, makes the good news of Christ's death in our place make sense.

Paul continues here in his letter to the Galatians, writing:

Galatians 3:23

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

In other words, we were in real trouble, pinned down by the law with no hope in ourselves, that we might look to our Saviour when He was revealed to us. And so we read:

Galatians 3:24

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

As I've said before, the law could not help us, it could only reveal our sinful state. And the example I've previously shared, is that the law is like a mirror. For a mirror cannot wash you. That's an experiment you can try at home — try brushing your face against the mirror in your bathroom and see if it makes you clean! All a mirror can do is show you that you are dirty.

So let me say once more, as Paul has been saying time and again in this letter — you cannot be saved by keeping the law. You need something that can actually make you clean. And when it comes to your sin, the only thing that can cover your sin is the blood of Jesus Christ that He shed for you.

But that great news only makes sense in light of the law. That's why the law was our schoolmaster or tutor to bring us to Christ. In fact, the Greek word behind this is `paidagogos` which refers to the culture of the time, where a servant was designated to care for the children, taking them to school and so on, until the time that they were old enough to become legal sons.

And now that we are *God's* children through faith in Christ, the law has no more demand on us. And so Paul writes next:

Galatians 3:25

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

In other words, the law can only chase a man to Calvary, no further. And indeed the purpose of the law is to chase a man there, showing him that he has nowhere else to flee. But with Christ as his Saviour, the law can chase no more — for all his sin (past, present and future) was paid for in full by Jesus death on the cross in his place. What tremendous news!!

Now, as Paul rounds out this chapter, he says:

Galatians 3:26

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

That is, having accepted Christ as your Saviour, you are now sons of God. Your relationship to Him has changed. And oh what wonderful benefits there are to being a child of God! These are truly things to get excited about. But they are the consequence of our salvation, not the carrot we dangle to others to try and entice them to Christ.

And Paul continues:

Galatians 3:27

For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

So then, he says, having identified yourself with Christ's death and resurrection in your place, you have put on Christ. That is, through what God has done, you've taken on His character, His traits, His likeness. That as Paul wrote in the prior chapter, you can indeed say "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

And in he concludes by saying:

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

What he is saying, is that this levels the playing field. No-one can boast how good they were, how perfectly they kept God's law. Without Jesus, each one of us would be doomed. We would have no hope. The focus is shifted entirely from us, to Christ. In fact, our efforts are out of the picture. We're not even in the background at this stage. It is all about Him. What He has done. Such amazing grace. And this is a direct comparison to the prayer a Jewish man at that time would typically pray each morning, saying "I thank You, God, that I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." And so referring to this proud Jewish prayer, Paul says, "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female. All those barriers are broken down. You're all one in Christ."

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

That is, if you have approached Christ in faith — then you will be seen as righteous as he was seen as righteous, not because of works, but because of faith. Faith in what God has done, not in what you have done.

Application questions

Now, let me come to a stop here. There's three questions I urge you to consider today:

- Are you trying to earn God's grace through works?
- Have you ever approached God in faith, not for a happy life, but for Salvation?
- Are you sharing the gospel faithfully? Are you sharing it accurately?

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