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The Mission
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Galatians 3:1-25

Turn to chapter 3 and I'm going to read verses 1-25.

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? 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? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

5 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?— 6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 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.” 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

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.” 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

13 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”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

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. 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. 17 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. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

19 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. 20 Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.

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. 22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in

Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Let's pray.

Many years ago, seven people died in the Chicago, Illinois, area from taking over-the-counter pain-relief medicine. The investigation that followed determined that somebody had laced the pills with poison, evidently while the bottles were sitting on the store shelves. The authorities were never able to solve the crime and they never found out who committed this crime. But it did lead to some very critical changes with the introduction of some new safety standards for packaging products.

And today, if you buy medicine—in fact, when you buy any number of products from the grocery store—you'll notice that they now have an extra covering of paper or plastic that you have to peel off to gain access. Even a jar of peanut butter has a paper covering.

Now, going back to that original crime, it was no doubt very tragic, but it was also very ironic in this particular case that a product, which was designed to relieve pain would result in multiple deaths. And it was all because somebody had added poison to the pills.

Well, as we set sail back into the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul is doing something very similar in that he's adding some extra protection to the gospel.

Now, like we learned in past lessons, there were a group of false teachers who were tampering with the truth of the gospel—and they were in

essence adding to it the deadly poison of legalism, by teaching, that works were essential for salvation.

And so in chapter 3, Paul is going to be busy protecting the gospel—and making sure that everyone knows that salvation is by grace alone and that it is received by faith; apart from works. And if you're looking for some real relief from your guilt and your pain of sin? Well, here it is.

Now, the first thing Paul does is remind the Galatians that they're on dangerous ground. He reminds them of their own personal experience when he writes this in **verse 1**, He says, **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?**

In other words, he is saying, “Don't be deceived. If keeping the law can get you into heaven, then Jesus died for nothing.”

And then Paul asks this question in **verse 2**. He says, **“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?”**

Well, the answer is obvious. They were saved and they were given new life in Christ by the Holy Spirit; and it had nothing in the world to do with how many commandments they had kept.

And then Paul asks another question in **verse 3**: He says, **“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”**

In other words, if keeping the commandments has nothing to do with salvation, then it has nothing to do with your spiritual growth or your sanctification either. You're not saved by keeping a list of rules, and you don't become mature or grow up in Christ by keeping a list of rules.

And then Paul illustrates this with the example of Abraham: He says in verse 6, **“Just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”**.

Abraham was justified, meaning he was declared righteous, or right with God, how? By believing the word of God when the Lord appeared to him back in Genesis 15. And so, Abraham was counted as righteous—or as being right with God—several hundred years before God ever gave Moses the law.

This is why Paul says in **verse 7, “7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.**

And what Paul means is that these Judaizers, or these Jewish false teachers—they wanted the church to adopt the law of Moses. And they were teaching also that Christians had to be connected to Abraham through ancestry, which meant that every Gentile believer would have to effectively identify as a Jewish person by obeying the Mosaic law and the men would have to submit to circumcision.

And so you can see how all this was literally adding poison to the gospel! They were trying to add the poison of legalism to the pain relief that the gospel had brought to those who had committed their lives to Christ.

And in verse 10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to show that those “who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.”

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.”

To gain heaven through the law, a person would have to live a perfect life. So in essence, people who are trying to live under the law and keep a

list of rules, are being poisoned, because it's impossible to do. If a person breaks just one law in their lifetime, they'll be condemned.

That's why Paul tells us in Romans that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous! No not even one save Jesus Christ. And we're all in need of someone to save us and that someone of course is Jesus.

So to try and follow the law with the hope that it will get you into heaven is to be effectively poisoned, because the law condemns anyone who does not keep it in its entirety. And this is why the law is a curse! It cannot and will not save you! It will only condemn you.

And then Paul quotes from the prophet Habakkuk, from chapter 2 and verse 4. And here in verse 11: He says, **“The righteous shall live by faith.”**

Now, this is one of the most important statements in all of the Bible. And the reason is because this is the pure and simple and untainted truth of the gospel. The righteous shall live by faith, because it's not our righteousness that we depend on to get us tom heaven. It's Christ righteousness. And when we receive the free gift of salvation by faith and through grace, it's the righteousness of Jesus in us that guarantees our acceptance into heaven.

When God looks at your heart or mine after we've been saved, He doesn't see our old dirty heart anymore. He sees the heart of Christ and the righteousness of Christ which is perfect and pure and without blemish. And so to go back and try and live by the law would be just plain foolish.

And then Paul adds this in verse 13, he says **13 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”).**

In other words, Jesus took the poison of sin upon Himself and died under the curse of sin, allowing us to receive the pure, relief-giving grace of salvation, again by faith and faith alone.

And then in verse 14, Paul gives us a promise

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And what he's saying is that both Jews and Gentiles get saved the same way. They both get saved and receive the Holy Spirit the same way, which is by faith alone, in Christ alone. No one can earn it, no one can attain it by works, and no-one can maintain it by the way they live. It's all Christ who lives in us and through us.

And then in verse 15 and following, Paul explains that the original promise to Abraham—which we call the “Abrahamic covenant” has not and cannot be added to or erased.

It was God's unconditional promise to Abraham and his offspring. And when he refers to Abraham's spiritual offspring—he's referring to those who come to God by faith alone. They're the ones who will share in the spiritual blessings of the covenant.

Mankind might try to tamper with it, and change it and add to it, but God has sealed it with this promise.

Now, if this is all true and it is of course, Paul knows that people are going to be asking the question, Then what good was the law or what good is the law? If the law cannot provide salvation, then what is the purpose of the law of Moses? And that's a legitimate question.

And so Paul in verse 19 asks and answers that question.

He says, 19 So what purpose then does the law serve?

He says, It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (and who is the seed? It's Christ) till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

In other words, the law was given to restrain sin—and to punish lawbreakers and transgressors. And the law does that. If people follow the law, even because they'll be punished if they don't, then that restrains sin. Right?

Paul also tells us that the law reveals the sin in us and he reminds reminds us, that we are all transgressors of the law. And remember, we're not sinners because we sin. We're not innocent when we're born and then become a sinner because we commit a sin. We're born guilty. We're born sinners and so we sin because sinners. We don't become sinners because we sin.

Have you ever stolen a piece of candy from a grocery store? Have you ever told your parents, or your teachers a lie? Well, according to the law, that makes you a thief and a liar. But you're not a thief and liar because you stole something or because you lied. You stole and you lied because you were born a thief and a liar. That was your inherited nature when you were born. And so we're all transgressors of the law from the start. And the law that I've broken can't possibly save me; it can only be used to point out my sin and then condemn me. The law just shows me that I'm sinner.

And so, Paul explains; that the purpose of the law was to show people, and especially Israel here in this context, that their sin was revealed by the law. And that they needed a Savior.

And then in verse 24, Paul describes the law as a **“tutor; your translation may say guardian, until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith”**.

In other words, the law could not redeem life, but it could regulate life. And that word here for “tutor or guardian” was a reference to a schoolteacher back in Paul’s day. The law kept writing on the chalkboard, so to speak, the word “guilty”. The law kept teaching mankind that we’re sinners, but that a Savior is coming.

Paul told us that back in verse 19, when he said, **till the Seed should come**. In other words, the law was never meant to be permanent. The law was given by God to Moses as a temporary means to control sin until Jesus would come.

But now, how do Christians today relate to the law? For people who have believed in Christ; how does the law relate to us today?

Well, Paul answers that in verse 25 and this is very important to remember. He says, **“25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. And again your Bible may say guardian.**

He’s saying that the law has served its main purpose by revealing to us our guilt and thereby encouraged us to repent and to trust in Christ for our salvation. And so we’re not under the law.

And through faith in Christ, we’re free from the curse of the law, and the condemnation of the law, but we’re also free from the power of sin. For when we received Christ and committed our lives to Him, we were not only declared righteous, but we were also empowered to live the Christian life by the Holy Spirit!

And how does that occur?

Through God’s Word! It always comes back to God’s word!

Now, that doesn't mean we can act anyway we want to act and break the law at will; and steal and kill and do whatever we want to do. There are still consequences to breaking the law. And though we continue to do it, and we continue to sin, we have an advocate in Jesus who still covers our sin and will continually forgive us our sin when we confess our sins.

And so the law is a constant reminder that we still sin and that we will always rely upon the blood of Christ to continually cleanse us from our sin.

1 John 1:7, But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

We're saved through faith in Christ; but every single day, we depend upon His sacrifice on the cross, which gives us the assurance that we are no longer condemned.

And we need to be very careful not to add anything to that message. And not to poison the purity of the gospel, which is and will always be by grace through faith in Christ alone. Amen!