

## Galatians 3:10-26

Hey, welcome to the church at the beach. What a beautiful morning we have – I don't know about you, but I'm certain I have friends that are shoveling snow this weekend, and I'm guessing you do to.

For the last few weeks, or about 2 months, we've been working through the book of Galatians. And the overarching theme of the entire book, is that Christians, if you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus, Christians are saved by grace alone, through faith in Christ alone. That salvation is a gift from God, and isn't based on how good you are, or how awesome you think you are – it is a gift of God's grace to us.

But people don't like that. We like rules to follow, lists to keep, comparisons with others to make ourselves feel better. Not just us, but back in Paul's day too – they liked the rules. And there were these teachers that crept into these 4 churches teaching that faith isn't enough – teaching that they had to follow all of the laws of God and take the ceremonial sign of Judaism in order to be forgiven.

So Paul writes this letter – and where we left off last week was this comparison of the Law of God and the Promise of the Gospel. And really trying to understand the purpose of the Law – because we know that the Law is from God, and that God is good and unchanging – so how does the Law of God fit with the Promise of the Gospel. That's what we're looking at this morning. If you have a bible or device, go ahead and turn to Galatians 3. I'm going to read 19-26

### READ Galatians 3:19-26

<sup>19</sup> Why, then, was the law given? It was added for the sake of transgressions<sup>[a]</sup> until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. The law was put into effect through angels by means of a mediator. <sup>20</sup> Now a mediator is not just for one person alone, but God is one. <sup>21</sup> Is the law therefore contrary to God's promises? Absolutely not! For if the law had been granted with the ability to give life, then righteousness would certainly be on the basis of the law.

<sup>22</sup> But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin's power,<sup>[a]</sup> so that the promise might be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe. <sup>23</sup> Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. <sup>24</sup> The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, <sup>26</sup> for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.

### I. The Opening Question

That's what Paul asks, rhetorically, in V19: "Why then, was the law given?"

And then later he asks another question in V21 "Is the law contrary to God's promises?"

These are huge questions in a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish context, and in the 1<sup>st</sup> century church – but these are huge for us today too.

Why was the law given? For the sake of transgressions. Without the law, we wouldn't see our need for God's grace. In Protestant/Reformed traditions, we talk about the 3 uses of the law today. Some of you may have heard me talk about these before. The first use of the law of God, think the 10 commandments here, the 1<sup>st</sup> use is to serve as a mirror that reveals the absolute holiness of God and the sinfulness of our own hearts. This is what Paul is getting at when he writes that it was added for the sake of transgressions. The law points us to

our desperate need for God's mercy and grace and forgiveness → said another way the Law points us to our need for the Promise of the Gospel.

Now, think about it this way. Who here has ever taken a test at school? Right. All of us have. Every one of us has taken a test at school. Most of the kids will have tests this week and next at the end of a grading period, right? Now, how did you know if you did well on the test? How do you know what a good score is? 2 things. You've got the answer key, and the grading scale. I took a class once where a low 70-something was still an A. This teacher had a different grading scale than the rest. And without the scale, you don't really know where you stand, right?

Well, think about the law of God like the answer key and the grading scale combined. The first use of the law – we see the absolute holiness of God (the answer key) and the wickedness of our own hearts (the grading scale). Unlike my economics professor at Clemson, a 70-something isn't an A.

Some of you know I love sports. Just about all sports (save soccer and hockey). Understanding how things get evaluated is huge to understanding sports. In baseball – if you get a hit 1 out of 3 times – you'll make the hall of fame. In fact, the highest career batting average is Ty Cobb, and he hit .366. BUT...if you play basketball, unless your name is Shaquille O'Neal, if you make 1 out of 3 free throws, you'll never make the team.

The law, like an answer key and grading scale, should show us how desperately we need God's grace and mercy. The law should point us to our need for Jesus and the promise of the Gospel. Because the bad news has to come first, then we can start to see how good the good news really is. When I'm sharing Jesus with people, and especially with kids – I always want to know that whoever it is, has a real understanding of sin. Because it is through the LAW that we see the beauty of the promise, and our great need for it.

And until we see ourselves like God sees us, we'll never really see the beauty of the promise.

## **II. The next Questions – Is the law contrary to the promise?**

Re-read V21

The answer here is a resounding NO. You could translate the question – is the law “against” the promise. Because we know from God's character revealed through this Word, and affirmed in our own experience that God is good. That God is unchanging. That His ways are perfect and True. And since the law came from God, and the promise is from God, we know that the law can't be against the promise. But it was inferior – because none of us can hit the standards. There is no 2<sup>nd</sup> way, or 3<sup>rd</sup> way, or whatever. Life can only be found through the promise of Jesus.

## **III. Previously Imprisoned**

In V23 Paul writes that before this faith came we were confined and imprisoned. The picture here is military in nature – think about locking up your house at night to keep the bad guys out and all the crazy kids in. That's what the law did – it imprisoned – prior to the coming of Jesus, and prior to our belief in Him.

And it's only as we see ourselves imprisoned that we see the value of the promise. I've never been arrested before. Never had a jail or prison ministry either. Only seen movies, and cop shows (lots of cop shows). Probably like 28 different layers to the security, to keep whoever is there locked up. The law, without the promise, keeps us locked up. Just like that. Because we can't obey it.

When we see ourselves locked up like this – we see the incredible value of the promise.

And as we see Jesus for who he is, as we see our sin for what it is, we turn to Him and live, we are free as sons, through faith.

#### **IV. Free as Sons through Faith in Jesus**

Faith in Jesus – brings us into God’s family. We are no longer imprisoned, or under a guardian. Instead we are free as sons.

The beauty of the Gospel, that while we were in wild rebellion against God’s law, God sent Jesus to fulfill the law’s requirements for us, to die and take on the curse of the law for us, and to defeat death on the third day. Offering life to all who would believe – freedom as His son!. What an incredible gift. What an incredible promise. The promise of the Gospel.

**CLOSING – Tie this into Christmas – The greatest gift ever given.**