

Galatians ch 3 vs 15-29

This morning we're going to be taking a look at the 2nd 1/2 of Gal ch 3, there's so much there in the 1st half that we could probably spend our entire time going back over it and gleaning from the richness of Gods word out of just those 14 short vs. Where Paul has just been making such a conclusive argument against righteousness by the works of the law, or works of the flesh, things that we can do in and through our own efforts to obtain a righteous standing before God. It can't be done, you receive a righteous standing before God by only 1 means and that means is by faith in His Son Jesus Christ trusting in the finished work of the cross.

There's nothing that you or I can do to perfect that work and to try and do so is only to take away from the reality of what it is that Jesus did by taking our place and suffering the penalty of our sin. and Shedding His blood that we might be washed clean before God (the atonement for our souls being found in His blood) and we say by trying to merit righteousness before God that what Jesus did just wasn't quite enough for us.

Paul has been tearing down that mind set, with the position of how did you receive Jesus Christ into your life, how was it that the Holy Spirit took up residence in your heart? Was it when you did some series of good deeds and God finally acknowledged that you were a worthy player to have on His team? Or was it when you realized that you were a sinner and there wasn't anything that you could do to change that and having heard that it didn't matter where you had been or what you had done God loved you. and Wanted to give you a new life and a hope and a reason worth living, that you just opened up your heart and believed on Jesus Christ saying God if your willing to take me just as I am, then I'm willing to give my self to you.

Now is that an act of legalism or faith; is that beginning by works or by the Spirit? and So having begun in the Spirit, having received a perfect and righteous standing before God by means of the Spirit, are you now going to perfect that work by some work of the flesh. That's a no brainer type of a question, your sinful nature can't improve on the work of the Holy Spirit, to the contrary it wars against it. and Paul is in ch 3 taking them all the way back to the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis and illustrating to them how even the great patriarch, Abraham himself who received the promise of God didn't merit it through legalism but by faith. and As he *simply believed* on God, God accounted that belief as righteousness to him 430 years before the law was ever given.

God is the same yesterday today and forever Mal 3:6 “*I am the LORD, I do not change.*” and So if God merited righteousness to one’s account by faith from the beginning then the law didn’t change that. To the contrary the law brought a curse, because if you didn’t keep everything in the book of the law even according to the intention of the heart, (which no one can) then you were brought under the curse of the law which is death. So in that all of mankind has been brought under the curse and that’s why Jesus came, to redeem us of the curse becoming a curse for us. The innocent dying for the guilty, the just for the unjust, innocent blood making atonement for the guilty, so that the blessing of Ab might come upon us by faith in Jesus Christ because those who are of faith are sons of Ab, it has nothing to do with ethnic background, it has everything to do with faith. and Even those with a proper understanding of the heart of God in the O.T understood this principal, we read in Habakkuk 2:4 “*the just shall live by faith.*” and So we read in vs 15

Vs15

Paul is here still trying to drive home the principal fact that once a contract or in this case of covenant has been made binding, that’s exactly what it is, binding and there’s nothing anyone can do about it. and It doesn’t matter what gets stated later or how much time goes by that covenant still stands. Those of you that are making house payments on a 30yr note, try going to the bank and saying well we’ve decided that instead of paying the agreed \$500 a month or whatever for the agreed 30 yrs that we’re going to pay \$50 a month for the next 3 months and then we’ll call it good and see how it works out. You can’t do that, you don’t have the authority to alter the contract and that’s the type of illustration that Paul is drawing here, that’s why he says *I speak in the manner of men.* He’s using a human example and though it’s only a mans covenant, once it’s ratified there’s nothing anyone can do to change that. and If that’s the way it works amongst men (you see) how much more is God going to honor a covenant that He enters into, which He did with Ab by means of the promise.

Vs16

Paul says here that to Ab and his Seed were the *promises* made, and the promise is of major importance and significance to Paul at this point, the word promise is brought up 8 times in vs 14-29 alone. and He’s seeking to emphasize the fact that the law can not annul the promise that was promised by God to Ab and his Seed and Paul again emphasizes the word *Seed*, making sure that there’s no confusion as to where the blessing is found. It’s not in the seeds of Ab, which would be the Jewish nation, but it’s found in the Seed of Ab, a direct inference to Jesus Christ In other words when God promised to Ab that *in your Seed all the nations shall be blessed*, He wasn’t saying that all the world was going to be blessed through the Jewish nation, He was saying that all the world would be blessed through Jesus Christ

You see, now to Ab and his Seed were the promises made, and when God speaks or commits Himself, makes a promise and enters into a covenant or an agreement, it's settled He's going to do it. Num 23:19 *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"* Ezek 12:25 *"For I am the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass."*

God keeps His word, in Gen ch 22 when He swears to Ab you find that He swears by Himself or by His own Name because there is nothing higher than Himself for God to swear by. and Yet we read in Ps 138:2 *"You have magnified Your word above all Your name."* Point being that God will keep His word and as you study the covenant that God made with Ab you find that in reality it was all based upon God's commitment to keep His word to Ab. and It didn't even include Ab outside of his simple trust and belief in God to do His part that He had committed to. and You can read of the ratifying of that covenant in Gen ch 15, but before you do you need to be aware of the way that covenants were ratified in that day. What they would do is when 2 parties entered into an agreement that they wanted to make legal and binding is they would take a heifer or a goat or a ram and they would cut them in two. and Then each party would walk through the middle of the bloody mess and they were in essence meeting in the middle signifying that if you do your part I'll do mine we'll meet ½ way and we're "dead serious" about this issue and it's bonded by blood, signed in blood (if you're willing).

So as you come to Gen ch 15 you find God promising to make his descendants as the sand of the sea shore, promising to bless Ab. and Ab said I believe You, but how am I going to know that these things will come to pass, basically saying God can we put this in writing? God had Ab take a heifer and a goat and a ram and a couple of birds, and each of the animals he cut in two, right down the middle, and he waited on God to show up to confirm the covenant. and He waited, and waited, eventually these vultures showed up and he shewed them off and he began to get tired and, his head began to bob, then he began to slump and then he fell into a deep sleep right as the sun started going down.

Then right as the sun went down, God showed up and Ab was sleeping and God passed through the animals alone, going all the way by Himself, what does that mean? It means that God knows the weakness of human flesh and the fact that man can't keep his word unconditionally with out ever faltering. So this covenant that God made with Ab wasn't dependent upon Abraham's contribution, doing his part, meeting God ½ way, if you do your part I'll do Mine.

It had nothing to do with Ab's faithfulness to God, it had everything to do with God's faithfulness to Ab. and That's still the way God operates today. God never asked you to be a promise maker, He asked you to be a promise taker and there's a big difference, your salvation, and the blessings of God being poured out upon your life are not conditional, they're not based upon some work that you have to do to merit them. It's not about your faithfulness to God, it's about His faithfulness to you, as you simply believe in Jesus Christ even as Ab believed and it was accounted to him as righteousness.

We could go through and point out several promises that were made to you through Ab (but for times sake we won't) but I encourage you to sometime do a study on promises that have been given to you by the word of God, there are literally thousands. and Know that they're not acquired by some work that you do as if they are God's reward for good behavior. They come to you by being the offspring of Ab (and how are you the offspring of Ab) by being found in the person of Jesus Christ by faith, the promises were given to Ab and his Seed, which includes you if you're in Christ.

Vs17

In other words law or no law, the promise stands, the promise was made irrespective of the law and at that the law was given 430 yrs later. Actually if you do your math you find that it was more like 645 yrs later but the covenant was last confirmed to Ab via Jacob 430 yrs prior to the law in Gen 46 vs 1-4. and If now the law is the means by which man relates to God and obtains favor from God, other than by simple faith and belief, then the promises made to Ab 430 earlier are now rendered void and of no effect. God in essence would be going back on His word, and we've just spent all this time developing the fact that God in no way ever goes back on His word. Therefore it's impossible that the law should annul the promise and that man should be imputed righteousness and favor with God by means of the law. Because that would cancel out the promise and make it of no significance or as Paul says, "*of no effect.*"

Vs18

I like this because sometimes I feel like I repeat myself over and over, but here that's more or less what Paul is doing, he's just re-emphasizing his point. If you could inherit the riches of God, or be heirs of the blessing and the kingdom of God through law performance, Then God's work in men's lives would no longer be of promise, which would mean that His promise would be meaningless and wasted. If the inheritance was of the law, Paul repeats this same basic concept again in Rom 4:13-14 where he says, "*For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect.*"

It's not that Paul is denying the validity of the law, but he is saying that the law doesn't merit righteousness or salvation. So then the question comes up what's the point of the law, if the law can't bring righteousness, if it's not to make you right in the sight of God, then why even have it?

Vs19-20

Now there's quite a little bit represented here, and the 1st thing that we want to take note of that is a key in understanding the purpose of the law as it regards or relates to the promise is that little word in vs 19 "added". The law was an addition not a substitute, it was basically a supplement to the promise in order to make clear man's dependence upon, and need for, the promise. and It was added because of, or for the sake of transgressions, listen, let me make this clear, the law was given to *reveal* sin, not to *remove* sin and it's important that you understand that. The law was given, not to take away sin, it was given to show us our need for a Savior, it was added so that we might see how wretched we truly are when placed under the scrutiny and in the light of a holy and righteous God. and If this is the way that my heart needs to be perpetually in order to be right with God, and the slightest blemish at any point in my heart damns me forever then I'm with out hope, and I need someone who can bridge the gap for me. The law was meant to show us that reality and to make us aware of our sinful state before God.

Paul said that before the law said you shall not covet, he didn't know that covetousness was a sin, so the law exposed the sin in Paul's life, now it was sin before the law said it, he just didn't know it. Rom 3:19-20 *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

So the law exposes us as sinners, as we look into the perfect and holy law of God and we see the righteous standards of God what's reflected back to us is our sinful and desperate condition before God. Because Ezek 18:20 tells us that *"The soul who sins shall die"* You see there's a common mis-conception that we become sinners upon the moment we sin. But that's not true, the fact that you sin only proves that you were a sinner in the 1st place, you were a sinner from the moment of conception and the fact you stuck your hand in the cookie jar after you were told not to didn't make you a sinner. It just confirmed the fact that you already were.

The law was meant to bring us to this point of recognizing that so that we would see our need (notice vs 19) *till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made*. That little word “till” is another key, it means that the law was meant to be a temporary means of supervision until the Seed (Jesus Christ) had come or been incarnated to take away the sins of the world by the shedding of His blood. and We’ll speak more on that in just a minute, but the law was never meant to be a permanent means by which we were to relate to God. It was more or less a baby sitter, keeping us in check until Jesus Christ should come that we might be justified, not by the law but by faith, the law just shows us our need for a Savior.

Then we read another interesting little note in vs 19 concerning the law which wasn’t really brought to light in the O.T and that’s that the law was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator, that obviously being Moses. But we read here of the fact that the law was dictated to Moses from the Lord by means of the angels. Now certainly God spoke openly to Moses, we know that, but apparently the law itself was dictated by means of the angels. We read the same thing in Acts 7:53 when Stephen is addressing the council there in Jerusalem and he speaks of their fathers who stoned the prophets and murdered Jesus Christ and he speaks of them as those, *“who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”* and Again we read in Heb 2:2-3 *“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, (speaking of disobedience to the law) how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.”*

The reason Paul points out here the means of angelic hosts dictating the law is for the simple fact that even in that it proves to be of lessor character. 1st of all it was temporary, it was added *until* the Seed should come, we read in Rom 10:4, *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”* So how could a temporary law be greater than a permanent covenant. and Then 2^{ndly} it was given to the people basically in 3rd person, it went from God, to the angels, to Moses, to the people, it came in a less direct manner. But where the promise was concerned there was no mediator it came straight from God to Abraham.

Vs21

The law and promises don't contradict each other, God never said that righteousness came through the law, if anything they compliment each other, the law showing the necessity of the promise. The law is not an alternate route to righteousness, and we don't have time to get into it but you remember that's what vs 21 of ch 2 emphasized. (Read) If there was any other way by which we as sinful man could've obtained righteousness in the sight of God other than Jesus Christ shedding His blood, then His death was pointless and righteousness would've been by law and then the law and the promise would've contradicted each other.

Vs22

The Scripture (or the law, which is the scripture that Paul is in reference to in this particular context) has confined or you might even say has locked them up in prison. The law has imprisoned mankind in the guilt of sin, the law makes every man guilty of sin in the sight of God and it holds them there, it confines them there. They're trapped, unless they accept God's one and only out, there's only 1 way out of the confinement that we're brought into under the law, 1 door and Jesus said, *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved."* Apart from receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior you're condemned under the curse of the law, but Christ has redeemed us from the curse and I'd refer you right back to vs 13 and last weeks bible study.

Again the law was given to reveal sin, not remove it; the law is like a mirror, it can only reflect our wretched and filthy condition before God. But as you look into a mirror, it can only point you to the need for a washing, it can't cleanse you itself, how many of you have ever washed your face with a mirror. and Yet so many people try and present themselves clean before God by the means of the law, and all it does is reflect our filth. It's interesting how Satan would have us seek to prove ourselves holy by the means that God has intended to show us in our sin.

But it's the blood of Jesus Christ that acts as our wash basin, forgive me if the example seems weak, but the law is like your bathroom mirror, exposing your dirt in the light. and Jesus Christ is like the wash basin that cleanses you and makes you spotless. and We receive that washing by faith, but notice Paul further explains now in vs 23 the purpose of the law.

Vs23

You see the law never liberated anyone, it keeps us under guard, it keeps you in check, it exposes the wickedness of the human heart and shows us our need for a Savior.

Vs24-25

So the law was meant to be a temporary means showing us our need for a Savior and pointing us to Jesus Christ and this word tutor or schoolmaster doesn't mean teacher. It's the word that was used for a slave that would basically raise a child up to a certain point, making sure he acted appropriate, watching out over him, but he wasn't his teacher, his role was to take the child to school so that the teacher could instruct him. Paul is saying that that's the laws relationship to mankind, it watch's out over us, keeps us in check, but it doesn't provide a means of salvation, it only leads us or points us to the Savior. and Once that work is accomplished, it's done all that it can do for us.

Vs26-27

Just for the record I'm not convinced this is in regards to water baptism, we've already established the fact that that particular work of the flesh has no part in our salvation. It's the Holy Spirit that baptizes us into Christ. 1 Cor 12:13 *"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."*

Vs28

God has no personal favorites in Christ we are all co-equals in Christ, Him becoming the common denominator by which we all relate to God on an equal basis through Jesus Christ His ear is not turned more to the man, nor is it turned more to the woman and there's only one race the human race. So we're all on equal grounds before God in Christ, it doesn't matter if you're Chuck Smith or Billy Graham we all approach God through the same means that being the person of His son.

Vs29

The promise of the eternal inheritance and riches of God is Found in the Seed of Ab Jesus Christ and if you're in Christ, then you're the seed of Ab as we read in vs 7 *"only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."* and If you are the seed of Ab then you're an heir according to the promise.