

Galatians 3:15-29 | Dave Stough

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[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. We are in Galatians chapter 3. We're doing the last half of the chapter, verse 15 to the end.

So if you got your Bible or your phone, whatever you're using, turn there and get that ready. We'll read it in just a few moments. I just want to say I'm glad to see everybody today.

It seems like it's getting crazy out in that world, doesn't it? I don't take a day for granted anymore. I just feel like the rapture is so soon. And I know we should probably have been feeling that way for years and years, but I guess especially more so now.

If you were diagnosed with a serious condition when you were seeing your doctor, you wouldn't want the doctor to skirt around the truth.

In order to not hurt your feelings, right? You need the truth so that you can be made well. In much the same way, the gospel of Jesus Christ will first hurt someone who's not a believer.

[1 : 15] It'll be kind of a wake up. Because the gospel is offensive. Just like a patient needs to hear accurately what the doctor has to say, so too the gospel needs to be presented accurately.

So those who are perishing may have life. The truth is that Christ died for the ungodly. When that truth is believed, it gives life.

Truth always brings life. Lies always bring forth death. Now, Satan is always busy behind the scenes trying to destroy the truth of the gospel.

We've talked about this a lot in recent weeks. Jesus said in John chapter 8, When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources.

For he is a liar and the father of all lies. Now, please take note that these were religious people that Jesus was talking to.

[2 : 50] The Pharisees held the traditions of man higher than the word of God. They were deceived and they were deceiving people. Jesus called them blind guides and sons of hell.

Satan's a sneaky snake waiting to strike. He's a master deceiver. He would destroy the church if possible. We know from Matthew 16 he can't.

But he would if he could with lies. What better way is there to destroy the church than to deceive the people who are in the church to present something that sounds like the gospel but is not the gospel?

Satan. Lies bring death. At the risk of sounding a little redundant to those hearing previous sermons here in the last several weeks, I need to set the context for today's chapter.

The religious people in Paul's time that were teaching a false gospel were called the Judaizers.

Those were a group of people who lived under the law before Christ came.

[4 : 12] And when Christ came, at some point they believed in him as the Messiah. Or at least they said they believed in him as the Messiah. Whether they did or not is not the issue here in Galatians.

It's what they preached is the issue. They preached that believers in Christ had to put themselves under the law in addition to believing in Christ in order to be saved.

This situation evoked some strong language as you've heard in the last several weeks as you've read in chapter 1. In chapter 1, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, wrote these words.

That is, if anyone, even an angel, tells you how you can be saved from your sin in a way different other than Jesus told the apostles in the church, let that person be devoted to destruction by God.

Heavy language. So, in chapter 3, Paul's going through different arguments, we call them different presentations on why you can't add the law to grace.

[5 : 40] And in chapter 3, he goes to work explaining how the law of God and faith in Christ are at odds with one another when it comes to being justified before God.

In verse 11 of chapter 3, he says, Clearly, no one who relies on the law is justified before God because the righteous shall live by faith.

Now, I like to define our terms. I know for some of you this is review, but it's important that we're all on the same page here. What does it mean to be justified?

Biblically speaking, to be justified means to be declared righteous by God. To have the sin issue in your life dealt with His way so that you know that you are eternally right with Him.

So, let's read that verse again. Clearly, no one who relies on the law is declared righteous by God because those who are declared righteous by God live by faith.

[6 : 54] God's Word declares that His law and His promises, which require faith, are good and right because they both come from Him. However, His Word also shows us that the law of God and the promises of God have different purposes when it comes to being justified before Him.

The law was given to obey and has conditions attached to it. The promise was given to believe in and is unconditional.

So, there's this tension between law and promise when it comes to having our sin issue dealt with. We each have a sin issue, right? Can I get an amen on that?

No, I know I don't like to admit it either. But, this tension is illustrated well for us in Galatians 3. The tension between law and promise.

Paul goes over the covenant that God gave the law through Moses and then he goes over the covenant, the promise God made with Abraham. Let's go ahead and read Galatians 3, chapter 3, verse 15 to the end.

[8 : 11] Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can cancel or add to a man-made contract that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

Now, to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made. He does not say, and to his seeds, meaning many people, but he says, and to your seed, meaning one person, who is Christ.

And what I mean is this, the law which came 430 years later does not do away with the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise. But God gave it in grace to Abraham by a promise.

So then, for what purpose was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people the extent of their sinfulness and was designed to last only until the seed to whom the promise referred came.

[9 : 23] God gave his law through angels to Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people. A mediator is for more than one party, but God, who is one, did not use a mediator when he gave the promise to Abraham.

Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not. For if there could have been a law which gave men spiritual life, then the law would have produced righteousness.

But the scripture declares that we are all prisoners of sin so that what was promised would be given to those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Before the coming of this faith, we were all imprisoned under the power of the law until the coming faith would be revealed.

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

Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all that were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

[10 : 40] There's neither Jew or Gentile, slave nor free, nor is there male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and an heir's according to the promise.

Wow, that's chuck full of meat to chew on, isn't it? There's a lot in there. So let's look at the promise God made with Abraham first.

Now three times recently, in the last, I don't know how long, year and a half, two years, I've been given a passage to speak on that has something to do with this promise. Back when we were doing the foundation study, I was given Genesis 15 and that's where this promise is made.

Then later on, in Ephesians 1, the effects of this promise are spoken about in the present age and in the kingdom to come. And now we're talking about it here in Galatians 3.

So if you remember some of what I'm about to say, bear with me here. Anyway, the effects, this promise is worthy of much pondering anyway because the effects of it are seen in the Bible all the

way from Genesis through the end of Revelation.

[12:01] The promise that God made with Abraham 4,000 years ago, way back there in Genesis 15, lays the foundation for him to call to himself by his grace a group of sinners, both Jew and Gentile, to make them his own children.

It is God's will that this redeemed group of people from every tribe, language, people, and nation will be gathered together, unified as one, in fellowship with him and one another, praising his name for all eternity.

The promise that God gave Abraham in Genesis 15 is the foundation for this. That's a mouthful. Let me say that again. The promise that God made to Abraham lays the foundation for him to call to himself by his grace a group of sinners, both Jew and Gentile, to make them his own children.

It is God's will that this redeemed group of people from all over the earth be as one, unified together, praising his name for all eternity.

I believe that this oneness is the essence of our future inheritance. There's more to it, but I think that's the big thing. Don't know that, but that's what it seems like to me. Back in Genesis, God promised fatherless Abram that he would be a father of a great nation, that his descendants would occupy a very specific piece of land, and that through Abraham, all the nations of the whole earth would be blessed.

[13:58] It's recorded in Genesis 15 that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Abraham was declared righteous by God when he believed back in Genesis 15.

He declared him righteous because of his faith. Then he told Abraham, I want you to go get five animals. It's like a heifer, a goat, what else was there?

A ram, a pigeon, and a dove. And he told him to take the goat, the ram, and the heifer and just cut them in half. Kill them and cut them in half.

And then lay them, separate the carcasses and lay them in a, and make an aisle between them, a bloody aisle. Now this would look rather unusual, even kind of gross, to most people today.

Bunch of bloody animal carcasses on the ground. Maybe if you're not a deer hunter, maybe that's not so bad. But it seems kind of odd, doesn't it? God gave them this, justified them, gave them this promise, and he tells them to do that.

[15:07] But people back in that time would have recognized what was going on right away. The arrangement of bloody animal carcasses with the aisle between them was recognized as a setting for making a blood covenant.

It was the way of establishing a binding oath between two men. The parties involved would walk the path between the slaughtered animals and they would say something to the essence, let this be done to me if I don't keep my oath.

And then afterwards, the families of the two men would eat to show that they were at peace. And so they pledged their lives that they would be taken if they did not live up to their oath.

It's a very serious event. So the scene in Genesis where we see God telling Abraham to split the animal carcasses is God is getting to basically ratify his promise into a covenant with Abraham.

But what do you see in this blood covenant with Abraham when you read Genesis 15? After Abraham did what God told him with the animals, he fell asleep.

[16:25] God put him to sleep. Deep sleep came on him. And God, in the form of a smoking oven and a flaming torch, walked down the aisle by himself.

I guess the oven and the torch were God saying he will accept the sacrifice. So he walked down the aisle by himself while Abraham was sleeping.

God alone passed through those carcasses and pledged to keep an oath. It was this covenant was sealed by God himself, not with Abraham, not with Abraham pledging anything.

God made a promise to Abraham. Abraham did not make a promise to God. The full weight of the responsibility for the fulfillment of Abraham's descendants becoming numerous and becoming a great nation for the specific plot of land given to those descendants and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham, the full weight of that responsibility for that promise falls on God.

God swore by himself. It says in Hebrews 6, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, God swore by himself.

[17:47] In our text, in verse 16, it says that this promise that God gave was made to Abraham and to his seed and it clarifies in our text that that seed is Christ, Abraham's offspring.

That promise was made to Christ and with Christ. So through Christ, we Gentiles, we partake in the promise made to Abraham which includes our salvation.

The promise on which the gospel of Jesus Christ rests is not conditional, unconditional. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the promise maker.

He walked down the aisle in Genesis 15 by himself and he's the promise keeper. He walked down death row, so to speak, and he was nailed to the cross by himself, endured the wrath he bled when our sin was placed on him.

both events, Genesis 15 and Christ dying involve blood and death because that's the cost of our sin.

[19 : 07] Are you thankful today that we have a God who keeps his word even to the point of death? I'm also thankful that it doesn't end there because he rose from the dead.

the promise which our salvation is tied to was given to Abraham 430 years it says in our text before the law was given to Moses.

The self-righteous Judaizers in Paul's time implied that the giving of the law changed the original covenant God made with Abraham.

Paul is saying that's impossible. once two parties enter into a covenant the third party cannot come along years later and change the contract.

Can't do it. The conditional temporary law given to Israel 430 years later cannot in any way alter the permanent promise made by God to Abraham.

[20 : 09] the Judaizers they just you know it's our human pride each one of us deal with that they just wanted to take some kind of credit for something you know that's what legal is you just want to maybe I've got to do something right to be with God and maybe that part of wanting to be right with God is good but the idea that we could do something to be right you can't add to God's grace there's no substitute for that perfect sacrifice.

They had no right to try to add to the gospel since they were not even a party to the original contract.

Now verse 18 in our text says for if the inheritance if the inheritance is of the law it is no longer of promise but God gave it to Abraham by grace and a promise cannot mix law and grace because they are fundamentally different that I can see for three reasons.

One the law is temporary promise is permanent. The law had a termination date. Temple worship involving the animal sacrifice the civil laws the dietary laws all those things you see in Exodus and Leviticus they came to an end.

the ten commandments contain God's will for mankind for all time but even they because they do not produce righteousness in a person's heart they're set aside in a sense because you need Christ to fulfill the demands of the ten commandments.

[21 : 59] So that's one way it's temporary two the law was conditional talked about that God said to Israel if you obey me I will bless you if you disobey me I will curse you that's the nature of the law and three the law had had to have a mediator Moses went back and forth between the people and God he would intercede for the people not to God for the people so he wouldn't wipe them out when they were rebelling and then he would go to the people and warn them and plead with them to walk with the Lord so the law required an mediator these are the reasons that law and faith are that law and faith and the promises are at odds with one another when it comes to be declared righteous by God so that brings up a logical question what is the purpose of God's law our text says in verse 19 that it was temporarily added alongside the promise to show us our sinfulness in the law we see a reflection of God's character and we also see that we ain't right brought this today maybe help out a little bit

I don't hope you can see this back here our character when you when you see God's law our character shows up and this is what God sees can you see that back there like this would be a person who thinks they're okay you know yeah I know I'm not perfect there's all kinds of blemishes here if you can see those there's wrinkles and stuff but when the light of God's law shines on us you start seeing stuff that you never really realized the way you did before can you see those what about I don't think Kevin can you see those back there envy adultery theft greed hate lust coveting disobeying parents I didn't write that one in there but that's in the list too so the light of God's law the law it doesn't take away sin it only exposes it that's the purpose of the law David asked a question last week but I have to ask it again have you ever heard of a policeman pulling someone over and congratulating them for obeying the speed limit sounds kind of good doesn't it

I kind of had a little fantasy dream with this a picture I picture myself sitting at a red light on Manchester Road back in the day and Bob Wayne coming up and knocking on the window and handing me a Panera gift card for obeying the traffic signal \$20 one will be good Bob thanks that's ridiculous isn't it it'd be kind of nice but it's ridiculous the law is not in place to congratulate us for the laws we keep but it's there to penalize us for the laws we break in the same way God is not going to save a person from sin because they try to do their best or they try to keep his commandments the law does not congratulate you it condemns you so if you happen to be here today and you're thinking like I want to be right with God and you're just trying to do your best like I used to and then I didn't care and then I got saved but if you're like that if you're in that stage where you're just trying to do your best to please

God are you hearing what the law is saying if you do you would be like Paul when he proclaimed in Romans 7 wretched man that I am who will deliver me from this body of sin that's why Paul says in our text in Galatians 3 if there could have been a law which gave men spiritual life then the law would have produced righteousness but the scripture declares that we're all prisoners of sin though the law will not take away our sin it still does play a role though in our salvation I was waiting for somebody to throw something at me there and here's what I mean by that I think you guys know what I mean the text says the law was our guardian that pointed us to Christ that we might be justified by faith the word guardian is translated schoolmaster in some of your translations there the word that's user it's a

Greek word that I can't even pronounce I think it's pedago something like that the term the word it comes from an ancient Greek system set up to train children in many Greek and Roman cultures in their homes well educated slaves took the children to and from school they watched over them during the day they sometimes even disciplined them they protected them they did all these things the work of the guardian was preparation for adulthood once the child came of age he no longer was under the guardian once he became a certain age the guardian was out of the picture his job was done the child had become an adult son with the privilege of direct access to the father the law prepared

[28 : 11] Israel for the coming of the Messiah it trained Israel to get ready for the Messiah and in a certain sense it restrained evil because of the fear of punishment when Jesus came there was no longer a need for the law its job was done in much the same way you and I when we understood what the law was saying we were held by its power 1 Corinthians 15 says the strength of sin is the law so it guided us and taught us the guilt and shame the law produced in us taught us that we needed something more than our own attempts to be right with God it pointed us to Christ the spirit of God used it it produced God's spirit uses the law to produce repentance and faith in a person when they understand they're lost and they hear that

Christ died for the ungodly verse 26 declares that we are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ the law cannot do for us what Christ does it could never give a person oneness with God only Christ can only Christ can free us from guilt free us from the worry of condemnation only Christ can make us sons with a future inheritance with access to the father that verse in John 8 it says whom the son speaking of Jesus whom the son sets free is free indeed when a person believes and gets saved they are placed into the body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we belong to him he also at that point comes to live in us we have a new identity Paul in this verse tells us to put on our new identity he's saying in your heart remember who you are now you know just like somebody who's in the army or the navy puts on their uniform to proclaim that they're a part of the military so we too put on Christ you do this through water baptism you do this mostly hopefully through your thinking about who you are in Christ put on Christ so when we start to understand what it means to be in Christ and consciously identify with him what's the result our text says there's neither

Jew or Greek there's neither slave nor free there's neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ the things in this world that distinguish us from one another they don't matter when you come before the Lord in essence anything that is temporary not eternal has absolutely nothing no bearing on being in Christ we all have the same blessed position of being sons of the living God and bear with me you know when I say sons I'm meaning both male and female right I think it's important to say that so we all brought nothing to the cross to offer him when he forgave us we're all the same height so to speak at the cross there's nothing for us to brag about except our savior this is the core teaching of being unified as a church this is an identity we'll still have when we are in eternity in

fellowship praising the

Lord as one I'd like to end with an illustration can we have the musicians come up John 3:36 says he who believes in the son has everlasting life he who does not believe in the son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him ever since Adam sinned in the garden there's been this black cloud of judgment looming over man because when God looks down what does he see without Christ this is what he sees he has to judge sin his character demands it if he's going to be fair he can't judge some sins and not all sins he has to judge all sin so that he

[33 : 53] God hates the things that are our sin natures like he hates them now one of the one of Satan's lies floating around in our culture today is God is nothing but love he will accept you just the way you are with no mention of coming judgment there's churches out there saying that yes God's love he loves people too much to leave them in the misery and the doom of their sin God will judge in righteousness all sin and those who do not place their faith in Jesus as you guys know they're on their way to the lake of fire now the promise God has given to us is eternal life through his son so I want to ask it's always good to do this is everybody here sure that they turned from this to

Christ because if you have this is what God sees can you see that there he looks down and he sees that because the sin issue is dealt with the price was paid in full so if you haven't seen your need for a savior please consider what I'm saying so Christian probably everybody here I don't assume that but here's what I want to ask when we meet together and have fellowship and I ask myself this okay what do people see in me and you do they see this because when you see that the self is kind of way down there and there's a connection between us and put it in simple terms the thing that justified us is the same thing that unifies us so when

Christ is exalted not ourselves the spirit of unity and a bond of peace exists because his life flows through us and connects with Christ to other believers who seek to do the same so my encouragement today is let's show Satan the master deceiver that we believe the gospel through just believing and living it thank you out all he the the he