

# Live in Gospel Freedom

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Date: 05 November 2023

Preacher: Ben Murray

[0:00] Amen. Well, good morning, church. My name is Benjamin. You can have a seat. I am not the pastor here, but I am a guest preacher. I am happy to be here. It is great to be with you all.

Daniel was the preacher last week. He and I are pretty good friends. We've been doing ministry for about three months now together. We started a young adults ministry, which we're really excited about at Valley Life.

And I've been in the church for a very long time, ever since I was a kid. I've always, always been on the right side of the law, too. I've never really gotten into trouble at all.

But there are two times that I have been in a traffic stop. The first time I was entering into a construction zone, as you probably know where this is going.

It was two lanes merging into one. So in my defense, I was just trying to help things move along a little bit faster. And so I decided to speed up a little bit and get past the car that was next to me. And of course, there was an officer in the construction zone.

[1:03] And he saw this and pulled me over. And he said, hello, I'm not really going to give you a ticket. There's no construction workers here. You weren't really doing anything that crazy. And so just kind of watch your speed. So he let me go.

The other time that I got pulled over, I was just leaving ASU. I had a friend there that I was visiting. And I had just left. It was night. And I just left.

I pulled out. And I got pulled over. And I was like, I don't know why I got pulled over. I was doing everything right. I used my blinker. I couldn't figure it out. And so the officer came up to my window. And he said, hey, you're driving with your lights off.

And I was like, oh, my gosh. And so I just turned those on. And he said, well, it's fine. I'll just let you go with a warning. Probably shouldn't do that in the future. Well, in our modern times, we are very familiar with this idea of we have traffic laws.

And we should obey those laws. We do it all the time. We stop at red lights. We go on green lights. But there are more than 600 commandments, these laws, that are in the Old Testament, most of which we actually don't keep as Christians.

[2:08] And you ever wondered why that is? Why don't we keep all of these laws? They're laws that were given by God to the people of God to follow. So why don't we as Christians, who are the people of God, follow that?

Well, let's go ahead and jump into our text. And we'll look to answer that. We're going to be in Galatians chapter 3. We'll be reading verses 15 through 22. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and open there with me.

And I will start reading here in verse 15. It says, Why then the law?

It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made. And it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now, an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

[3:47] But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Well, if you were here last week, Daniel mentioned that Paul is writing this letter to a group of churches in a region of modern-day Turkey, the region's called Galatia.

It was under Roman control, but it had received the gospel from Paul, which you can read about in Acts chapters 13 and 14. There's a lot of different types of people here in Galatia, and they're all mixed together, including some Jews.

There's a section of these Jews, even, who were contradicting much of what Paul was teaching. What they were teaching instead was that the Gentiles had to become Jews first.

Paul has just finished reaffirming the truth of the gospel to the Galatians, which is that only through faith in Jesus can someone be saved. Works will not give life. And that brings us to our first point this morning, which is that God's covenants are eternal.

We can read this starting in verse 15. To give a human example, brothers, even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. This is the part of Paul's letter where his address to the Galatians becomes a little bit softer.

[5:03] Up until this point, he's been pretty harsh with a lot of his language. He's even called them foolish a couple times. That's not really what we would expect from Paul. Without this address, it would be easy to picture Paul as an angry dad who's come home and he's stepped on some Legos that got left out again, and he's really upset about it.

Instead, we see him practicing what he preaches in Ephesians 6.4, which says, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Paul is choosing not to frustrate the Galatians, but to teach them. His use of the term human example is an attempt by Paul to bring what he's saying down to a more understandable level, a human level.

He's calling attention to the fact that there is a higher level of understanding that's possible, but because he loves them so much, he's trying to make this as plain to understand as possible. We don't really know what the level of education that the Galatians would have had, or at least these specific churches, but what Paul's doing here is he's demonstrating his spiritual gift of teaching by taking a very complicated subject, this concept of the law and the covenant of Abraham, and he's presenting it in a way that is understandable to the everyday person.

[6:21] His defense for his use of the Abrahamic covenant begins here in verse 15. He starts by examining the nature of covenants that are made between two humans.

Even these covenants, which don't include God's direct participation, commanded the deepest level of respect and honor from those who entered into them. It was even unthinkable for someone who had entered into a covenant to change or cancel the covenant after the fact.

It was a very sacred thing. We don't really make a lot of covenants between us nowadays, except for the obvious covenant of marriage. And sadly, even that covenant's not treated with even half as much commitment and respect as it was previously.

However, another example of a covenant that we can see being made between two humans would be the covenant that Jonathan makes with David. If you will, turn with me to 1 Samuel 18, and we'll pick it up in verse 3.

Starting in verse 3, it says, My best friend moved to Texas a couple years ago, and while I'm a little bitter that his rangers beat our D-backs, it doesn't alter our friendship.

[7:53] I'm still very good friends with him. We stay well connected through discipleship, and we play video games online. And in a similar but much bigger way, Jonathan's commitment to the covenant that he had made with David was evidenced here in 1 Samuel by the shedding of his royal robe, the armor that was his protection, and his weapons with which he would have defended himself.

He was willing to do whatever it took to keep David safe out on the field of battle because Jonathan loved him so much. And remember, this is an example of a human covenant. God's not in the middle of this.

He is indirectly, but not in the middle right now. Paul doesn't spend much time on this because he knows his audience is very familiar with the concept of a covenant and how sacred it is.

And it doesn't get changed or canceled because of anything after it's been agreed upon. So what's the argument that is going against Paul here? Well, the Judaizers, the people who are trying to make the Gentiles Jews, were trying to claim that because the law came after the covenant was made to Abraham, the law was in some sort of way adding on to the promise that God had given to Abraham.

It had become a requirement in addition to what God had already done, which Paul was having none of. He goes a little deeper here in verse 16.

[9:13] Go back to Galatians 3. It says, Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.

It does not say into offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one. And to your offspring, who is Christ. It's interesting to note that this is possibly the first time that this distinction is being made. And we can even read the story, if you turn with me to Genesis chapter 17, we can read exactly what's happening. I'm going to pick it up in verse 8.

It says, The best of the best preachers up until this time would generally have agreed that an interpretation of this text, in the Hebrew, would have intended a plurality of offspring.

And the text doesn't really specify which of the two it is. However, we as Christians hold that it is of the singular, because Paul is writing in this passage to tell a church in Galatia exactly that.

[10:40] And we as Christians hold that the Bible is inerrant and irrefutable, without contradiction and the living, breathing word of God. Amen? Paul continues to explain his point plainly back in Galatians, starting in verse 17.

Going all over the Bible today. Back in 17, he says, It's hard to blame those who object to Paul's use of Abraham when they've been so used to following the Mosaic law.

They've even seen it as the means to salvation. After all, it's the most recent guide to human living and how we're supposed to be living. It's a good thing to do while waiting for the promise, even.

However, even this good thing to do is being clarified by Paul because its purpose is not to bring about the promise that was given to Abraham, as we see in the next verse, verse 18.

For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. So the Jewish believer's focus was rightly placed on obtaining this inheritance that's been promised by God.

However, the purpose of the law was never to provide a path to obtain that inheritance. And if it did, the promise that God gave to Abraham would have been pointless because his descendants would need to follow the law while he had earned his inheritance through faith.

[12:17] It would have sort of been like a bait and switch where we're offering justification by faith to one and justification by works to the other. And that's a contradiction and not true. The law that was given at Mount Sinai didn't change the level of access to justification for those who have faith, as Abraham did.

And that brings us to our second point this morning, which is that God's law is a guide. We'll pick it up in verse 19. Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made.

And it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. This is as genuine a question as they come. If the law doesn't provide justification, what's the point of observing it at all?

Fortunately, Paul immediately provides a hint to the answer he provides just a little bit later that it was to deal with transgressions, sin. Sin is so offensive to God that he cannot let it go without punishment.

The law was implemented to bridge the gap between the coming of the offspring, Jesus Christ, and the state that God's people were in as they were on their way to Canaan to establish a nation that served God.

[13:33] A really good analogy that I heard was to picture God's people from the time of Exodus all the way up to Pentecost as being in a plane.

And they're circling the airport. They're waiting on receiving clearance to land. They haven't been allowed to land yet. They know that they'll land, but it's just a matter of time before they do. And while they're up in the air, as some of us do, they start to get a little antsy, and some of them are getting up out of their chairs and trying to walk around, and we can't have that.

So God provides a list of guidelines and rules for us to stay calm before we land. It's got a procedure for what to do if we find ourselves out of our seats, which would be sinning in this case, and how to get back into our seats, which would be the sacrificial rituals that were given through the law.

However, neither of those things help the plane to land. This is just a process to keep us all calm on the way. It's significant that the Mosaic Covenant is established through angels by an intermediary because God is entrusting the mediation of the covenant to Moses.

It requires the adherence and compliance of both parties, God and Israel. John MacArthur says it like this. Paul seems to be pointing out that a mediator, literally one who stands between two parties, is needed only when more than one party is involved.

[14:55] God gave the covenant directly to Abraham without a mediator because he was the only one involved in making the covenant. Abraham was a witness to the covenant and was a beneficiary, but he was not a party to it.

Abraham had no part in establishing or keeping the covenant. That responsibility was God's alone. The covenant of law, however, not only involved mediators, angels and Moses, but mutual obligations on the two parties, God and Israel.

End quote. Paul assumes the natural objection would be that the law is actually a contradiction then by God in our final verses for this morning, but it also brings us to our third and final point.

God's Son is the key. We can see this in verses 21 and 22. Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?

Certainly not. For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

[16:05] The law would be contrary to the promises of God because if it provided a way to life, a way to undo sin, the promise that God gave Abraham would have been nullified, contrary to what we know about covenants and who God is.

Because God had not fulfilled the promise he gave to Abraham yet, the law couldn't be that fulfillment because it required action and compliance instead of faith. Instead, the law was given to show just how bad the situation is and how possible it is to atone for sin through works.

Even the good works that the law requires are of no benefit to the justification of those who live by it. The purpose of the law is to demonstrate to those who live by it and those who are watching those who live by it just how impossible it is to be justified by works before God.

The concept of scripture, the law, imprisoning everything under sin is not to say that it causes people to sin, but to show them how badly they are sinning, how constantly they are needing to atone for their sin, and how desperately they need a savior to put their faith in for salvation.

To put it simply, the law's purpose wasn't to be a vehicle for salvation, but instead to be a tool to fill us with anticipation for the hope of the offspring of Abraham that would receive the promises God gave us.

[17:32] We know from what Paul wrote to the Romans, as well as many other places in the Bible, that we are not deserving of the promises of God. It wasn't because Abraham was such a good person that God picked him or because David was the strongest of his brothers.

In Romans 3.23, it says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

We also know from Romans 6.23 that the wages of sin is death. We are spiritually earning death when we sin. Fortunately, in that same verse, we also learned that eternal life is a free gift from God through Jesus.

God's covenant doesn't change because the law he gave to Moses and his people was meant to be a guide to those who live by it to the only way by which a person can be saved, faith in Jesus.

So, how does this passage help us? Well, for those of you who have placed your hope and trust in Jesus, I want you to reflect on the goodness of God and how gracious he is.

[18:38] His ministry of reconciliation has been passed on down to us and it's our job to carry that into all the world. The term gospel is literally good news and when we receive the good news, it changes who we are.

It takes us out of our own little worlds and kingdoms and puts us in a right relationship with God and others. So, pursue God and the reconciliation of others to him as well. If you accepted Jesus a while back and sort of feel like he isn't as important as he used to be anymore, return back to him. There is no shame because we are all in need of more grace than we could possibly know, but the good news is that there is infinitely more grace available to us than we could possibly imagine. For those of you who haven't put your hope and trust in Jesus, I'd love to talk with you and share how he has changed my life and is continuing to change my life.

He's a constant friend and putting your trust in him is not burdensome. It might not be convenient in some ways, I ended up driving an hour and a half to come up here, but I love doing that and I am so glad to be doing that because he's done so much for me and I want you all to have the same sense of belonging with him that I have.

If you're not comfortable talking with me or one of the other believers here this morning, you can know this. In Romans 10.9 it says, because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[20:07] It's as simple as that. I'll close with this first bit of Romans 8, which I really hope gives you all the hope and peace that you need for this coming week.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. By sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh but those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the spirit if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you.

[21:23] Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you although the body is dead because of sin the spirit is life because of righteousness. The spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.

He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his spirit who dwells in you. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word and your goodness.

We ask that you would fill our hearts with your love that we would go out into all the world and that we would seek seek the reconciliation of others. We pray all this in your son's name.

Amen. Amen. God bless you.

Amen.