

AM Galatians 3:15-29

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[0 : 00] The first reading is from John chapter 14 verses 1 to 7 and that's page 1086 if anybody's using the church bibles.

So John chapter 14 verses 1 to 7. John 14 verses 1 to 7.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. That where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way and the truth and the life.

[1 : 23] No one comes to the Father except through me. If you do not know me, you would have, if you had known me, you would have known my Father also.

From now on, you do know him and have seen me. Our second reading is from Galatians chapter 3 verses 15 to 29.

Galatians 3 verses 15 to 29.

So continuing reading our readings from Galatians 3 verses 15 to the end of the chapter.

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.

[2 : 24] Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one.

And to your offspring, who is Jesus Christ. This is what I mean. The law which came 430 years afterwards does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise. But God gave it to Abraham by a promise. Why then the law?

It was added because of transgression. Until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made. And it was put in a 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.

[3 : 29] 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. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law.

Imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So therein, the Lord who was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[4 : 35] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring. Heirs according to promise. Thanks be to God and for the reading of his holy word. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, as we come to study your word, may the thoughts of our minds and the words of my mouth be acceptable in your sight.

Through our Lord and Jesus Christ. Amen. So as we complete Galatians chapter 3, one question for you.

Are you on the right way? Previously, we've looked at the two roads that we could take. We've looked at the law road and man's endeavour to earn his salvation by his own actions.

And the gospel road. The road of returning to God and a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father. Today, we will briefly revisit our law and then focus on God's promise.

[5 : 56] And the fulfilment of his promise through the coming of his kingdom. His kingdom which came to earth in the birth of Christ. In his ministry, crucifixion and his resurrection.

We'll look at the gospel message and its relevance to us today and in the future. Paul starts this passage today by looking at a man's last will or testament.

In verse 15. And the limitations of the law and the strength of a promise. Many of us are aware, either through personal experience or through things we may have seen in the media, about making wills and about the difficulties that can be involved in then changing them as circumstances change. But when Paul wrote the letter, in his time, it was nigh impossible to change a will after it was written. So, once a will was in place, that was it.

And Paul describes it as a covenant, a man-made covenant. Which could not then be altered. And if we think even in Genesis 27.

[7 : 21] We can think how Jacob had tricked his father Isaac into blessing him. He pretended that he was Esau, the eldest son.

Went to his father with his bowl of soup, or his food as he'd asked. And he'd also dressed himself then to appear as Esau. And Jacob then blesses him and gives him a blessing to rule over the family and to rule over his brothers, his siblings.

Of course, Esau comes back from the hunt, prepares his father's food and takes it into him. And his father is confused.

And then it comes out that his blessing had already been given to Jacob. Despite the fact that Jacob had tricked his way into the blessing, the blessing was not overturned.

The covenant had been made. Now, if man-made covenants cannot be changed, how much is God's will unchangeable?

[8 : 38] Because he keeps his promises. The law does not wipe out God's promises. Once a promise is made, it is binding, no matter what changes may occur.

However, too often, many see something new coming as a replacement for what is already in place. The latest trend forces out established beliefs.

So many see the Mosaic law, which came some 430 years later, as a replacement for the promise of God to Abraham.

Many would see this as changing the agreement. So to get the blessings of Abraham first, we now need to keep the law of Moses.

But Paul shows us that this is a false conclusion. In verse 17. The law of Moses cannot change a promise.

[9 : 42] If salvation now came by the law rather than by faith, then God has changed his mind. It means that we do not need a saviour. And we can stop the story here.

As God would now give his blessings through man's performance. And not by promise. If that were the case.

If that were the case, the rest of the Bible would be pointless. But rather, the rest of Scripture highlights man's need for a saviour.

It highlights that man cannot earn his own salvation. That salvation can only come through Christ and through God. The only way to God is by grace and through faith in Christ.

If we are saved only by Christ's performance and not our own efforts, do we still need to keep the law? If our faith is in Christ and that earns us salvation, is there any relevance for the law of Moses in our lives today?

[11 : 03] We can't treat it flippantly as other questions. And we can't treat that flippantly as other questions about how we live stem from that question.

Our values, how we treat people, even how we spend our money, are all linked to the relationship we have with the law. And if we think back to what we had said previously about Calvin's view about the law, Calvin gives us three purposes of the law as relevant today as when they were given to Moses in Mount Sinai.

First was lead us to Christ. The second was to restrain evil. And the third was to determine the behaviour of believers. We are free from the penalty of sin through the Spirit.

And our sanctification should lead to the greater obedience of moral and ethical teachings of Christ. For Calvin, it was first a punitive purpose of bringing us to faith.

It renders us inescapable, making us aware of our sin and wrongdoing against God. Calvin writes, Naked and empty-handed, we flee to His, that's God's, mercy.

[12:28] Repose entirely in it, hide deep within it, and seize upon it alone for righteousness and merit. So having our sins exposed before us by God's grace and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we seek salvation in Christ through God's love and mercy.

Realising it is in His mercy that we are justified. This is relevant to all humanity, whether they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour or not.

It highlights that we cannot meet the requirements of the law, and none of us are perfect. We are all flawed in some way. Even the best of us.

Therefore, as lawbreakers, as sinners, we are separated from God, from fulfilling our potential. And we cannot fulfil our purpose.

And our purpose is to glorify God. Yet our hope is not lost. God, from the time of Adam, wronging against him, breaking the one commandment he was given, not to eat from the tree of knowledge, had planned for the redemption of man.

[13:47] Right from that first moment, God had a plan to bring man back to himself. That he would once more be free from the penalty of sin and have union with God.

So the law heightens our sense of sin, but it has limitations. The law can and does define sin, but it cannot cure it.

It's like going to the doctor who can diagnose your illness, but it has to then refer you on to a specialist for treatment. The law can highlight our sin, but our sin can only be cleansed through our Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God.

It can guide us to right desire, but it cannot give us the desire to follow God's law. The law cannot give life. It cannot bring us alive.

But the principle of the law and its purpose, sorry, but the principle use of the law and its purpose for Calvin was to direct the behaviour of the Christian.

[15:00] Calvin sees the law as the best tool to teach, teaches God's will, and to exhort us to do it. It will enable us to step back from wrongdoing.

He writes, By frequent meditation upon it, we will be aroused to obedience, be strengthened in it, and drawn back from the slippery path of transgression.

So it teaches and exhorts believers to walk in God's ways. As Luther and Calvin expounded, the proper use of the law is to expose, restrain, and convict the lawless, the sinner, you and I.

The law is primarily intended to curb sin and keep it from escalating. It also exposes sin and its power to control and confuse, to dominate, deceive, and to lead astray.

The law cannot save us, as sinners, it only reveals our sin and our need for a saviour. As Paul writes in Galatians 3.21, Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?

[16:14] Certainly not. For if the law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. Rather, Paul gives us a message of hope to us all by proclaiming our freedom from the penalty of failing to keep the law.

If we are committed to Christ by faith alone. In Romans 8.1-4, he writes, 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 flesh, could not do.

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemns 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.

So we must seek to live the life God desires for us by faith and not by the law. We must not ignore the law, but let it guide us in proper behaviour that glorifies God.

[17:32] We must not seek to derive life from it. And remember, Christ came not to nullify the law or to set it aside, but to fulfil it.

In Matthew 5, 17, Jesus says, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfil them.

So rather than the repeated animal sacrifices for our sins, Jesus Christ himself made a once and only sacrifice for our release from sin.

instead of repeating an action of man again and again, Christ gave himself up as the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Never to be repeated. And it is only by faith in Christ alone that we have salvation. Only in Christ are we saved and have life in all its fullness.

[18 : 33] But some of you may say that you have heard this before, but you know what the gospel message it doesn't change.

It is simple and it is understandable to all. We need to hear it to be saved. We need to hear it to stay on track. And we need to hear it to grow, to implement Christ's teachings into our actions.

Jesus' own words could not have put it any simpler in John 3.16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

And in the passage we read in John 14.6 and 7 Jesus continues his plain and simple message when Thomas is confused. He says I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me you would have known my Father also. From now on from now on you do know me you do know him and have seen him.

[19 : 52] What good news what glory what a simple gospel. Our Saviour Jesus Christ has come he has declared us clean and he has redeemed us.

He has paid the price of our sin to claim us back and he has shown us the way to God our Heavenly Father. The Kingdom of God has come into our lives.

The Kingdom of God isn't stuck 2,000 years ago in Palestine. He's not stuck there and he's not stuck in the future pie in the sky when you die.

He is with us now. The Kingdom of God is here in Dumfries today. Christ is with us today. As Christians we have had the privilege of experiencing his presence through the Holy Spirit in our lives.

first to the point of our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and thereafter daily in our lives.

For those who have still to experience a personal relationship with God Jesus points the way.

[21 : 06] Jesus is clear in John 14 I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. Jesus Christ is the only route to our Heavenly Father.

There is no good works there is no karma there is no continual rebirth to earn salvation. No self meditation or self improvement to be the best you can be.

We cannot do it ourselves. We are fallen sinful people who will always fall short of the demands of the law. Only by God's grace do we come into full and eternal fellowship with Him.

Yes we can know of God's existence we can see the power of His creation around us but there are many in the world who know of God but they choose not to follow Him.

They turn their backs on a life of freedom and fulfilment. This morning if you have not chosen Christ you have that opportunity to recognise Jesus Christ as your saviour.

[22 : 19] He came to set you free. You can step aside from the constant striving for success.

The constant feeling of having failed because we can't meet the law. Of not been good enough. Of punishing yourself for failure and promising to try harder.

in Christ all that pressure is removed from us as God is the one who in His grace has given us the gift of His Son that we may follow Him in faith to our Heavenly Father.

In the coming months we will look further at Jesus as being the way, the truth and the life. But this morning He's waiting on our response guided by the Holy Spirit.

But how do we share in this blessing of salvation of being saved through Jesus Christ? First in verse 16 Paul highlights that the blessings promised to Abraham are not immediately available to all his descendants but to his offspring a single person and that offspring is Jesus Christ.

[23 : 35] So the promise of blessings made to Abraham pass to Christ his heir. And here is the key to our inclusion in the blessing in verse 26.

For in Christ Jesus you are also the sons of God through faith. By our faith in Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer we become part of Christ.

We become part of His family and so share His blessings. It is by divine adoption from of God.

The notion that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters, is the mainstream of Christian living. Our sonship of God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption.

Our salvation is a privilege that comes through our divine adoption by God, our heavenly father, not a right earned by our labours. And as a sign of our adoption in verse 27 we are to put on Christ as if a new set of clothes.

[24 : 43] We are to have a closeness to Christ and through the Holy Spirit we should become ever more like him. We are to be transformed. For the individual wracked with guilt about their failings

the individual always striving for the next prize whether promotion at work or recognition by society this is at an end in Christ.

We have been adopted into Christ's family. His church and as such inherit all that is his. Like him we share in the love of the Father who loves us so much that he sacrificed his son for us.

We are free of our old life and have a blank canvas to chart out a new life. Our sins are forgiven.

We are fellowship with God through Jesus Christ and our life is renewed.

Like the young child that is adopted by a new family their past is put behind them. It cannot harm them and in the love and support of their new family they build a new life.

So it is for the new Christian. Verse 28 brings home an important point in highlighting the inclusiveness of Christianity. It reads There is neither Jew nor Greek There is neither slave nor free There is no male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[26 : 15] No one is barred from salvation through Christ no matter their past social standings or actions if they come repenting of their sins and acknowledging their actions.

So Paul is clear that there should be no division within the church family and each of us must play a part in that. And there is much work to be done.

This does not mean being all things to all people to betray a settled and unified church. It means a oneness in Christ through upholding scriptural teachings.

And if it goes against the gospel if it goes against scripture it is not of God and it is not of Christ. Our unity is in Christ but it does not make us clones.

Paul was not Peter Peter was not Andrew but God used each of them differently for fulfilment of his purpose. We are not all one thought or one mannerism or one voice and we do not all of the same tasks though we should be of one purpose to bring glory to God.

[27 : 34] We are individuals with individual skills and abilities and as our bodies are made up of many parts with a shared purpose so we each have a role to play in the outworking of God's plan.

He will use us in our way for his purpose. But to go back to that verse 28 there is to be no distinction of race neither Greek nor Jew.

So no priority is to be given to one group over another. We are all equal before God. There is to be no distinction of rank neither slave nor free.

We have to break down the class barriers. All are welcome. In the church before God. And we can think of the rebuke in James 2 for treating the rich man with honour and leaving the poor man aside. All are equal before God. And there is to be no distinction of gender neither male or female. We are all equal before God.

[28 : 52] We all have different tasks to complete for God just as the body has parts of different roles. So we don't set aside Paul's teachings in Ephesians and Colossians.

We have complementary roles as male and female as men and women. And together we should have a unity in Christ.

And if we are Christ's we are part of the promise of Abraham. As Paul concludes in verse 29. And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring.

Heirs according to promise. Saved to a new life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we started with the idea that the law cannot set aside a promise.

Cannot set aside a covenant. And we finish in verse 29. That as God fulfills his covenant to Abraham we as heirs of Abraham through Christ will share in that promise.

[30 : 03] Amen. Let's pray. Amen.