

The Gospel's Defense: Faith and Law

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 February 2023

Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 0 0] Galatians chapter 3, Galatians chapter 3, we're going to look at verses 1 through 14. If you've missed the last couple of Sundays, I try to do my best to preach in such a way that you can just drop in on a Sunday and get a full understanding of what we're looking at, but I do know that I have a tendency to pull back into the past and bring different thoughts and ideas forward. And so if I end up saying something like 100 trillion debt today, and you don't know what that means, or 100 trillion credit, you don't know what that means, you might go back and listen to a couple sermons to kind of catch up, and hopefully I'll remember to explain myself. So Galatians chapter 3, verses 1 through 14, I want to read the passage and then pray, and then we'll dive into the Word. Beginning at verse 1, you'll notice that Paul's attitude and his tone of voice changes right here with the Galatians. You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing

I want to find out from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

Did you suffer so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain? So then, does he who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you? Do it by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Even so, Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of the faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, all the nations will be blessed in you.

So then, those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law to perform them. Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident, for the righteous man shall live by faith. However, the law is not of faith. On the contrary, he who practices them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.

[2 : 5 3] For it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree, in order that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word, and I pray, Lord, that you would help us to understand the big picture that's here, to understand how we need to think, so that we would know how we ought to live.

And we pray, Lord, that you would guide us and direct us through your word, in Christ's name. Amen. Okay, so am I good? I just heard something pop and thought I was fixing to be electrocuted with this thing. Okay, all right, we're good. You know, when I was a kid, when I was a kid, you know, I didn't get saved until I was 18, you know, but I was in the church.

My dad was a pastor and whole nine yards, and I just remember a lot of different phrases getting stuck in my head as a Christian or as a young person, and even later in my life as a Christian, some of these phrases would stick in my head and stay there, just little cliches about how we live or what we think or what we believe. And one of those phrases stuck in my mind was that Christ died for me, so I will live for him. Now, on the surface, it sounds like a pretty good phrase, but the problem is, is that we often tend to think that salvation is by grace, and once salvation is over, once we've gotten our get out of hell free card, the rest of the Christian life is all us and all our effort.

And the truth of the matter is, is that the same faith that saves us is the same faith we have to live in day by day. The same grace that saves us is the same grace that keeps us and helps us to live day by day. And what I'm not saying is that how we live is unimportant. As a matter of fact, we are all familiar with the Ten Commandments, and there's a way in which I'm going to say that we need to be living by the Ten Commandments. We don't need to live by them to gain anything, but we need to live by them. And just, just think about this for a second. Do you know the Ten Commandments?

[5 : 15] Have no other gods before God. Do not worship any idols. Do not take the name of the Lord in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Honor your father and mother. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not covet. We could take any one of these commandments and sort of think about it for a second and think to ourselves, how do we live this out? What are we supposed to do with this commandment? What is it to not take the Lord's name in vain, for instance?

You know, most of us would understand that you don't need to take the name, the Lord's name in vain, and we would say, don't use God's name as a cuss word, and we would all kind of be there. But did you know that it's even the thoughtlessness in our minds when we use his name without even any thought?

It's very popular these days, O-M-G. That certainly is taking the Lord's name in vain. But how do we stop these things? How do we obey these things? How are we supposed to live as Christians if we're not trying to earn our way to God, if we're not trying to merit our way to God, and yet we know we have to live a certain way? How do we do this? Where's the fundamental layer where we can build upon and say, well, this is how we live? I'm saying all this because as Paul is dealing here in Galatians with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, you and I are going to have a tendency, because I'm going to say some of the same things over and over and over again, you're going to think to yourself, it's like, well, Brady, we've already talked about justification by faith alone. Can you talk about something else? No. And the reason is because I'm in chapter three where Paul wrote, and this is what Paul wrote, and I'm going to say what Paul said. I'm not going to try to come up with my own thoughts and give you my own ideas, because if I gave you my ideas, it would ruin your life. But if I give you what the word says, even if you can't immediately go like, well, how do I apply that? What do I do with that? You still need it in your life because it's foundational to how we live. Does that make sense? I'm just, I'm just, I'm just afraid of saying something that comes from me, because I don't want you to have your life ruined because you think this is the truth because I said it. So that's why we want to stick to the word. And in this passage, what Paul does is he gives us a bigger glimpse, a broader glimpse, a broader understanding of justification by faith alone. And he helps us to sort of see a couple of areas that if we can grasp, it helps us build the foundation on which to live out the life he's called us to live.

So there's four things. I'm going to go through them, I think, pretty quickly. We're going to divide it. Well, I guess I, some of you have a little handout. Let me, we're going to divide this verses one through five, six through nine, 10 through 12 and 13 and 14, just so you can kind of keep up with me. Here's the first big thought, and this is the way I would say it to you. You did not earn your salvation. You did not earn your salvation. You did not merit it. You did not win it. You did nothing to get it. If you're saved and if you're a child of God, you did not deserve that and you didn't get it on your own. Listen to Galatians chapter three, verses one through five. As he's, as he's asking them these questions, he says something like this.

Did you receive the spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? In other words, when you became a Christian and the Holy Spirit came to live within you and you knew that the Holy Spirit was in you, did that come because you went to go get circumcised? Did that come because you sacrificed a goat? Did that come because you marched into the temple and spread blood all over someplace?

[9 : 35] Or did that come by faith? It came by faith. You see, we do not do anything to earn our salvation.

And because we talk this way, because we say you can't do anything to earn your salvation, we as Baptists tend to fall into one of two ditches. We fall into a ditch of liberalism in which we say to ourselves, well, since we can't earn our salvation, that I can believe in Jesus and then go out and live however I want to. But no, no, if he saved you, then you belong to him and you can't live just however you want to. You must live the way he tells you to live. But the other ditch that we seem to fall into is that of legalism, which by the way, liberalism and legalism are twin sisters. Just always remember that. Okay. So if you, you see one person pushing against legalism, they have a tendency to go to liberalism or if they're liberal and they have a tendency to try to push away from that, they go to legalism. Neither one are the right thing. Right? And so in legalism, just like the Pharisees, right? Think about the Pharisees, right? What do they do? They would take, can you hear me? No. Is my battery in?

The whole wireless system is out right now. Okay. I'll stand right here. That is going to be really hard. I'm not going to be able to think. Live stream may be just in trouble. The Pharisees, you know, they, there was the law that says, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Well, the Pharisees were kind of like, okay, so that means no ordinary work on Sunday. That means, well, for them Saturday, that means ordinary work is something like carrying something heavy. That means that you can't go any further than this distance and carry something. In other words, they start with the law and they build a fence and build a fence and build a fence. And then they look at you and say to the man who was by the pool of Bethesda that's carrying his mat, I'm sorry, but you violated the law. You're a sinner. It's like, whoa, whoa, that's not being a sinner. Like he's carrying his mat. The law is back here. Stop building fences around the law. That's what we as Baptists have done all of our lives. I'll give an example. I'm just going to irritate you all. You know, I was raised that Baptists don't dance. Do you know why?

Because the only place you can dance is in a bar. And you know why that's bad? Because there's alcohol there. And you know why that's bad? Because you're not supposed to be drunk. And so what we've done is we've built fence upon fence upon fence and saying, well, this is wrong because of that over there. And it's pharisaical. And the problem is, is that when Christ saved us, we did not earn our salvation. We did not deserve it. There was no way we could get it. But what we don't need to do is let that push us over into liberalism or legalism. It's sort of where Paul is going. He says, look at your experience and see you didn't earn this. So why are you trying to do something to keep it by earning it?

Well, let's look at the second thing then. The second thing, verse 6 through 9, verse 6 through 9, there's only one way of salvation. What Paul does is he moves on to prove that justification by faith alone is the right way to think and the only way to think and the only way someone is saved by looking at Abraham.

[12 : 58] Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Beloved, here's the thing you need to understand. Old Testament saints were saved exactly like us.

Old Testament saints were saved exactly the same way New Testament saints were saved, exactly the same way that we are saved, by faith in Christ.

There was not a separate system for Jews and a separate system for Gentiles. It was not that the Jews needed to obey the law to be saved and Gentiles believe in Jesus to be saved. All are saved by faith alone in Christ alone for justification. This is a quote that Paul is giving from Genesis chapter 15, verse 6. Not one single Old Testament saint was ever saved by keeping the law. Look at verse 11.

Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident. So that brings up a question. If Old Testament saints, if Abraham was saved by faith in Christ, just like us, then the question is, how did they get saved since Jesus had not died?

And that's what verse 8 answers. The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham saying, all the nations will be blessed in you. Did you hear it?

[14 : 36] Abraham had the gospel preached to him. Did you hear anything about Jesus's death in that gospel? Well, no. So how was that the gospel, right? That's the question. Well, you got to remember that Abraham is not in a vacuum, right? Abraham doesn't just appear on the scene outside of Adam and Eve and Noah and all of these people, right? He knows what has happened. He knows what's going on there. So what's happening is that the gospel is preached in the statement that all the nations will be blessed in you because he knows that one day there's coming one who will destroy the serpent. He knows. Every generation knew.

Every generation was looking for this promised offspring of the woman. Even Noah's father called him the one who would give us rest from our work and our toil. Every Old Testament saint that you read about was saved in exactly the same way we are. And the point of that is that there is only one way of salvation. It doesn't matter if a person's a Jew, a Hindu, a Buddhist. It doesn't matter if they're spiritualists. It doesn't matter if they are some sort of Christian denomination or some sort of cult.

It doesn't matter what country they live in. There is one and only one way for every person on the face of the planet to be saved. And that is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

And that ought to shape the way we present the gospel to other people. And a lot of people say a lot of things and there's a lot of things they say that are wrong. And as you present the gospel, you need to present the gospel not as another way to help them, but as the only way for the salvation of their souls.

And while we're there, I just want you to think about it from this point. Because there is salvation in only one way, by faith alone and Christ alone, the question is, do you know where your hope is?

[16 : 48] Can you identify the tiny little spot where your hope rests? I was thinking about it this way. I was thinking about the sky deck in Chicago on Willis Tower, right? It's this glassed in box on the side of the building. You can pay tickets to go sit inside this thing. No thanks. But let's just imagine that you've gotten tickets to sit in this thing and you know that it's going to plummet to the ground. And you know it four weeks in advance and you can't get out of it. What would you do? What would you go buy? What supplies would you gather up? Who would you talk to? So that you would not plummet to your death in that box. Whatever that is, maybe you decide to buy a parachute. Some of you are daredevils that way. Maybe you decide to buy a harness and a rope and tie off before the thing falls. Whatever that you would grab, that's where your hope is.

Do you understand? So the same thing is going to happen. One day God is going to come back in judgment and wrath is going to come back in judgment. And wrath is going to come back in judgment. And wrath is on the line. And the question is, is where's your hope on that day? Is your hope, well, I tried to do my best?

Then your hope is in yourself. Well, I tried to, you know, live by God's grace and make better decisions. Your hope is in yourself. Well, I've been a member of the church for ages. Your hope is in the church.

Well, I was baptized and your hope is in water. You see, a Christian is someone whose hope is in that moment. I mean, there you are. There you are.

God is saying, why should I let you into my heaven? Why should you not get wrath? The only right answer because of Jesus' blood and righteousness. That's it. That is the only right answer. That is the only thing we have. And so if you're a Christian, I pray that that would become so fixed in your mind that it would affect the way you do evangelism. It would affect the way you do your whole life. And if you're not a Christian, then I pray that you would trust the Lord today. The third thing is that the law cannot save. Verses 10 through 13. When you look at 10 through 13, you get, you get a couple of thoughts here. Verse 10, he says, for as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse for it's written cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them.

[19 : 55] It's a lot of words to basically say this. If you decide that what you want to do is try to earn your salvation by works of the law, then you are under a curse because you must keep all the law perfectly. You cannot make a single solitary mistake. You must keep it all because cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book. Deuteronomy 27. Deuteronomy 27, 26, 27, 28 tells the story of how when a new king is going to be anointed, they would go and read from the law between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. And on one mountain, half the people would be lined up and on the other mountain, the other half the people would be lined up. And as they would read through 27 and 28, the blessings and the curses, the people would shout in agreement. And so all of these curses written in Deuteronomy 27 is what Paul is pointing to because at the end of that, he says, cursed is everyone who does not abide by everything written here. There's none of us who can keep God's law perfectly. That's what Romans chapter 8, verse 7 and 8 say, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.

And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. We do not want to obey the law of God. We cannot keep the law of God. It's about like me. I cannot eat Brussels sprouts.

And I will not eat Brussels sprouts. And the reason that I cannot and will not eat Brussels sprouts is that I do not have the heart to do so. And that's exactly like us when it comes to the law. The natural man, the unsaved person, he does not want to keep God's law. He cannot keep God's law. He does not want to walk that path because he doesn't have the heart to do so. See, there's not a problem with the law of God.

The problem is with us. If you look at verse 11, he says, now we know no one's justified by the law before God is evident. I mean, this is the plain meaning of that verse. He's just telling us that there is no salvation by following the law. It was never meant to be that way. Why? Verse 12, the law is not of faith. On the contrary, who practices them, the law, should live by them.

You cannot trust in the law or in your law keeping as the object of your faith. I mean, just imagine, go back to the sky deck for just a second. You're standing before God on judgment day. He asks you, why should I let you into my heaven? And you would say, because I've kept the whole law from beginning to end from birth till death. Does that sound like somebody in the Bible you know? Should. There's a guy that we call the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and says, I've kept all the law.

[23 : 17] Why can't I have eternal life? And it's because he hadn't really kept the law. If we're going to try to understand how the law works, I think the best story is to think about the Exodus for a second.

You remember the Exodus, right? You've got Israel. They're in bondage to Egypt. They've been there for 400 years. They're in slavery. God comes to deliver them. And how many plagues does he bring?

10. On the 10th, it's the death angel. Not only then does he bring the death angel and give to them the Passover so that the death angel passes over their house. But as he leads them out, they get to the Red Sea and they get blocked up there by the shoreline as the water is before them and Pharaoh's armies are behind them. And so God splits apart the sea so they can march across dry ground, get to the other side. And when they do, he closes the water back over top of Pharaoh and his army and destroying them all. God delivered Israel out of bondage. He delivered them out of slavery. He delivered them from the destruction that Pharaoh was putting them through. But he also delivered them from their false gods because they had began to worship the Egyptian gods. He is the one who saved them. And after he saves them, look at Exodus chapter 20, verse 2. He says, I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of

Egypt, out of the house of slavery. And you know what the very next verse is? Have no other gods before me. In other words, he delivers a people so that they might then obey his law. You do not obey the law. I mean, think about this. This is this would be so ridiculous, right? Here you are at the Red Sea and you're like looking at this thing and here comes Pharaoh. He's marching out behind you. You know you're fixing to be destroyed. So what do you do? Okay. Circumcise everybody. God will deliver us at that point. No, no, because God does not use our obedience to save us. He saves us so that we might then be obedient to him.

As a Christian, we need to understand that we don't need to fall off into that liberalism or that legalism, but we are supposed to obey him. We are supposed to follow, I would even say, the Ten Commandments. Maybe one of the things you should do is go back and read the Ten Commandments.

[26 : 01] Maybe you should go back and get them memorized in your head. Maybe there's some hand signals we could teach you or maybe there's a song we could teach you to memorize the Ten Commandments. It's really important to do so because not only do you need to look at the Ten Commandments and realize that you need to obey out of gratitude because you've been set free, but just like our legal system, the Ten Commandments are case law. You know what case law means? Case law means that you have a commandment such as do not murder, but there's lots of ways to figure out how that works. In other words, do not murder positively means that you should protect life. Well, how should you do that? Well, there's lots of ways, I'm sure, that that could come about. Negatively, it means don't take life either by on purpose or accidentally or by negligence. But it also, in the Beatitudes, means that we can't be angry.

I mean, you heard me say last week, I'll say it again, anger is a symptom of idolatry. If you get angry at somebody, there's something you want and you want it way too much.

And that has become your ruling idol, your ruling God in your life that controls your behavior. So we need to know God's law, even though it doesn't save us, he has set us free so that we might obey him. And finally, in fourth, we want to look then at verses 13 through 14. How does all of this come about? What provides for us this justification? What provides for us this salvation? It's Jesus who became a curse for us. Verse 13, it says that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.

It's interesting that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. He did not become a curse for himself because he was sinless. He did not need to die on the cross for himself. He did not need to have his own life taken because he was sinless, but he gave his life willingly for us to redeem us.

This idea of redeeming is to buy us back. It's to pay the ransom price to buy us back. You know, in our culture, a ransom is something that a good guy pays to a bad guy to get something back from the bad guy.

[28 : 34] That's our culture. But the biblical culture is this. A ransom in the Bible is that a bad guy pays a good guy to keep the good guy from taking the bad guy's life. And so what do we have? You and I owe God a debt.

And to ransom us from him means that we need to pay this ransom price to him to keep him from killing us. But we're poor. That's what the Beatitudes are all about. We have a poverty of spirit. We have nothing to give to God.

You're not good. I'm not good. There's not a person in this room. There's not a person in this community that has a good heart. There's not a good person in this place. There's not a good person on this planet. There is none that are good.

There's none that are righteous. There are none that seek for God. And so we can't pay that ransom price. But the good news is that Christ came and paid that ransom price for us by his death upon the cross.

It says, cursed is everyone who hangs upon the tree. Because in Deuteronomy chapter 21, one of the civil laws is that if somebody was a criminal, if somebody had a major criminal offense, you were to hang them upon a tree as a public ridicule and humiliation, showing that this is something you should not do. And so Christ became our humiliation for us.

[30 : 10] Christ hung upon that tree for us. Christ died the criminal's death for us. He went to the cross on our behalf. We deserve that death. We deserve to be the criminals.

We deserve to be open to public shame. We deserve all of that. But Christ took it for us. And that is the good news. He tells us the reason why in verses 14. He tells us two of them.

So that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles. In other words, there's this breaking down of the wall between Jews and Gentiles. As a matter of fact, if you look back up in verses 7 and I think 9, it speaks about how if we're a faith, we're sons of Abraham. I'm going to tell you something right now.

That verse right there ought to change your eschatology. It ought to change the way you view the end times. Because Jews and Gentiles are saved in exactly the same way. And you, as a Gentile, if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a son of Abraham. The promises and the covenants are yours.

And so while left behind might make good fiction reading, it's terrible theology because it's not built upon the truth that you are a son of Abraham. You have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb in exactly the same way every Jew has. There is no difference. He died so that we might receive the blessing of Abraham. He goes on to say, what is this blessing? It's the second purpose. And that is, it's the promised Holy Spirit. What is the promised Holy Spirit? It's the third person of the Trinity.

[31 : 56] And he is the Spirit of Christ because he is the presence of the resurrected, ruling, reigning Christ in your life. See, in the Old Testament, it was always the Spirit of God because Christ had not yet come. It was always the Spirit of God because Christ had not died yet. It was always the Spirit of God because Christ had not risen yet. It was always the Spirit of God because Christ was not ruling and reigning just yet but now Christ has come now he has died now he has risen now he's ruling and reigning and when he says I'm going to give you another comforter to be with you he's saying the Holy Spirit of the resurrected ruling reigning Christ will be in you living in you for now till you come home that is what Christ's cross does for you your salvation doesn't depend upon you your growth in that salvation doesn't depend upon you it's all as Jonah says salvation belongs to the Lord so will you turn to him will you believe in him will you trust in him if you're not a Christian will you turn to him and if you are if you are will you lay this foundation in your life of how your salvation come how your salvation is there and from that will you live a holy life let's pray together so