

A Contrast of Two Laws

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: 30 July 2017

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[0 : 00] Please turn your Bibles to Galatians chapter 3. And this morning we are continuing our series in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

! And our attention is going to be directed to verses 23 through 29.! And I'm aware that a good number of you are joining us for the first time in this series this morning.

So before considering the passage, I want to take a few moments to review the letter up to this particular point that we will be considering this morning.

Paul wrote the letter of Galatians to a group of churches that he himself had established through the preaching of the gospel. But not too long after Paul had left these churches, Paul's teachers came in and they began to teach.

Contrary to what Paul had taught. And the Galatians began to embrace what the false teachers were teaching.

[1 : 04] And so Paul writes this letter of correction to them. And you would notice in chapter 1, in verses 6 and 7, Paul writes to them and he says, I'm astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you into the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but that there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. And then Paul goes on from that point and he argues for the truthfulness of the gospel he had preached to the Galatians.

He does this up until verse 14 of chapter 2. He argues to say to them, my gospel was the authentic, true gospel. Haven't changed it. I'm preaching the same thing I preached to you from the beginning. But up to verse 14 of chapter 2, Paul does not state specifically what the false gospel that these false teachers were preaching and the Galatians were turning to Eve.

He doesn't state it up to that particular point. It's not until we come to verses 15 and 16 of chapter 2 that we find exactly what this false gospel was.

[2 : 21] It was the belief that by keeping the law, a person could be justified or a person could be made right with God. A person could be accepted as righteous in God's sight.

And Paul describes this in verses 15 and 16. He writes, We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ.

So we also have believed in Jesus Christ in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

Here's why. Because by works of the law, no one will be justified. So Paul makes it very clear what the issue was.

And he says to them, You cannot be justified the way that you are seeking to be justified. But at this point, Paul does not tell them why. He doesn't tell them why they cannot be justified by the law.

[3 : 30] He doesn't do that until chapter 3. And you would notice in chapter 3, in the first six verses, Paul refers to the Galatians' experience of salvation.

And he reminds them of how God saved them. And then he goes on to teach them that it was God's plan from the Old Testament to save them in that particular way.

And in a nutshell, what Paul says in these six verses is that God saved them not by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified for sinners.

That's the point that Paul makes in these verses. And he says to them that their salvation was through faith in the same way that Abraham believed God and was counted to him as righteousness, and both were saved by faith and not by works of the law.

And then in verses 7 through 9, Paul makes a very important point to the Galatians. And really, it's an important point for all of us this morning and anyone who will wrongly seek to be justified by

keeping the law or by doing good.

[4 : 48] And the point that Paul makes is that God's plan to justify people through faith and not by works of the law was preached to Abraham.

It was always God's plan. And what God said to Abraham was, in you shall all nations be blessed. And again, this is a very important point that Paul makes.

It's important because it's really a reference point for us to see that the gospel is not some add-on in the New Testament. The gospel is not something novel that we have come to in the New Testament.

No, the gospel goes all the way back. It was proclaimed to Abraham thousands of years prior to Jesus Christ. Paul says that it was God promising to Abraham that he was going to bless the nations through him.

And this goes all the way back to Genesis. And he says, salvation is not by works. It is by faith. And then in verses 10 through 14 of chapter 3, Paul now begins to explain why we cannot be justified by keeping the law.

[6 : 07] Again, up to this point, all he says is, you can be justified by keeping the law. But it doesn't say why. Now he begins to explain. And what he says is that no one will be justified by the law because no one can be justified by the law.

No one will be justified by the law because no one can be justified by the law. And the reason he tells us that no one can be justified by the law is that to be justified by the law, you must keep the law completely and you must keep the law perfectly.

and since that's an impossibility for fallen people like us which is all people it means that no one can be justified by the law instead of being justified by the law what happens to us is we are all condemned by the law because we can't keep the law and being condemned by the law we all come under the curse of the law as stated in verse 10 everyone who does not abide by everything written in the law comes under a curse that's universal that's not just unique to the Jews who got the law directly that's to everyone everyone who does not abide by everything written in the law comes under a curse and then in verse 11 Paul tells us the only way that we can live or have eternal life and he says that it is by being justified by faith he says the righteous shall live by faith and then in verses 13 through 14 he tells us how we are able to come from underneath the curse of the law the only way to be removed from the curse of the law he tells us in verse 13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree and then more importantly in verse 14 he tells us why Christ redeems us from the curse of the law so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith now in Galatians 3 15 through 22 which we considered last week Paul points to a more fundamental problem with what the Galatians were believing with what they were turning to Paul argues that the giving of the law through Moses did not replace God's promise of salvation through Abraham and it's a very important point that Paul makes to see a further reason why it is impossible for the law to save us Paul argues that God's promised salvation through Abraham long before the law was given did not change when the law was given the giving of the law did not change that promise the law was secondary to it and the law was also temporary until Christ came now with that review let us now consider Galatians 3 23 through 29 I'm reading from the English Standard Version please follow along as I read Galatians 3 starting at verse 23 now before faith came we were held captive under the law imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed so then the law 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 and if you are Christ then you are Abraham's offspring heirs according to promise let's pray together

[10 : 46] Father we pause in this moment to look to you to ask for your superintendence over the preaching of your word and its application to our hearts Father we ask that you would speak to us from your word I ask oh Lord that above and beyond my words and my voice your words and your voice will be heard Father I pray that you would grant me the spirit of God to be able to proclaim your word to these who are gathered today I ask Lord that you would keep me from error I ask that you would keep me from excess and Lord that you will do all things this morning for the glory of your name and for the good of all who are gathered in this place

Father do what only you can do now as your word is preached we pray in Jesus name amen now in these seven verses that we have just read the apostle Paul is contrasting the reality of two lives first he describes in real terms life under the law that the Galatians were oddly being drawn to and then he describes life in Christ that the Galatians were oddly being drawn away from and it should be quite obvious that the only reason that anyone is drawn to seek salvation by keeping the law is that he or she really does not understand the bondage and the misery of what it really means to be under the law and it's also quite obvious that when one is drawn away from Christ the life of being justified by faith in Christ he or she truly does not understand the riches and the blessings of being in Christ the Galatians clearly didn't understand and so in these seven verses the apostle Paul contrasts these two lives and he reminds them of a spiritual reality that is true for every person who has come to Christ he reminds them of this simple but profound truth those who are in Christ are no longer under the law again simple but very profound and actually very far reaching as we will see in these seven verses the Galatians thought that they were putting themselves under the law for the first time they thought they were doing something for the first time as they were keeping the law and Paul reminds them that they were formerly under the law and that in

Christ they were set free from the law and the apostle Paul makes this point by contrasting two lives first life under the law and second life in Christ and now remaining time this morning I want to consider each of these lives and see how Paul argues that life in Christ by necessity means being freed from life under the law let's consider the first life under the law now you remember last week we saw in verse 19 that the law was added because of sin until Christ came when Christ came people were able to be justified through faith in Christ and now here in verses 23 and 24 Paul describes what life under the law is like and it's clear that he's doing it for the Galatians because the Galatians don't understand they did not understand what they were trying to return to even though Christ had been preached to them even though they had come to know Christ they did not understand that they were turning back to something that Christ had actually redeemed them from and so in verses 23 and 24 Paul provides this vivid description to help them to see what life under the law was like and he uses two particular descriptions the first one is a prison his first description is that life under the law is like a prison that kept us captive before faith came now when you think of a prison especially for those of us who have been to our local prison when you think of a prison there's nothing favorable about it nothing positive nothing desirable about it speaks of limitation in some cases being locked up the whole day and maybe getting out for half an hour if there are enough guards to let you out speaks about control it speaks about the removal of freedoms that ordinarily people would enjoy

Paul says we were imprisoned by the law and to the law and we couldn't keep its demands we could not escape the demands of the law the law would not let us go free it made sure that we could not escape so that's the first description he uses for the law a prison the second is a guardian Paul says the law is like a guardian and he uses a word that would have been very familiar to the Galatians the guardian was a tutor or a guide of boys typically the guardian was a slave and his job was to escort a young boy who was under his charge to and from school and watch over his conduct generally and in many respects the guardian was a disciplinarian and we're told that guardians were sometimes harsh to the point of being cruel and I'm told that if you look at some ancient drawings of guardians it was regular to see them with some kind of a rod or cane in their hand because that is what they primarily did they brought discipline so those are the two descriptions that Paul uses to describe what life under the law is like so how should we understand these two descriptions about the law as a prison and as a guardian and here

[17:56] I want to lean on deceased British pastor and theologian John Stott who explains it in a way far better than I can here's what he writes in what sense is the law a prison jailer and a child's disciplinarian or tutor the law expresses God's will for his people telling us what to do and what not to do and warns us of the penalties of disobedience since we have all disobeyed we have fallen under its just condemnation we're all under sin and therefore are all under the law by nature and practice we are under a curse that is the curse of the law nothing we do can deliver us from its cruel tyranny like a jailer it has thrown us into prison like a guardian it rebukes and punishes us for our misdeeds now Paul is not discussing and describing the law in a vacuum he's not just talking about it theoretically no he's talking about it in light of the

Galatians he's talking about it in light of their reality and their experience and in a sense what he's saying to the Galatians is you were formerly under the captivity of the law you were in prison you

were formerly under the guardian of the law and you want to go back that's what you're actually doing you're not pursuing something new it is something old that was a part of the spiritual reality of your life before you came to Christ now as hard as the law is being described as a prison and being described as this guardian the law in and of itself was good the law is good the problem with the law is the problem with us and that problem is sin we can't keep the demands of the law but God never intended the law to be permanent remember it was given until the offspring should come to whom the promise was made we considered that last week that's the point that

Paul was making the law was given until and here again he makes that point in verses 23 and 24 now before faith came we were kept captive under the law imprisoned until the coming of faith again I love the way John starts so clearly explains this he writes both verses tell us that the oppressive work of the law was temporary and that it was ultimately intended not to hurt but to bless its purpose was to shut us up in prison until Christ should set us free or to put us under tutors until Christ should make us sons and then he goes on to say only Christ can deliver us from the prison to which the curse of the law has brought us because he was made a curse for us only Christ can deliver us from the law's harsh discipline because he makes us sons who obey from love for their father and are no longer naughty children needing tutors to punish them so in summary Paul says the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith because the law could not justify us although we're not a large group this morning I would not be surprised if there are those who have come to Christ and yet still wrestle with keeping some aspects of the law wrestle about the Sabbath day wrestle with issues like can I eat lobster can I eat kunk can I eat pork and some whose conscience would tell them that if you do that then you're actually putting your salvation in jeopardy it is a going back to the Lord it's a kind of spiritual recidivism it's a kind of going back to prison the crisis set us free from all of those legal demands that we could not in and of ourselves keep because even if we can keep some of them we could not keep all of them and truth be told even the ones we think we can keep we don't keep them perfectly so we're not even keeping those ones the law can only bring condemnation

Christ is the one who brings us justification so that's life under the law that's the first life Paul then goes on to contrast it life in Christ look at what he says again in verse 25 but now that faith has come we are no longer under a guardian Paul tells us that the difference that faith in Christ makes to those who put their faith in Christ Paul says you're no longer under guardian and he says we who have put our faith in Christ are in Christ Jesus no longer under the law no longer under guardian but now in Christ Jesus and this term in Christ Jesus is a very important term it is a term that speaks about our union with

[24 : 01] Jesus Christ it is a salvation term it talks about us being united with Christ that we are in Christ at this moment every single person in this room is in one of two historical men that we read about in scripture the first one is Adam and what the bible says is we were all born into Adam the first Adam we are partakers of his nature and of his sin and of his disobedience he was our proxy as it were when he said he plunged the entire world into sin we were born into the first Adam and the second man is Jesus Christ whose scriptures refer to as the last Adam in first Corinthians 15 he is referred to as the last Adam and we are in him by being born again we are born again into the last Adam we're born into the first Adam we're born again into the last Adam and in a sense there's a union with both of these men if you're not in Jesus Christ you have no union with Jesus Christ you have a union with the first Adam the fallen man it is only by being born again that we can be in Christ and we can have union with Christ this spiritual union that Paul is actually referring to when he talks about us being in Christ so if you've not trusted Christ as Lord and personal Savior then your spiritual union is still with the first Adam you're under the law you're under it's just condemnation because you are unable to keep it you are under the curse the law and it is only through turning from sin and turning to Christ and trusting in him and who he is and what scripture says he has done for sinners being their substitute and taking their place dying the death they deserve to die it is by embracing him it is by putting faith in him that you're able to change locations from being united with this first

Adam condemned to sin and death and under the law and to come to the last Adam the one through whom the promise given to Abraham of salvation by faith becomes a reality Paul starting in verse 26 shares with us three specific results that flow from our new spiritual status of being in Christ the first one that he shares in verse 26 is that we are sons of God you're in Christ then he says you're sons of God obviously this would include females when we place our faith in Christ and

we become united with him God adopts us as his children again my favorite commentator John Stott here's how he puts it God is no longer our judge who through the law has condemned and imprisoned us God is no longer our tutor who through the law restrains and chastises us God is now our father who in Christ has accepted us and forgiven us and then he goes on he says we are neither prisoners awaiting the final execution of our sentence nor children minors under the restraint of a tutor but sons of God and heirs of his glorious kingdom enjoying the status and privileges of grown up sons now I think it's important for us to recognize that it is only in Christ Jesus that we become sons of God and I think for us especially in our context here in the Bahamas this is an important truth that gets blurred in a lot of contexts that we find ourselves in oftentimes at public events people would be led into the Lord's prayer and they would say our father who art in heaven or sometimes you would hear someone say we're all God's children and see scripture doesn't support that what scripture says is that only those who are in Christ are sons of God only those who are in Christ are God's children God is the creator of us all but he's not the father of us all God adopts us when we are in Christ he adopts us as his!

[29 : 16] But we're not all the children of God just because we are no we become children of God through adoption through being in Christ through coming from outside of the first Adam and being in the last Adam Jesus Christ it's not a popular truth but friends it is a biblical truth and I think often times when we cause people to face the reality then they begin to think about where they really are verse 27 Paul tells us for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ now here he's talking about our those of us who put faith in Jesus Christ he's talking about the visual of water baptism it represents this uniting with Christ it represents this union with Christ clearly this passage and elsewhere in scripture just to be sure does not teach that we are saved by water baptism that water baptism itself unites us to

Christ it is a picture of the spiritual union that we have with Christ that we have been immersed into Christ but clearly the point of that union with Christ is that it is by faith Paul uses the word faith five times in these seven verses so we shouldn't get the impression that he's saying that baptism brings about this union no baptism is a visual of that union so in turning away from the gospel and faith in Christ alone as the basis for their justification the Galatians were turning away from being sons of God they were turning back to wanting to be this ward under a guardian and the same is true for us this morning if we are turning from faith in Christ alone for justification then we are turning back to the law and no longer being sons of

God but as I thought about that I realized that there is again even this greater and more sober reality those who are not in Christ are still under the law still under its curse still under its demand still under its condemnation and the only way to come from underneath it is through Jesus Christ putting faith in him in verse 28 Paul tells us the second result of being in Christ he says we are one in Christ notice how he says it in verse 28 Paul's point is that in Christ we enjoy unity with one another despite our differences all who belong to

God belong to each other all who have God as their father have each other as brothers and sisters but not exactly what is Paul saying what does Paul mean by telling us that there is neither Jew nor Greek slave nor free male nor female what does he mean by that well Jew nor Greek is referring to racial distinctions slave nor free is speaking about social distinctions because in that society if you're a free person you are higher in the social order than the slave and then even within those groups there was a pecking order in society among the free and then there was a pecking order in society among the slaves depending on the task that you had and then male nor female is referring to sexual distinctions now when we look around this room and

I want you to take a look around the room we have distinctions in this room there are racial distinctions very obvious there are sexual distinctions very obvious perhaps the social distinctions are not as obvious but they are among us and I think we know that in most settings economics determines social standing social status and often times we talk about socioeconomic status because the two are actually connected together wealth and money determine things for us they determine where we live for example they determine the food we eat or don't eat the clothes we wear the schools we attend and so many other things now the reality is that for those of us in this room who have come to Christ we would acknowledge that when we came to

[34 : 58] Christ our race didn't change when we came to Christ our social status didn't change when we came to Christ our sex didn't change we continued to be male or female so what does Paul mean when he says there is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither slave nor free there is

neither male nor female I trust you're not tired this morning of me turning to my friend John Stott but I will read hopefully my last quote I think I may have one other so please indulge me but here's how John Stott puts it he says of course every person who belongs to a certain sorry of course every person belongs to a certain race and nation has been nurtured in a particular culture and is either male or female when we say that

Christ has abolished these distinctions we mean not that they do not exist but notice but that they do not matter they're still there but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship we recognize each other as equals brothers and sisters in Christ by the grace of God we would resist the temptation to despise one another or patronize one another for we know ourselves to be all one person in Christ Jesus Paul is saying that unlike in the world race is not an advantage or a disadvantage in Christ social status is not an advantage nor a disadvantage in Christ sex is not an advantage or a disadvantage in Christ in Christ those things do not matter now we don't become color blind when we come to

Christ we don't become indifferent to the realities of a person's circumstances we don't look at a person who is needy and say well there's no social status in Christ and so we ignore the need no we still have eyes for those needs but see it doesn't matter it does not matter that that person might be needy we reach out and we meet the need but we don't become blind to them even in terms of sex we don't become blind to the fact that males are males and females are females we treat those with the kind of difference and deference that is required I mean for example if I'm driving and I come upon one of the men from the church on the side of the road with a flat tire changing the tire it's not likely that I'm going to really push them aside and say let me change the tire for you I'll probably stand and encourage them try to help them I can change a tire and that's not why I wouldn't say let me!

change it but if I came across one they'll change their tire I would go there and say let me do that and I'll change their tire we treat them in the appropriate ways that we are to relate to the sexes so we don't become blind to those realities Paul's point is it doesn't matter it's not an advantage it's not a disadvantage so when you looked around the room a!

[39 : 05] while! you saw differences you saw different races you saw different sexes again none of those things matter but the sad thing is see in the world they matter in the world they really matter in the world if you have a particular accent it matters you'll be treated in a particular way sometimes not positively if you have a particular last name sometimes you can be discriminated against because of that last name it happens in the world Paul says not so in Christ and the tragedy is when what happens in the world happens in Christ happens in the church Paul says no when we are in

Christ those distinctions though they are there though they are real they don't matter if the world praises it when you come to the church don't expect it to be praised it doesn't matter if the world despises it when you come to the church don't expect it to be despised it shouldn't be despised and God forbid that it should be despised in this church brothers and sisters God has done something wonderful and beautiful in joining us to himself through Jesus Christ and one and the beauty of it is that though we are one we are different see God could have made us all one race and removed all the distinctions and everything else and then we really would be one in every respect we would be one in Christ and we would be one visually but what a picture we are to the world when the world is able to see our oneness!

our unity our love for one another and they recognize that there are differences that matter in the world that make a difference in the world and here with this we need to be honest because we have lived in the world for a long time and perhaps even some of us we have lived in the world longer than we have been in Christ and it's so easy to hold on to ways of relating!

to people that we learned in the world that we experienced in the world and to relate to brothers and sisters in Christ in the same way when that happens we need to confess it we need to confess it as sin we need to turn away from it and we need to ask God to give us grace to recognize this truth and this reality that we read about in verse 28 that these distinctions don't matter they're not a premium for us they're not a discount they're not a liability they are what they are and when we demonstrate our oneness it's a beautiful picture and it is a strong message to a watching world there are some people who use Galatians 3 28 to argue against biblical manhood and womanhood and by that I mean what scripture reveals about the roles that God has given to the sexes the distinctives that God has given to us and some would argue for example

I've heard many use this text to advocate for women elders and preachers and clearly Paul is not addressing that and clearly elsewhere Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 3 for example and Titus chapter 1 where he addresses the qualifications of elders and he addresses that it should be a man a husband of one wife he starts out with obviously something a woman can't be and I just mention that in passing because this is such a popular verse for so many people to go to and on the face of it it's an argument that one can easily accept if you hear it in isolation and not in reference to the rest of what scripture actually has to say but the third result that Paul tells us that comes from our union with Christ our being in Christ is he tells us in verse 16 we are Abram's offspring not 16 sorry in verse 29 he says and if you are

[44 : 07] Christ then you are Abram's offspring heirs according to the promise now you remember back in verse 16 Paul identifies Christ as Abraham's offspring and now he tells us that by virtue of being in Christ we are Abram's offspring and heirs according to the promise in other words we are Abraham's spiritual seed we are the recipients of God's promise and think about that that is that is amazing truth that we're hearing you know one of the realities that Paul teases out in Romans 9 in particular is he says that not everyone who is a physical descendant of Abraham is truly a child of Abraham and in another way he is making the same point where he is able to say to us that if we are in

Christ then we are Abram's offspring and heirs according to the promise so if you think about that that pertains to Jews and Gentiles the way Jews become heirs to the promise is they are to be in Christ if they're not in Christ they're not heirs to that promise even though they may be able to trace their physical lineage back to Abraham and Gentiles who cannot trace a physical lineage back to Abraham if they are in Christ then they are Abraham's offspring we have a connection to a man who lived more than 4,000 years ago all because of Jesus Christ if we have put our trust in him we become the beneficiaries of this promise of salvation by faith that God gave to Abraham the false teachers were impressed by Moses and Paul is making the point no be impressed by Abraham because if you're in

Christ you are Abraham's offspring you are Abraham's seed now why would anyone knowingly turn from this why would anyone knowingly turn from such a glorious inheritance to return to the prison and the guardianship of the law Paul earlier said to the Galatians who has bewitched you who has played with your mind to cause you to do what you are doing they were spiritually bewitched and so Paul lays out for them these two lives says Christ redeemed you from that you want to go back to that but look at what he has redeemed you to you sons of God you're one in Christ you're Abraham's seed all because of that promise that God gave to Abraham that he would justify by faith but Paul not only holds out these two lives for the Galatians friends he holds them out for us this morning we are all under the law or we are in Christ there is no in between one of two places we are under the law under its condemnation under its curse or we are in Christ and those of us who are in!

we have nothing! to boast! it is the mercy and grace of God that has transformed us and transported us from being under the law and being in Christ it's not because we were smarter it's not because we were better it's because grace has come to us and grace has changed our spiritual locations from being under the law and that life and being in Christ and the new life and those who are under the law you will acknowledge that you have not trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and I think for many people it's harder to acknowledge that you're under those harsh realities of the law but I think most people who are honest would also say no I'm not in Christ and if you're not in Christ then you are under the law that's bad news but the good news is God has sent those who are under the law from its curse if they would put their faith and their trust in him

[49 : 14] Jesus became a curse for those under the curse who would express faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and so this morning right where you are you can turn to Christ turn from sin trust in Jesus Christ call on him we sang about it this morning everyone who calls upon his name they will be saved that is a promise everyone without exception you call on his name and you will be saved and that law that you couldn't fulfill that we can't fulfill Jesus has fulfilled and we can put our faith in him and even when we fail we don't need to despair we repent but we trust in him who kept it perfectly for us that's my prayer for you this morning is that you would turn to

Christ and that you would like those of us who have found mercy you too would be in Christ amen let's pray