

Ringfenced!

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[0 : 00] I do apologize for not asking you to stand to sing. I'm not quite sure whether it has become a habit yet, but please don't wait for me to say stand for the third singing. Just do it and that will be everybody will know where because we do it now all the time for the third and the last singing.

We're going to turn again to Galatians chapter 3 and we're going to look together at words that you find in verse 13. Page 1171 and it's Galatians chapter 3 and 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 is hanged on a tree.

So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith. I just want us to look at verse 13 in particular.

Anybody who knows about the Christian faith will tell you that the Christian faith has a person at its center.

[1 : 26] It's not a manifesto. It's not a set of rules. It's not some kind of political structure. It is a good news.

It's a message that centers on the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is there from the beginning to the end. And if you lose sight of Jesus as the person at the center of the gospel, you've lost sight of everything.

You might as well throw the whole thing away if you lose sight of Jesus. And of course, this is what the writings of the Apostle Paul are about. It's what the New Testament is about. It's actually what the Old Testament is about as well.

Looking forward to the day when God himself would enter into our world as a baby and when Jesus would die on the cross. And there are many ways in which the Bible expresses what Jesus did when he died at Calvary.

Calvary lies and stands at the very heart of the gospel. The death of Jesus is the payment for sin. It is the once and for all sacrifice by which our sin, if we trust in him, are paid for.

[2 : 38] And the whole point, the whole objective of what we're doing today is to try and understand more and more and more of what his death means.

And the way in which the Bible does that is it describes the death of Jesus in different ways. It comes at it from different directions. It looks at it from different perspectives.

Let me give you some of the ways in which the New Testament describes the death of Jesus Christ. For example, 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 3. Paul says, I deliver to you as first importance that which I also receive.

Here it is, that Christ died for our sins. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.

What that means is that you will not really understand the phrase Christ died for our sins unless you understand something of the scriptures, which is the Old Testament.

Here's another one. Timothy chapter 1st, Timothy chapter 2 and verse 5, where Paul says Christ Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all.

[3 : 50] In other words, the word ransom is the key word in order to understand the death of Jesus. That's another perspective in which the Apostle Paul describes the death of Jesus.

There's all kinds of different. For example, here we go. Here's another one. Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14. Jesus partook of flesh and blood that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

There's another perspective. This time it's not the ransom. This time it is to destroy the one who has the power of death. The devil is now defeated through the death of Jesus.

That's another way of looking at the dot. That's another achievement of the cross. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 24. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live to

righteousness.

One of the most famous verses of all is 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21 where Paul says, God made him to be sin who knew no sin.

[5 : 04] In other words, Jesus, who was ultimately perfect being God, God made Jesus to be sin. So that in him he might, or rather we, might become the righteousness of God.

Now in all of these references we're taught that Christ gave his life as a ransom or a sacrifice for sin. But here the apostle puts it slightly in another way altogether.

Verse 13. Let me just read it once again. Try and grasp what Paul is saying in this verse. He says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Now I'm going to ask you a question. Do you really want to understand the gospel and the death of Jesus today? If you understand, here's one more piece of information which will help you and bring you to a clearer and a greater understanding of what took place at Calvary.

Here is Paul and he's giving us this information and it will help us to understand more of the glory and the greatness and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ who laid down his life that day, that moment at Calvary.

[6 : 25] Here it is again. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

Now how are we going to understand this? Well, we first of all have to understand what the law means. He redeemed us from the curse of the law. What does that mean? Well, for most of us, the law is the sign on the road that says 30 miles an hour.

However, the law is the way in which the government have regulated our lives, what you can do and what you can't do. That for us is the law.

But that's not what Paul's talking about when he talks about the law. Again, he's going back to the Old Testament and he's talking about the law that God gave to Israel, his people, through Moses. When Moses brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, the first place they came to was Mount Zinai. And God commanded Moses to come up to the top of Mount Zinai.

[7 : 26] And on Mount Zinai, Moses spent 40 days talking to God, listening to God and receiving the commandments that would regulate the life of the people of Israel.

And of course, these are encapsulated in the Ten Commandments that were written on the two tables of stone with which Moses came down the mountain on that occasion.

Now, the law, of course, is much more than that. The law also contained regulations for sacrifices and feasts and special days and the Passover and the tabernacle and the way to worship and the priests and the priest's clothing and all of these things.

That was the law as well. But I'm going to leave that side to one side. That's what you call the ceremonial law. All the law that related to the priests and the sacrifices and special days.

All of that was the ceremonial law. Let's leave that to one side. And let's talk about the moral law because that's what Paul is talking about here in this verse.

[8 : 29] Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. And the law, of course, was encapsulated in the Ten Commandments. You shall not have any other.

It's the first one. You shall not have any other gods before me. First commandment. Second commandment. You shall not make to yourselves an image or a likeness of anything that is in heaven or earth.

Heaven above or the earth beneath or the waters. You shall not bow down yourself to anything else apart from God. Third commandment. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord.

Fourth commandment. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Fifth commandment. Honor your father and your mother so that your days may be long in the land. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery.

All of these were the Ten Commandments. And, of course, these commandments extended to the whole of life. And they encapsulated the way in which we think, the way in which we conduct ourselves, and the way in which we speak.

[9 : 37] And, essentially, they say two things. They said, first of all, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. That was the first commandment.

And then the second thing was, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So, the commandments related to the relationship between us and God and then relationship between us and one another within Israel.

And so, that was the Ten Commandments. Now, here's the point. As soon as, the moment you begin to try to live in accordance with those Ten Commandments, you make a horrendous discovery.

An immediate, immediate discovery which is not good news. And here's the discovery. You discover that you can't do it.

You can't do it. This is the problem that I have with people who tell me, oh, there's, the Bible is, you know, it's got so much good.

[10:57] And it really, it gives you the principles, the ethics by which this world ought to live. Which, of course, is partly true.

The problem is, is when you just stop there. And that's, and you think that's all that the Bible is. The problem is, you can't do it.

And the reason that you can't live the way God wants you and commands you to live, is because of something. It's because of a force and a voice within us, which the Bible calls sin.

No, that means that the moment that I even try to live sincerely as God wants me to live, I find that it's a complete failure.

I might know all the theory. I suppose it's something like if you drive a car. You might know all the theory. You might be doing everything right. The engine could be switched on.

[12:02] The car could be in gear. You've got enough acceleration. You're letting your foot off the clutch. But if there's a rope that is between, that's tied between the car and the brick wall behind you, the car's going to go nowhere.

And as soon as you do even try to do everything right, you find that there's another force that's keeping the car in one place. It's like playing a game of football.

You could explain to one team the rules. There's the objective. The objective is to take this ball, and your objective is to, as an 11-man team, to shoot the ball into that net.

And you go, that's easy. There's nothing difficult about that. There's nothing unclear about that. But as soon as you start, you find that there's another team whose objective is to keep the ball out of their net and to put the ball into your net.

And you discover that not only is it not easy, but if the other team is more powerful than you, you lose. That's what sin is all about.

[13:06] We all know the theory of, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord. Honor your father and mother.

You shall not have any graven image. You shall not... We know the theory, but as soon as you sincerely try to put it into practice and live as God wants you to live, you discover that there is an opposing force.

You discover there's a team that is working against you. You discover that there's a rope keeping you in one place and will not let you achieve what you want.

And the problem is that you discover that there's another, there's a voice also that actually doesn't want to keep God's law and to live as he wants you to live.

And what's worse is that the very thing that actually governs the way you live actually provokes evil and badness within you.

[14:11] Have you never been tempted to go more than 30 miles an hour when there's a 30 miles an hour sign on the road? Have you never been tempted just because there's a sign on the train that says do not pull this cord to pull the cord?

Have you never been tempted when you were a young person when you knew that there was pears on your neighbor's garden to climb over the wall and to steal the pears?

Even though you knew that that was stealing, you knew that the pears were there and there was something exciting about the prospect of stealing them. And there's something particularly tasty about stolen fruit. That's what sin is.

And okay, that's very simplistic, but it applies to the whole of life. And that's what the apostle Paul discovered. He lived if anyone tried to live as God wanted him to live.

There was nobody as faithful as Saul of Tarsus. And he discovered he was an utter failure until, of course, the day on the road to Damascus when he discovered that there was forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

[15:17] See, it's all very well knowing the theory and knowing the Ten Commandments. It's a different thing altogether, trying to put them into practice. And God's word comes to us.

God tells us that if we fail in one respect, we've broken the whole law. Even one itself is a breach of the entire law of God. And there is only one punishment for a breach in God's law, and that is death. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death. He makes it abundantly clear for us. And, of course, people, they feel that this is unfair. Well, why is it unfair?

Nothing God does is unfair. We're dealing with God here. And what God says is always the truth. It's always what has to be. God cannot adjust himself to accommodate our requirements.

You can't go to God and say, God, that's too extreme, or not fair, or it should be different. How dare we? Are we actually suggesting that we know more than God?

[16:22] Or that something that God says is wrong? He's God. We are us. We have absolutely no... It's okay to go and negotiate your way with some other human being. It's okay to go if you're in a court of law and you say to the judge, ah, yes, but please take into account all this.

Here's the judge of all the earth, the whole universe. You don't need to tell him anything. You can't tell him anything. He is altogether good. He never makes mistakes. Never makes wrong judgments. He doesn't need anyone to tell him anything. He knows everything about us. And he tells us. And the reason he tells us today that the wages of sin is death is because he wants us to be saved. And he wants us to know, first of all, what we're being saved from. There's no point in talking about being saved if you don't realize what you're being saved from. If you don't realize that, then you don't think you need to be saved at all.

God lays it on the line. He tells us in no uncertain terms where we are with relation to him. And he says, you've broken my law. And you've been breaking it ever since day one, since Adam and Eve.

[17:29] We looked at this last week. Since day one, when Adam and Eve chose to go their own way instead of living in harmony with me. That's what happened in Genesis chapter three.

You chose, Adam and Eve chose their own path. And having done so, they brought in sin and destruction and misery and evil and corruption and murder and all the things that we see in this world between man and his fellow man and natural disaster, disease, disappointment, all despair and all the darkness you find in this world.

And every one of us is part of it. Look at your own life. Ask yourself some honest questions. Today about yourself. Don't go pointing the finger to other people as if somehow they were the ones that deserve God's punishment.

All of us, every single one of us are in the same position before God. And that means we're under a curse. Let's move on to the next part of the verse.

Verse 13, Christ redeemed us. We've talked about the law, God's law. But what is the curse of the law? What does the curse mean?

[18:44] Let me just say at the very beginning, please do not think about magic spells or magic charms or all the kind of fairy story curses that you're reading in all these kind of books.

Forget all that. That's not what curse means in the Bible. Let me tell you what curse means.

Something that was cursed in the Bible, it's very simply this, was something or someone who was ring-fenced for destruction.

It's as simple as that. Anything. Could be a thing. Could be a person. Could be a city. But it was when God said, draw a line round that and everything within that line, within that circle, is destroyed.

That was a curse. Last week in Dundee, I'm told that, reliably by someone who lives in Dundee, that they destroyed the Hilltown Maltese.

Do you know what the Hilltown Maltese are? I should have said, before last week it was R. Now it's where. The Hilltown Maltese were a bunch of, were a row of massive 1960s high-rise flats, which were last week dramatically, spectacularly destroyed.

[20:12] Of course, the whole thing was planned very carefully so that when the explosions went off, they all fell within their own footprint. It's amazing, isn't it? I just don't understand how people can be so sure that if you put explosives in certain places and buildings, that the building will just sort of collapse on itself.

But apparently that was the whole thing. Because if I'd gone any other way, of course, other things would have been destroyed. But a thing like that doesn't happen overnight. Destruction like that doesn't happen overnight. Because weeks or months even before, the council must have made a decision, these flats are going to be destroyed.

Now how are we going to do it? And they must have planned it very carefully. But as part of that plan, these flats were fenced. For obvious reasons.

You can't have people going too near them because otherwise that person could have been killed. But the fence had to go all the way around all the flats that were going to be destroyed.

And anything inside that fence was doomed to destruction. That's what a curse is. According to the Bible.

[21 : 23] And you see it, for example, in Jericho. Remember Joshua? When he fought the battle of Jericho. And God said, Jericho is cursed.

And what that meant was, it was like you drew a line. Not literally. But there was a kind of line or a circle around Jericho. And that was part of what the significance was.

You remember how just before the walls fell, the army had to march around the city seven times. That was what a curse was.

God is saying, you see the circle? Anything inside that circle is destroyed. That was a curse. And God is saying, in this verse, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

The curse of the law is that every single one of us lives with a circle around him or her. And God says to us, everything within that circle is doomed for death.

[22 : 31] Every one of us. No exceptions. Because we have broken God's law. Because we have sinned. Because we're part of the fallen, sinful human race. He has to do it.

The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins shall die. And death, of course, in the Bible means more simply than natural, physical death. That's bad enough.

That's why death has come into the world. And that's why regularly we stand at an open grave and we wonder, why do I have to be here? Why, amidst all the joys and the greatness of life, why is there this awful end that every single one of us has to face?

And the Bible tells us it's not the end. The Bible tells us that it's not just the separation of the soul from the body, not just the body, our bodies going into the grave, it is the separation eternally of us from God.

But eternal death is something that continues for all eternity as the punishment of God. That's what the Bible tells us. Clearly, that's the curse of the law because we have failed to live as God has commanded us to live.

[23 : 42] Isn't that awful? doesn't that make you writhe in your seat? It does me. I'll tell you, I can't preach on this subject. I cannot look at these words without feeling this incredible sense of unease and pain.

that's why I have to move on. I have to, this is not the last word. This is not the word, I'm only just halfway through.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. There's a way of salvation. There's a way of escape. It doesn't have to be like that. It doesn't have to be death.

It can be life. Life is promised to us only by Jesus Christ. Now look at the other side of the story.

What Paul is really saying here is that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

But look at what it is by being, becoming a curse for us. By becoming a curse for us. Look at what God did.

[24 : 45] He sent his own son, Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity into the world to become a baby, to become a man, a human being, and to live with other human beings.

To be brought up in a human family as a human being, to feel the pain and the misery and the darkness of a fallen world. Do you know what? It was like there was a circle round about Jesus all his life, from the very moment he was born, and everything within that circle was going to die.

Do you know that? That's what I said before, isn't it? That's what I said before about us. But you would think that Jesus should be an exception because he was perfect.

He never sinned once. So why is there a circle round him? And why is God saying that everything within that circle has to die? He doesn't deserve to die. He doesn't. He never deserved to die. And the reason that there's a circle round him, and the reason God says he has to die, is because he took on the guilt of our sin.

And that's exactly what happened. He did die. He became a curse for us. Do you get it? Do you understand it now? Do you understand the idea of the curse?

[26 : 12] The ring fence. Jesus was ring fenced for death. And the death included the pain and the misery and the agony and the dereliction. My God, he said.

He cried out in agony. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? That's the length to which Jesus went to become a curse for us.

That's the destruction, the death, the punishment, the hell that Jesus suffered for us. for us. Instead of us, in our place, as our substitute, so that that curse, that ring fence around me could be removed.

And so that another fence could be put around me and so that God could say everything within that fence lives forever. That's God's promise.

[27 : 22] That's God's promise. How can I get the new fence? How can I get the life? How can I discover what Jesus did for me personally?

Can I have that life? Yes, you can. How can I have that life? Jesus tells us unless a man is born again. You must be born again, says God.

Born again. And when a person comes to faith in Jesus, when a person comes to see how much they need him, like we've been looking at here, and they come to discover, I don't have this Jesus, I don't have this life, I've got this fence around me, and I know I'm going to be destroyed, and I know that I deserve every single ounce of it, because God is righteous.

But how can I be saved? You come to Jesus, and you accept what he has done for you on your behalf as your substitute.

You take it to be your own. You can't do anything to earn it. Don't even try. You can't do it. It's free. It's without price.

[28 : 42] It doesn't cost you anything, and yet God demands everything. He demands your life. He demands your surrender, your total surrender. He demands that you turn away from your old life, and you come to him with nothing in your hands, and you're bankrupt.

You don't have anything to bring him, and you come and you ask him, Lord, please have mercy on me because Christ died for me. And God says, ask and you will receive.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. And the person who comes in faith and simply asks for that new life is the person who's born again because God does it.

it's a little bit like, if I could just close with an example, it's a little, this verse reminds me of if you ever, if you ever watch someone being born, not everyone has that privilege, of course.

I've had that privilege several times of watching my children being born. It's the most amazing sight.

As soon as a baby comes into the world, you know what happens?

[30 : 02] The nurse puts a wee plastic ring round the baby's foot with the baby's name on the ring.

If they have a name, either that's a number, it doesn't matter. But the ring goes round that baby's. And that ring is what or who that baby is.

It's got the name on it. that's who the baby is. Imagine that ring was on you for life and imagine it was God that put that ring on you.

Soon as you were born, God puts a ring on your leg and it's there for life. What do you think he would write on it? Do you know what? Death. All of us.

But when Jesus came into the world, imagine there was a ring put on his leg and God put that ring on it.

[31 : 04] What do you think it would say? Do you know what? Death. Because he too was destined to die for us.

And that's why today when we come to Jesus, God says we're born again.

And so that when we're born the second time, God puts a ring on our leg and it says life.

Everlasting life.

Eternal life. Abundant life. Don't listen to anybody that tells you that God wants you to live a secondary miserable life as a Christian. Only a person who's a Christian really knows how to live to the full.

Because God has put that ring on your ankle and it says life. And that means this morning there's not just me that's coming to you with this message.

[32 : 13] I'm delivering what God has offered to all those who have that ring around them. And he says, why will you die? Turn.

Come to God. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Come and discover what he has done and come to faith in Jesus Christ so that you know life in all its fullness.

That's what he promises. Let's pray. our Father in heaven we give thanks for our time together today and we pray that you will help us to understand perhaps what we still don't understand about

the gospel.

We ask Lord that you will bring us to your word the Bible and bring us to see its truth and bring us Lord perhaps for the very first time to see what we really are and who we really are in your sight.

We give thanks Lord that you so love the world that you gave your only son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

[33 : 14] And so Father we pray that you will follow with your blessing now and go before us into the rest of this day in Jesus name. Amen.