

Jesus, born under the law

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[0 : 0 0] Now, we're to turn to, by now, seeing that we're sticking with the same couple of verses or we have been so far.

So, Galatians chapter 4 and verses 4 and 5. Galatians chapter 4, beginning at verse 4, finishing at verse 5.

Now hear God's word. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Well, may God bless his word to us. Well, as we've promised, we have made our way through, or at least we've made our way, part of the way through.

This is the final one this evening. And we have been looking under this very simple phrase of the right time, right person, right place, and right way.

[1 : 2 5] The fullness of time, where we understood why Christ came at the time that he did. The right person, we understood why it had to be Christ, why it had to be God in the flesh, and the importance of that.

This morning, we understood what it meant for him to be born of a woman, born into the likeness of man, fully man, and yet fully God. And yet this evening, we have one more, and that is being born under the law.

I want to stress, if I can at this point, that this is equally as important as the others. But I understand that whenever a person reads the Bible, they find passages on grace a lot easier to read than perhaps passages on law.

I think the book of Leviticus is a much harder book to go to than perhaps the book of Galatians, or Romans, or Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

I think we gravitate towards the books that are not only easier to read, but the books that actually end up with the result.

[2 : 3 6] And perhaps you're the sort of person that says, just get to it. Just get to it. And I think that people who do just get to it, it's fine.

But I'd like to know everything up to the get to it. And I think that Scripture is written in such a way where it does get to it, but I think it's meant to be read from the beginning, and not just the highlights.

And I think sometimes being born under the law is an important detail, but it doesn't really make it into the highlights of Christianity. And yet I think it should.

I think it's here in Galatians, really, to make that point. If we're going to move forward then, and consider what it means for Jesus to be born under the law, I want us to consider just one thing in particular, and that is value.

How do you know the value of anything? I don't think the price tag really identifies the true value of anything. You can find the same thing cheaper elsewhere, or it can be more expensive in a different shop.

[3 : 49] It's very hard to identify the value of something. And then you have the subjective value, the kind of value where it's worth more to one person than it is another person, but it's exactly the same thing.

And they have a love for it that the other person doesn't have. They have a desire for it that the other person doesn't have. And most behavioral economists will tell you that actually the world actually works on this behavioral economist model of this subjective value.

It's not just about figures. It's not just about prices. It's not just about what people can get for the cheapest price. But it's actually about what people love, what they find lovable.

The law does something particular to God's love. And it's a detail that I don't think any of us can afford to overlook.

To put it a slightly different way, what is the value of redemption? What is the quality of Christ's accomplishment? What is it worth?

[4 : 57] What is it actually worth? What is the true value of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ? But not only his life, death, and resurrection, but his life, death, and resurrection for us.

What is the value? So I think if we're going to have a look at this, what it means to be born under the law, or for Christ to be born under the law, I think we have to appreciate how God values things.

James Denny wrote a very famous book called The Death of Christ. One of my favorite books of all time. Brilliant book. It's, you know, really, really good. He was a minister for at least some time at Queen's Ferry, just down the road, not too far away.

He worked elsewhere in Scotland. And he's known for several different works, the death of Christ being one of them, which is very good. But he also wrote a brilliant commentary on 2 Corinthians, which not too many people know about.

It's very hard to get hold of. And I managed, after a period of time, to get hold of a copy. And in that book, his commentary on 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, where he explains Christ exchanging his righteousness for our sinfulness, the great exchange of God giving his son for that reason.

[6 : 17] And he has a value statement right in the middle of that commentary, or at least in the middle of that part of his commentary. And he says this, that when a person looks at the death of Christ on the cross and reads about it in Scripture, what they are actually noticing is the value that God puts on a sinless life.

The value that God puts on your life being without sin. See, James Denny understood entirely that if you're truly going to appreciate what Christ did in the law and God's love, then you have to appreciate it in the context of value.

And the value of your life being without sin, the value of your life being reconciled to God in peace through the cross, the value of your life being adopted by God and brought into his family.

How do I understand the value of any of that? Well, James Denny points out the value of it is seen in when Christ exchanged all of that for your sinfulness and gave you all of that in return.

Value. The true value of what you have been given. I think then, it would be fair to say that it takes the law to appreciate the value of the cross.

[7 : 47] It takes the law to appreciate the value of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes a good understanding of the law to appreciate every standard that Christ met and kept in order to make you beautiful before God.

I think unless we understand the details and the lengths that what Jesus Christ actually went to, we're going to struggle with great difficulty to truly appreciate all the lengths and details that Christ actually covered in his life, death and resurrection for us.

In other words, what I guess I'm saying is if you skip over the details and only are satisfied with the highlights, you miss out so much value. You miss out so much quality, so much detail that God actually went through in order to redeem you, in order to bring you into the family of God.

And there is no doubt over the years that grace has been cheapened, that God's law has been even rejected. This has happened through some Christians not understanding it and then presenting it in a very poor way, that a poor presentation of God's law comes across in a negative way and it's something that is then termed as legalistic.

It's not legalistic at all. The law actually illuminates and exemplifies and brings great light and beauty to the love of God that you cannot see without the law.

[9 : 13] And so for God to send his son to be born under the law is to be born with a spotlight on him where every moment of his life is carefully understood and watched and perceived where his life would have to conform to every part of the law to be perfect or to at least remain perfect.

And of course, as we know, Christ did obey the law perfectly. He not only was without sin, but he committed no sin. And he committed no sin because he kept God's law perfectly.

Again, the same with God's grace. Sometimes we can think that we're being graceful when actually we're cheapening the grace of God because we're removing it from the standards which God actually kept in Christ Jesus.

So, we want to understand what it means for Christ to be born under the law. I think we need to understand the value of the law. One of the things that's really important for teaching children growing up is not to just obey the law.

That's important, isn't it? To obey God. Something way more important than that actually is said at the very beginning of the Ten Commandments and that is to love God first.

[10 : 32] You know, I think to obey anything out of just because you're told to do so is incredibly difficult. Because unless you have a reason why you should obey, then it makes obeying just not something you necessarily want to do.

I think if you're going to love God, then you need to learn how to love his laws. And I think when you fall in love with the law of God, the difficulty in keeping it, it's not all that difficult because you're doing it out of love, not out of compulsion, not out of, well, it's the right thing to do because God is God.

You know, Jesus obeyed the law perfectly because he loved his father perfectly. And the law allows us to see the true meaning of love.

And Jesus said himself that I've not come to abolish the law, but I've come to fulfill it. Grace doesn't replace the law. Sometimes we often think that in the Old Testament it was the law, in the New Testament it's grace.

Grace now replaces the old and what we have is something beautiful. No, not at all. What happens throughout the Old Testament is that the law is bringing the standards of God and Jesus is meeting every one of those standards for us.

[11 : 51] So if we're really going to appreciate the value of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to appreciate the lengths that he went to to acquire, to accomplish salvation for all of us here.

But then there's another way which we've already seen in the past of how Christ keeps the law. He said it this way, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. You've heard it said that way, you've heard it taught that way, but now I have something to say to you.

He says, when someone slaps you on one side of the cheek, the right side of the cheek, Jesus said, I want you to turn your cheek so that you can be slapped on the other side also. That's fulfilling the law.

But it's fulfilling the law in an entirely different way than you'd expect it to be done. Here's why. Because if someone's done something to you, then to get to that balance, that state of equilibrium where everything's fine, you ought to be able to do the same back to them.

And those little heart lawyers is that we all have, okay, love payback. Love payback. You know, we almost keep receipts in our heart that when someone's done something to us, we say whether it's out loud or quietly within our heart, you're going to pay for that.

[13 : 13] You're going to pay for that. God understood the importance of justice, so he said an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. In other words, you have to get to that state of balance. In other words, if someone has done this to you, then it's right that the same thing should happen back to them.

But when Jesus comes to fulfill the law in grace and in love, he said, no, there's another way. And the way that he does it is that you get to fulfill the law by receiving the second slap rather than giving it.

And here we have Jesus Christ on his way to the cross saying, I'm not going to pay you back for all the sin that you have done towards the triune God of Scripture.

For everything that you have done, for everything that you have committed, for everything that you have thought and said and gone about, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, it should be. But no, I won't pay back.

I will receive. And so when Christ says, I've not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it, what he meant by that is, I am showing you the true value of grace and love.

[14 : 27] The law allows us to see the standard that ought to be kept, which then shines on Jesus Christ fulfilling the law by not paying it back, but by taking it upon himself.

That's what we see in the Sermon of the Mount. And that is definitely what we see at the cross of Christ. We see Jesus Christ turning the cheek in a very beautiful way, if I can put it that way.

Not paying back all the sin, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, on the people that have sinned against God, but rather receiving that second slap, turning the cheek.

Not disobeying the law by saying, oh, it doesn't matter, we'll just forget about it. No, no, receiving the balance, receiving the second slap, rather than paying it onto us.

So I think if we're going to appreciate, and we're going to love what actually Christ has done for us and the reason why God sent him, I think we have to understand the law. I think we have to understand the details.

[15 : 32] Because if we don't, we're never going to understand the value of what Christ has actually accomplished. The judgment of Christ is Christ, if I can say, turning the cheek.

The judgment of Christ is Christ taking our place, okay, receiving the judgment. But he receives it in himself, rather than we receive it.

I think the law of God is beautiful. But I think the law of God only ever appears to be beautiful when you see it through the lens of Jesus fulfilling it.

Because if you don't, it becomes a terrible burden and a curse on everyone who doesn't obey. I think unless you truly appreciate that Christ has fulfilled the law, then the law is just something that you're frightened of.

and you don't want anything to do with. In other words, pay attention to the details, especially the details which the Galatians thought that Christ forgot, rather.

[16 : 38] That Christ is the fulfillment of all of these things. The law is beautiful for Christ who has kept it and for us who live in the light of Christ keeping his law.

How did he do it? Well, the beauty of redemption can only come about in one way. And that is through perfect obedience. Jesus Christ was born under the law to keep the law perfectly.

This is what it says in Galatians 3.10. Essentially, that if God's law is not kept perfectly, then cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the law.

Galatians 3.10. If you can't keep the law, then you're cursed by the law. God's people then live under this curse because they haven't kept his law.

They've not even got close to keeping the law of God. But then it says that in Christ, they are redeemed from the curse of the law by Christ becoming a curse for us.

[17 : 41] What does it mean? Well, it means this, that cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. Christ became the curse not in the same way we did.

We became cursed by the law because we broke it. Christ became a curse by taking upon our sinfulness in a perfect way, exchanging our righteousness, his righteousness for our sin.

Now, you know these to be true. What I'm saying is unless you hold on to them, you fail to appreciate the sheer beauty that we have received in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ does bring an end to the law in one way, but he is the one who brings an end to the law because he fulfills it, not abolishes it. And in Hebrews 9, it says that the redemption can only happen through the shedding of blood.

simply put, without Jesus, and without Jesus fulfilling the law of God perfectly from beginning to end, then no redemption would be possible.

[18 : 50] Jesus not only had to be born under the law, he had to keep every part of the law in order for redemption to be accomplished. Okay.

What's the possible drift here? Well, it's something that I highlighted this morning and it's something that I want to highlight again. And that is to lose interest one minute into listening to God speak about his law.

Come on, get on with it. Just get it out. Just get to the point. Well, the law is the point. And too often we want to rush the person to the end of the conversation.

Come on, just give me the end of it. Just say it. And we miss the points all along. The main points are all the points. The main points are all the details leading up to the accomplishment, leading up to the result.

And I think that's what we have to appreciate. In other words, what I'm saying is don't just love and appreciate the result of salvation as I said this morning. You know, don't just be happy with the fact that you're saved.

[20 : 01] Don't just love the fact that you're saved. But learn to love the lengths that God actually went to to accomplish the value of your salvation.

I think it's in our nature though, isn't it, to overlook when we're given the gift the lengths that somebody actually went to to give us that gift. I think as children we do this all the time.

We don't see the amount of hard work that went in to get what we get, get what we got back in the day. We just don't see the difficulty, perhaps the financial difficulty, or perhaps the stress of being able to order it and will it arrive on time and all of those type of things because for a very simple reason the person giving has to do all the work.

The person giving has to do all the work. The person receiving, oh, they just sit there and there it is. But up to that point they have no idea of the lengths that the other person has gone to.

They're not even aware that the person is going to those other lengths but the moment the gift arrives they receive it and all of those other things are just not even seen. They're not noticed, they're not even appreciated because you're so caught up in receiving the gift that you haven't taken the time to appreciate the lengths that the person went to to give you that gift.

[21 : 23] I think one of the things that we're meant to understand is this, that if we're truly going to appreciate Christ as a gift, an Advent gift, the gift of God at Advent, then I think we have to appreciate the lengths that God went to and the lengths that Christ went to to fulfil that gift entirely.

Here's the exhortation then as we close. Jesus Christ is really the right person who came at the right time into the right place and most definitely in the right way.

Don't minimise it. Don't gloss over it and say just get to the point God. Don't minimise the details because I think if you minimise the details you minimise the value of what you have at the end.

It's not just what you have received, but it's the length that God went to and the lengths that Christ went to that give its true value. That Advent is worth what it's worth because everything that God put into it, everything that we get to appreciate.

Secondly, don't make the mistake that the Galatians made and that is now that you've received Jesus Christ just move on beyond him. That's what they did. They've received Christ and Paul has to tell them off that why have you received this burden now that you've received you continue in the flesh?

[22 : 52] Why have you gone backwards instead of forwards? Why haven't you truly appreciated what Christ has actually done? And why would a Christian even make that mistake? Especially a Jew born under the law who's finally been set free by everything that Christ has done only then to go back to try and keep the law to get right with God somehow.

I think the only reason you would do it is because you haven't truly appreciated the details. I think you've looked at the gift, you looked at what Christ has done momentarily, your heart is full of joy, and then you've returned back to your old ways because you haven't appreciated everything that Jesus Christ accomplished, thinking that I need now to do it myself.

I think the message of Galatians is fairly clear. Number one, it's able to redirect the wandering Christian back to Christ.

It's able to redirect that person from going in the wrong way having already received Christ, and many Christians do. But not only that, it's also able to reorder a very disorderly Christian life.

There's two types of Christians here. They not only need redirection, but they need reordering. They need their lives setting to a new order. And that order is to be established only by Jesus.

[24 : 17] I think the challenge here is fairly simple. And that is if you drifted, the only way back to Jesus is through Jesus. If you've drifted from God, the only way back to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And perhaps the reason you have drifted is because you've lived off highlights for so long that you've not truly appreciated all the details of God's word. that you just have the highlights of Christmas.

And you just have the highlights of Easter. And for the rest of the year, your Bible knowledge and your truth and your beauty that you find in God's word is just not there.

And it takes these big moments of communion and Christmas and Easter to bring you back on track. or perhaps even throughout the week that you so much drift can happen in one week only to be brought back again hopefully on the Lord's day.

Here's a final thought. One of the beauties that we see in verses 4 and 5 is that God has done all of it. At the right time, God sent the right person to the right place in the right way to accomplish everything.

[25 : 33] To redeem you and to bring you into his family. In other words, nothing else needs to be done. God has done it all. So we get back to what God has done rather than what we must do.

The value of Christ's gift or God's gift in giving us Christ is not just noticed in the person of Christ. Christ. But it's noticed in all of his accomplishments and all of his actions.

It's noticed in everything that he did. Not just him as a person, but the fact that he obeyed the law perfectly for you in order to bring you into relationship with God.

The beauty of Advent is simply this. That when God sent Jesus Christ into the world to do for you what you could not do for yourself, so many boxes, if I can put it that way, were ticked by Christ.

That were left unticked by every man, woman, boys and girls throughout the centuries because they were just not qualified to do it. So here we have at Advent the beauty of the law is that if we're truly going to see the beauty of God's love for us, then we have to truly see the beauty of his law.

[26 : 55] And I think the moment we appreciate what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, by looking at it through the lenses of the law, only then will we ever truly appreciate the lengths, breadth and depth and height of God's love for each and every one of us.

As we consider this, I want to remind you of James Denny's quote as we finish. And I'm going to slightly paraphrase it. Jesus has done enough and Jesus has done it all.

When you look at his life, his death and his resurrection, what you're actually noticing is the value that God has placed on your life, not only being with him, not only reconciled, but being completely perfect.

That's the value. Amen. Amen. Amen.