

Galatians 3:15-29

Bottom Line: The law shows us our separation from God, but Jesus is what restores us to God.

We'll be talking about the law and how that works together with "faith". So first I want to explain what those 2 things are.

Law- this is what we know of as the 10 commandments and what we see all through the book of Leviticus. When I talk about the law tonight, it is not in contrast as if the non-religious people define their morality by the law and then the religious people define their morality by faith in Jesus. We are talking about believers who have been in conversation with God since the beginning.

Faith- When I talk about faith, I'm referring to living your life as if you wholeheartedly understand that Jesus Christ was promised to us by God and he has come, died, and rose again.

Whenever I've heard a message about law vs. faith, it's always just that- law VERSES faith. And we're told that we don't have to live by the law anymore and we don't have to try to impress God anymore because Jesus died for us. This is almost true! We don't have to try to impress God. In fact, we CAN'T, and that was the purpose of the law- to show us that we can't. But I'm often left with the question, "Well if I don't have to follow the law, then is it a free for all? Can I get by if I just try to be a good person?" We know we can't just sin freely and take advantage of God's grace. But I think we're off base if we decide that we can try to be good people. Paul did too! So he pulls all the pieces together for us!

The Law and the Promise

15 Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

- Paul wants to break this down into terms that any human would understand. So we all know what a covenant is, right? It's an agreement or bond. And it's "duly established" meaning it's agreed upon by two parties. Paul says it's the same kind of deal with the law and faith.

16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

- So now he wants to lay the basics down for faith. See we have faith in the promise that God made to Abraham. This means we believe that it's true -

that God really did make this promise and that he would keep it. Then he clarifies- have you heard the song Father Abraham? I was confused as a kid- like is Abraham my infinity great grandpa or something? And the Galatians were confused too! See Paul says, God's promise to Abraham wasn't that he'd be the infinity great grandpa of the world but that through his lineage, God would deliver his promise of restoration, which could only happen through Jesus.

- **So as of now, we understand that the law and faith have to work hand in hand. And we understand that our faith is in the promise of Jesus Christ coming.** We need faith. But what about the law part, Paul? We've been living under the law since forever... So he explains.

17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. **18** For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

- Now Paul wants us to understand, we haven't had the law forever. God's promise to restore us to himself through Jesus Christ was in place 430 before the law even existed. And it wasn't a replacement plan! If we believe that God kept his word to Abraham, then we believe that restoration is going to come through Abraham's seed, which is Jesus. We'll get to be a part of God's family and gain the inheritance of God's kingdom because he kept his promise, not because we attempted to follow the law.
- Great, so now I'm confused, you're confused, the Galatians are confused and so he answers the question he knows we're all asking:

19 Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. **20** A mediator, however, implies more than one party; but God is one.

- Let's break that up. It was added because of transgressions- so the law was given** to us because without it, it'll be like Purge 2 but 2,000 years ago and 2,000x worse. Until the Seed would come - that seed being Jesus. The law was given through angels- which means it was not manmade and therefore refutable, it was given to us by God, through a mediator- which we believe Paul is referring to Moses here. But wait! Now he wants to go back to his original metaphor of the covenant. Both now and then, this was basically a contract. And if you've ever seen a law show, you know the scene where a couple is getting a divorce, both of their lawyers are present, and then there's the awkward 5th person in the room who's job title is "mediator". They make sure that both parties get their fair share. So Paul wants to clarify! When he called Moses a mediator, in a spiritual

context, this means that he was the middle man between God and people basically. But the Galatians might've thought about a court mediator just like some of us did, and they would've pictured a similar divorce scene and thought oh so that's what you meant by 2 parties! Us and God. Got it. But no! The agreement in place for us to be restored to God DID NOT involve an agreement between God and Man. That would imply that if we don't hold up our end of the agreement, then the contract is broken, and then we wouldn't get saved. No, this agreement or bond only requires God holding up his end and the 2 parts that have to come together as one are the law and faith. Some commentators would say that by mediator, He could also be high key hinting at Jesus being the Mediator between God and Man. And he'd also low key hinting that God is one, meaning he's a God of unity. And this is a direct jab at the false teachers who said that God only cared about the Israelites, but the truth is, His promise was to all nations, which includes Gentiles. Where the law was only for the Israelites to keep them from killing each other before Jesus could be born, God's original promise of restoration was always meant for everyone.

- **So as of now, we know that the law was not a replacement plan. We know that God's promise came first and after the law. We know that the law was a gift from God to keep the Purge from happening. And we know that us getting restored to God doesn't not depend on humanity.**
- So we step into verse 21 and see the Galatians get confused over the divorce scene we were all picturing.

21 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

- They're thinking the law is snapping its fingers in a z formation saying, "I'm a strong independent woman and I don't need no man!" Maybe not quite that picture, but they are thinking, "Does that law work all by itself? Is it at odds with faith in God's promise? Are these things 2 opposites like I have to pick one or the other? They're like; do I have to move in with mom or with dad? Just kidding. But Paul says no! The law is not independent of faith as if it's a separate option for a way of life. Because we cannot be granted (that's what "impart" means) restoration to God through the law. The law cannot declare us righteous or worthy of the presence of God. It can't decide or determine that. Only God can.

22 But Scripture has locked up everything under the control of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

- Now Paul paints the very real picture to us of what the law was. It turns out there were false teachers telling them that they could only be restored to God by following the law. This made Paul sound crazy to say that we could only be restored to God through our faith in Jesus Christ. The commentary said it like this: “You are faced with an absolute contradiction if you are told that only by believing in the cross of Christ will you be able to live in a right relationship with God and then you are told that only by keeping the law will you be able to live in a right relationship with God.” The purpose of the law was to show us that we can’t just try to be good people. We are all sinners, and all sinners will face the judgement of God. The law showed us just how far we were from being “good” at all. The only thing that is good is God, and we chose to be separated from that goodness from the beginning of time. We haven’t been good since day 10. But God wanted to restore us back to himself. The law didn’t restore us. It just showed us that we needed to be restored. God wants to gain back those of us who are willing to admit, “I’m not good and I’m not God. I cannot satisfy myself or find it anything of this world. I need to be back in relationship with God, the way he intended it to be. I cannot get myself out of this cycle, so I surrender and I want you to be in control.”

Children of God

23 Before the coming of this faith, [i] we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. **24** So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. **25** Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

- The Galatians should understand now that before Jesus, they were basically trapped by a law that showed them how sinful they were but didn’t give them a way to fix that. The law served two main purposes- to specifically keep the Israelites from the Purge, and generally to show the whole world our need for Jesus. So the law is not contradictory to faith or the Gospel - the good news that Jesus came. The law paved the way for us to realize our need for the Gospel. Now that we have Jesus, the law is still an accurate depiction of how much we fall short and it’s a constant mirror for us to see that we are sinful in nature. But it’s no longer supposed to protect the Israelites- Jesus has been born, so if they want to kill each other, it’s on their own dime.

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- Now we get to the best part! Remember the song Father Abraham? Paul's connecting the dots for why those lyrics aren't so crazy. Because Jesus is from the lineage of Abraham, and through Jesus, now we all get invited into the family of God! ONLY because of Jesus. So for everyone who admits they're not holy, throws up a white flag to surrender, believes that Jesus is the promise God was talking about all along, agrees to be included in the group of people who Jesus took the place of on the cross, and now lives for Christ- THEY are children of God. They are restored to God. And this is an open invitation to everybody! We have an open invitation from God to be his sons and daughters and inherit His kingdom, which is life in the new heaven and new earth where we are fully satisfied in him and sin does not exist.
- Paul wants the Galatians to understand: BOTTOM LINE - The law shows us our separation from God, but Jesus is what restores us to God.

While the law is still valid and true and applicable, it only shows us our separation from God, it doesn't connect us back to him. Only Jesus restores us back to God. And this is proof that God keeps his promises, it is proof that we need him, and it is proof that it was always his intention from the beginning of time to bring us back to him.

So what if we lived like this? What if we knew that the law and faith weren't at odds, but partners? We would stop convincing ourselves that we get to go to heaven because we're good people. We would admit that we were never good. And we would humbly choose to live in honor of Christ. I think of it kind of like this: If you were sentenced to life in prison, but someone else volunteered to sit in prison for you, what would you do with your life? I hope you would dedicate the life you now have to his legacy. And the same goes for us and Christ. No, we don't HAVE TO follow a bunch of ritualistic laws, but we do GET TO proclaim the name of Jesus and live lives worthy of his example. And we'll jump into what that looks like in July, but I'm going to go ahead and pray for us...