

SAVING FAITH: GALATIANS

Week Seven:

Galatians 3:21-27

Good morning Lake Wylie Baptist. If you have a copy of God's Word begin opening it to Galatians 3. Our text is on page

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Chelsea and I closed on our new home in Clover. At the end of the closing they handed us the keys to our new home and the very first thing we did was we took our kids Olivia who is almost 4 and Lincoln who is almost 2 up to Chelsea's parents, we drove back to our new home and spent the first two days child-proofing the house.

I put safety locks on the cabinets and drawers. We put locks on doors to rooms they didn't need to be in. We made sure that when we moved items like knives or medicines we put them far out of reach. We put covers over electrical outlets.

If you think about it, as much as we want our house to be their house, there are some rooms we don't want them in. We want to keep them contained. There are some drawers we've said, "Don't open this. It's not for you." We didn't shut them out of those rooms, we didn't lock them out because we don't love them, but

because we do love them.

Because we want to preserve their life we have lay down the law. Because we love them we must restrain them. The same is true with God.

Through this series in Galatians we've been saying over and over, "You are saved by grace through faith, not through obeying God's law. You are accepted by God because of his grace, not because of your own religious observance. You are made right with God by trusting in Jesus obedience to the law, not your own."

After preaching salvation by grace for multiple weeks in a row you may begin to wonder, "So, is God's law a bad thing? Does salvation by grace mean that the law and grace are opposed to one another? Does this mean that we should ignore God's law? What purpose, then does the law of God play?"

In our passage today Paul makes clear that the law of God and the grace of God are not opposed to one another. He makes clear that the law of God is not an evil thing. The law is given to us by God to accomplish three purposes in our life.

God gives his law to us to:

1. Restrain and Condemn Evil
2. Discipline Us And Reveal Our Sin
3. Drive Us to Jesus

First let's see that:

1. GOD'S LAW RESTRAINS AND CONDEMNS EVIL

Look back at verse 21

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. 22 But the Scripture

imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

In this passage Paul says that the first reason God gave his law was to "**imprison everything under sin.**" Literally, the word for imprison means to "shut up on all sides."

What does it mean that "the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin"? Well, it means at least two things:

First, it means that through the law God restrains evil in the world. The law is an instrument of restraint. **Can you imagine what the world would be like if there was no law?** I mean, there are some weird laws that we could do without. In fact, this week I looked up some weird laws that are on the books here in North Carolina and South Carolina. For instance:

- > Did you know that in NC it's illegal to rollerblade on a public highway?
- > In NC Elephants may not be used to plow cotton fields.
- > In 1962 SC passed Title 23 Section 33-20 which reads: "Before any person shall fire or attempt to fire or discharge any missile within the borders of this State, he shall first procure a written permit from the Aeronautics Division of the Department of Commerce on such form as it may prescribe." Which is unfortunate because now you can't just blow up your neighbor's house anytime their music is too loud.

Now, those are obviously some silly laws, but can you imagine if we didn't have any laws at all. If no one knew right from wrong. If there weren't criminal laws, or economic regulations, or civil laws. So much of the fabric of our society is based on having laws that restrain evil.

The Scriptures teach that, in a sense, the giving of the law is a gift of God's grace. Human beings are capable and willing to do

incredibly despicable things. And, if there was no law our world would be far worse than it is. The threat of the law and its consequences holds back evil that would happen if there otherwise was no law.

Secondly, when Paul says that the scripture imprisons everything under sin he isn't just making a blanket claim that God's law restrains evil in the world, he is also saying this: "God's law condemns evil."

A moment ago I asked if you could imagine a world in which there was no law. Now let me ask you this, "Imagine a world in which evil is never condemned as evil." What if someone committed first degree murder and there was no consequence?

On the Biblical worldview you have something that you simply don't have in a naturalistic worldview: you have the foundation to say certain actions are not just distasteful, but they're wrong.

That's because the Scriptures teach us that the law ultimately doesn't come from us. Morality isn't just a social construct created from a herd mentality.

Law and morality come from God himself. They are external to us, to creation. They exist objectively. And, here's the hard reality: all of us must answer to their cosmic call, and all of us stand guilty.

Can I be honest with you for a moment: this is the hardest part of this sermon today: to get all of us to admit our guilty status and see our personal sin as it truly is without turning this into a bludgeoning.

If I wanted I have the liberty to run down a laundry list of sins and show how in some way we're all guilty of breaking them. But, instead of running down a list of the 10 commandments and trying to show us how we've broken them, I want you to imagine

that from the moment you turned 16 years old until the day you die there was a recording device attached to your arm and every time you made a moral claim, or accusation it recorded it. So, every time you said, “I’ll never lose my temper again,” or, “He never keeps his deadlines,” or, “

And when you die and that tape recorder is set in front of you and someone pushes play. What if, instead of judging you based on his law, what if God judged you based on the law that you spoke with your own lips? How guilty would you be?

Friends, if you and I cannot even meet our own bar of righteousness how can we hope to stand before God almighty?

God’s law imprisons everything under sin.

2. GOD’S LAW DISCIPLINES US TO REVEAL OUR SIN

*24 So then, the law was our **guardian** until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*

Paul switches metaphors. First, he said that law was like a prison. Now he says that the law is like a guardian. Some of your translations might say “teacher.” The Greek word there is the word pedagogue. We get our word pedagogy from it.

In the first century when a family had a child who was ready to begin schooling they would hire someone to fill the position of a pedagogue. The pedagogue didn’t actually do the teaching. The pedagogue was paid to make sure the child did their assignments, went to their classes, and stayed out of trouble.

In ancient drawings the pedagogue is often portrayed as someone wielding a stick. The idea is that the guardian helped form moral fiber.

You need to understand this: God doesn’t give his law as a teacher to help you learn how to get better and better in hopes of reaching a point of where you will be good enough and obedient

enough to accept you. God has given his law as your disciplinarian.

My parents were my pedagogue growing up. And they were both great at the whole discipline thing. But the one thing that always puzzled me was this: whenever my dad had to discipline me he would sometimes say, “Son, this is going to hurt me more than it’s going to hurt you.” You ever heard that? And I always thought as a kid when I heard that, “Dad, if this is going to hurt you more than me I have a solution. How about we switch places.”

You know where you really begin to sense the training and discipline of the law? It’s when you join in meaningful membership to a local church. When you covenant to walk with other Christians towards Jesus that commitment has a way of revealing and highlighting your own weaknesses.

That’s because we’re all different. We all have our own pet sins. We all have our own peculiar graces. This is one of the reasons committed membership and attendance to a local gathered body over the length of years can be transformative for you.

When we meet together, and sing these songs in unison, when we hear God’s Word read, and sermons preached and we meet in small groups to study and apply the Word part of what we are doing is holding up God’s law and truth so that we can publicly admit our own failings.

If you’ve been attending for a while and want to learn more about membership at Lake Wylie our next new members seminar is April 30th. You can sign up today for that class by writing member’s seminar on the back of your response card.

God’s law disciplines us to reveal our sin.

3. GOD'S LAW DRIVES US TO JESUS

So why does God give us a law that restrains, condemns, and disciplines us? Why all that condemnation, guilt, and punishment?

The law is not given to woo you and wean you from your sin and teach you how to morally strive for God's approval. The law is actually given to reveal, multiply and increase your sin to the point where we stand before God without any hope of self-reclamation.

The law isn't given so that you can try to obey it and thereby feel better about yourself. **The law is given so that you'll realize your inability to obey and run to Jesus.** Look at what Paul says in verse 24:

24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

Here, Paul extends the metaphor of the child under a guardianship. When the child had finished their training around age 16 there was no longer any need for the disciplinarian to wield the rod or correction.

Right now in my home my children ask Chelsea and me if they can have something to eat, or if they can go outside, or if they can wear pajamas to church instead of normal clothes. And we're very thankful that they ask. We want them to ask. But suppose 16 years from now I get a phone call. Olivia is off at college and says, "Hey Dad, I was wondering if I could have something to eat."

I would wonder if she was O.K. "Honey, why would you ask me that? Have you taken a hit to the head? I suppose you can have something to eat. You know if you're hungry or not."

We hope our children will reach a point when they no longer need to ask us basic life questions about when to eat or when to sleep.

If they don't reach that point something is catastrophically wrong.

The same is true with the law. God gives his law to reveal your sin, to condemn your sin and show your guilt, and God gives his law as a guardian to administer discipline.

But, Paul says, if you remain under the law you have not matured as his child. Those still trying to reach God through moral striving are immature. They're babies. They're like the 21 year old who still calls home to see if he can go play with his friends.

Notice here what Christian maturity is not—it is not growing in moral strength to the point where you no longer sin.

****Christian maturity is growing in humble faith to the point where you can admit your need and run to Jesus.****

25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

The beginning of Christian maturity is weakness. Luther said that the law's "true purpose is to... prepare us to sigh and seek mercy."

John Stott put it this way:

Not until the law has bruised and smitten us will we admit our need of the gospel to bind up our wounds. Not until the law has arrested and imprisoned us will we pine for Christ to set us free. Not until the law has condemned and killed us will we call upon Christ for justification and for life. Not until the law has driven us to despair of ourselves will we ever believe in Jesus. Not until the law has humbled us even to hell will we turn to the gospel to raise us to heaven.

Friends when that finally happens for you, and you approach God

with the empty hands of faith God, through Christ makes you his child.

If you come over to my house and say, “Jonathan I want to be a part of your family.” And you grab a broom and start sweeping, and moping and ironing and cutting my grass, first off, I’ll probably sit back and have some tea while you do all this work for me...

But, at some point I’d have to stop you and say, “You can’t become a member of this family by working your head off. The only way you can become a member of this family is if I adopt you.”

Leland Ryken says: The highest position you can ever achieve by simply working in a household is that of a servant. A servant may live with a family. A servant may do the family’s laundry, cook the family’s meals, clean the family’s house, and feed the family’s dog.

But the servant could do all these things day after day for decades without ever becoming a member of the family (in much the same way that someone who is not a relative could not expect to rise to the top of a family business). In such a case, the only way to become a son or a daughter is by adoption. This can be granted only by the will of the father; it can never be gained by the works of the servant. **And when it comes to God’s family, the Father is willing to adopt anyone who believes in his Son, Jesus Christ.**

Verse 27 says:

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Baptism was an ancient ritual that signified cleansing washing sin away. It was an outward sign of God’s inward cleansing.

Friend, when the dirtiest sinner comes by faith to the foot of the cross and confesses their need of God, God responds and washes every sin they ever have committed, every sin their heart is still in love with and every sin they ever will commit away.

And it doesn’t stop there. Thank God. If all God did was wash our previous sins away that would be like saying: “Ok, you’re back at ground zero. Now go forward and try really hard not to mess it up.”

Paul says you’ve been baptized—washed in Christ—**and you have put on Christ.**

Here’s what that means—becoming a Christian isn’t turning over a new leaf—it’s receiving a new life. Becoming a Christian isn’t getting a fresh start—it’s wearing the honors and accolades of Jesus.

On the cross Jesus substituted himself for you. And God the Father treated the Son, Jesus, as if he was guilty of all your sin so that when God adopts you into his family as a son, as a daughter, he treats you as if you had done everything Jesus had done.

And listen—when you know that you are no longer under the law—under the threat of condemnation. And, when you know that you wear on your chest, the medals that Jesus won—two things happen:

1. You’re humbled out of any pride that says, “I can please God through my own efforts.”
2. You begin to say, “Because of what you have done for me, God, I **want** to obey you. I **want** to follow you. **Give** me your law! **Give** me your truth! I want it.”

In the 19th century Charles Wesley wrote the hymn “Christ the Lord is Risen Today.”

One of the stanzas says this:

Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head,
Made like him, like him we rise,
Ours the **cross**, the **grave**, the **skies**,

That final line is like a taunt. It shakes its finger at guilt and condemnation. It says, "Come on condemnation, the lower you lay me the higher you raise me! Come on law! The more you point out my sin, the more you drive me to my Savior!"

Is that your hope today?

Service Opening Prayer:

O Lord, Our God,

This is your day, the day you have called us to rest from our work, and trust you. This is the open door of worship. This morning is the record of the resurrection being told again. This day is the promise of the future rest we'll enjoy in your kingdom, the day when those who have fought the fight of faith, will cross over into the reality of sight.

We praise you Father for the throne of grace that is open and accessible to us through the blood of Jesus. We come to that throne this morning and find you ready to hear us, waiting to be gracious to us, inviting us to pour out our needs, and promising to give us, in Christ, more than we could possibly imagine.

We bring you our empty hearts and ask you to fill them with Jesus. We submit and surrender our minds and thoughts to you. Keep away any distraction that takes our focus off the gospel of grace. We surrender our wills to you. Show us our sin, and make us to know the path of life in your Son. Strengthen us today for the work you have for us this week.

We honor you. We praise you. We love you because you first loved us. In Christ name we pray, amen.