

The Curses and Blessings of the Law

Galatians Series

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Bible Text: Galatians 3:10-18

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Before we read Galatians chapter three verses 10 through 18 which it will be the subject of our study this morning, I would like to first of all just set where we are in its context and then read it. I know that is a little bit different than our normal pattern. But what you have with Galatians as you are looking at three verse 11, where are you in this argument that the apostle Paul is?

Well, first of all, the first two chapters define the battle, that battle that Paul is engaged in for the believers in the churches in Galatia and he explains that there is a terrible thing that has crept into the churches in Galatia and then he explains how... he tells the stories of how he waged war against this pernicious idea that works can save you. And so he tells the story, first of all, of his going to Jerusalem and dealing with the apostle there. And then he tells the story of going to Antioch and doing the same thing and actually rebuking Peter to his face. And when you come to the end of chapter two and even on into chapter three, the apostle Paul is continuing this whole argument.

Chapters three and four really form the theological argument. So that is where you are right now. Paul has... he said, "There is a battle that needs to be waged. There is another gospel that is being preached." And now he is beginning to very systematically unpack the issues from the Scriptures. And that is where our focus will be here today.

And what is all this about? It is all about the extolling of the grace of God. The book begins with a revelation of the grace of God. And if you turn to the very last verse—go ahead and turn there, chapter six verse 18—you will see that the apostle Paul, he ends the book with what really is the heart of everything that he has to say in the book where he says, "Brethren..."

I want us to just be very sort of slow and deliberate about reading this last verse because I pray that this is the legacy of this sermon this morning that we would see all of what we hear in this context and also understand that it is this verse that really frames and summarizes the whole book of Galatians.

"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."¹

¹ Galatians 6:18.

And so he is speaking to brothers who have drifted away, who have sort of lost their way. And then he brings them back to the principle that they are together as a family of people and that this doctrinal principle that he is arguing for should prevail in their churches.

So the people in Galatia had been bewitched by a false gospel and the apostle Paul is attacking that.

Now when we get to chapter three I would like us to go back to where we were last week and pick up the story because the apostle Paul continues a line of argumentation from where we left off before.

We saw last week how the apostle Paul brings what I am going to call a withering interrogation. He asks five questions. You know, he starts with, “Who has bewitched you? Who? Who is it?” He wants them to identify who has brought this doctrine. And so there is this withering interrogation of five questions that he asks. And the intent of those questions is to help them to wake up to the grace that met them at their salvation, that really it is God who rescues sinners and that people cannot earn their salvation.

So he begins with these five questions and then he gives it the graphic example, the example from history and that is the example of Abraham. And he picks that up in verses six through nine. He uses Abraham as a historical illustration of the point that he is trying to make through the five questions.

So that is where we are now.

He has asked five questions that just are designed to shatter any hope that you have in your flesh to save you. And then he gives an example of Abraham that Abraham was justified by faith alone. And then he continues on. And if you look at your outlines you will see where we are going with this.

He presents a text in Deuteronomy chapter 27. It is a text that we are somewhat familiar with as we have been going through our studies in Deuteronomy. But what the apostle Paul does is he goes back to Deuteronomy to give an example of what he is talking about here. And so he gives a vivid text. And then he gives the testimony of an Old Testament prophet in verse 11.

In Deuteronomy we find a prophecy of the cross of Christ there. And the apostle Paul here in Galatians three here refers back to it again and he makes a connection. What you heard in Deuteronomy is what you need to know now. And so the illustration from Deuteronomy is given regarding the cross.

And then there is the promise of an unbreakable covenant in verses 15 through 18. What Paul does is he takes a common human construct, a covenant or a contract and he makes that an example for the Galatians so they can see that the faith of Abraham and the law are not contradictory and the faith was not nullified by the law. And that is what he does.

And he is saying God made a contact with Abraham and that is not taken away by the law, because the Galatians wanted to take it away, basically.

So that is where we are. So I want you to see Paul is piling up argument after argument after argument as he does so well.

Isn't amazing? Remember when we were in Romans how we noticed how Paul has a way of adding a line. He goes here. He goes there. He goes all over the place to pull his argument together, to hang it together. And he always goes to Scripture. He is always proving his arguments from the Old Testament. So that was is what the apostle Paul is doing.

Now, so the Galatians, who were the Galatians. These were not Jews. They did not understand the Old Testament law. They were saved. The apostle Paul came into their region and he preached the gospel and they were converted. And... but they didn't know the Old Testament law. But there were some who crept in, some who came in later and they began to try to bring into bondage those Galatian believers into the ceremonial law, particularly circumcision. And they were saying, "You know, if you are saved you will be circumcised."

And the apostle Paul is contradicting that and saying, "No, that is not true."

And what was happening to the Galatians was that they were blind to two things. And these are two really critical things that all churches in all eras have to struggle with because it is a struggle. Because the struggle was here, we know that it is a struggle everywhere. The devil works in the same way. Maybe he uses different colors and different, you know, nuances to the way that he works, but really he works the same way in pretty much every culture. And here what he has done with these Galatian believers is that he has worked so that they would have a blindness to the proper use of the law. They had a blindness to the proper use of the law.

And as we go on next week particularly we will see the proper use of the law. Paul in his letter to Timothy, Paul in his letter to all, really, all the churches in Romans, he talks extensively about the proper use of the law. So next week we will begin to draw. We will use what Paul says about the use of the law and we will draw from lots of places in Scripture.

There is difficulty in understanding the law. They were blind or perhaps they may be becoming blind to the proper use of the law and were confused.

The second thing is that they were blind to the power of the resurrection, that upon the cross all of their sins were nailed and that all of their sins, past, present and future and they had lost a sense of the power of the resurrected Christ and what he did on the cross.

Those are the two things that they were getting confused about: the comprehensive work of the cross and the proper use of the law. So that is what is happening to them.

And here is what Paul is doing. He is proving the bankruptcy of man's righteousness and he is exposing the pride of man that says, "I am circumcised. I am good. I am good enough." And he is exalting the grace of God. And I pray that this morning as we work through these various arguments that Paul brings to us that God would come and help us, that he would use these words among us now to exalt the grace of God, that he would use it to destroy all of our pride, that he would show us the reality of our sinfulness which is what he is really attempting to do. That what would happen among us is that we would lose all confidence in the flesh, lose it all and that we would have all of our hope in the competence of God in Christ toward us.

So what Paul is doing here in Galatians from beginning to end is he is making much of Christ and he is making little of man and his righteousness. That is what he is doing. And so I pray that this will happen to us today, much will be made of Christ among us and that we will see somehow with new eyes how much he has done for us in bringing us his Son.

And so Paul gives this withering interrogation to people who think that God owes them something for their righteousness and then he gives an example of Abraham.

And then in verse 10—look at verse 10—what you see in verse 10 is the word for. And Paul uses a term that is designed to connect, but has just come with what he is now going to say.

So you have to see this as a whole. He is continuing... he is just piling them up. And our intention here is just to try to go slow enough so that we can understand what these arguments really are and what they mean.

So here the Galatians have believed something that is not true. So Paul says, "For," and then he continues on. And he brings a text, a very vivid and terrifying text out of the book of Deuteronomy chapter 27.

And so he says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'"²

Notice two things here in this verse. One, he is speaking about a certain kind of person. He has sort of created... it is not a mythical person because they are running all over the churches in Galatia. But he is talking about a kind of person and it is the kind of person who is of the works of the law. He is using the term of or out of and what he means is there is a kind of person whose life comes justification whose status before God comes out of the works of the law. This is the legalist who thinks he is good because he is able to keep the 10 Commandments. He is like the rich young ruler whom Jesus asks him a question and the rich young ruler says, "I have kept all the law from my youth. I have kept them all."

² Galatians 3:10.

He was wrong. He was this kind of person. He was of the works of the law. He did not even understand the law at all. He did not understand the condemnation that the law brought to him. He thought that if he outwardly kept the law then he was righteous.

But this is the kind of person that he is talking about, people who think that by outwardly keeping the law they are righteous. And he is pointing a finger, really in a terrible misunderstanding of the law. So he is speaking of the Legalist. And really he is talking about how God condemns those who think they are able to keep all the law and he is condemning the legalist who trusts in his works, who has a sense of right self righteousness, that if they do this list of things whatever it might be, whether it is the 600, you know, and 24 laws that are found in the Old Testament or whatever law you might want to find. There are hundreds and hundreds of laws in the New Testament as well.

God doesn't stop making laws in the New Testament. He continues to define and clarify the heart of the matter of his will for mankind by continuing to define laws.

So Jesus Christ never stops defining his law. But what he does say here, there are people who think that they are justified out of the law. So he is talking about a certain kind of person. And then he brings an illustration out of the book of Deuteronomy to explain how silly this is, that anyone could possibly think that keeping even one law would save them.

And so he is trying to destroy all of your hope in your law keeping and telling you that you are under a curse.

So he says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse."³ And now he quotes Deuteronomy. "For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things.'⁴ Notice that, all things. That is very important to his argument. "all things which are written in the book of the law, [and] to do them."⁵

And so what Paul is saying here is that the law demanded that you keep all of the law.

Do you remember as we were going through Deuteronomy? How many times does Moses say, "Keep all my commandments"? He says it over and over again. "Keep them all. You have to keep them all." That is what Moses is saying.

And here now Paul is quoting that, that the apostle is quoting what Moses said, that you must keep all of the law. And so what he is saying is that the law demands that you keep every law. The law says you have to keep every law. And so in turning back to this text in Deuteronomy chapter 27 what you find there at verse eight in 27 verse eight he says, "Therefore, you shall keep every commandment which I command you today."⁶ You shall keep every commandment."

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Deuteronomy 11:8.

And then in verse 13 he say, “And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,”⁷ then... and he says, “I will bless you.”

And then beginning in verse 19 he says, “You shall teach them to your children.”⁸

And then, finally, in the last verse, in verse 32 he says, “And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.”⁹ And that is the verse that the apostle Paul quotes. He is quoting verse 32.

Verse 32 is a summary of the whole chapter. He starts out saying, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Obviously as we have seen in Deuteronomy, you know, Moses is not calling for just a religion of law. He is calling for a religion of the heart. And he begins with that and he continues on explaining all these things. And then he ends it in verse 32. And that is what Paul is quoting here.

So I want you to see what Paul is doing. He is going back and he is quoting a summary verse in Deuteronomy chapter 27 to prove his point. What is his point? His point is that in the Old Testament times perfect obedience was required. And he is saying, “And guess what? In New Testament times perfect obedience is required. But there is only one who has obeyed all the laws and that is Christ.”

And you can only trust Christ. You cannot trust yourself because you are obligated to obey every law of the Old Testament, but you can't. And Moses knew that as well and that is why he prophecies of the cross here that we read about as well in this passage.

So what Paul is saying is that if you believe that you are justified by the law, then you need to go back and read Moses because Moses told you that you are not justified unless you obey every single law. That is what Paul is saying. If you think you can be justified that way, go back to Deuteronomy because you can't do it. It is impossible. And he is telling the Galatians that they cannot find salvation by getting circumcised. And so he is going back to prove this.

So what you find here is this dual pattern in Scripture and you find it almost everywhere in Scripture where on the one hand God gives two things that are necessary and one doesn't cancel out the other. First, obey the whole law of God, every point, every jot and tittle. The second part is it can't save you. Those two things are true. You obey the law, but you have to understand, first of all, that you cannot obey the whole law. You might think that you can obey the law regarding murder. And then you have hatred in your heart and you found you have broken it. You may think that you have obeyed the law regarding the sabbath. And then your mind wanders during the sabbath and you don't

⁷ Deuteronomy 11:13.

⁸ Deuteronomy 11:19.

⁹ Deuteronomy 11:32.

dedicate that day to him, you don't use his words and work in his ways because you can't.

And so what hope do you have in this world? You only have one hope and that hope is Jesus Christ because you are obligated to obey every law. But if you base your salvation on that, you are history. You are lost. And that is the point that Paul is making.

So Paul goes, first of all, to this text in the Old Testament to prove that you cannot be justified by the law, because the law demands that you obey every law. And you can't obey every law. That is his argument, ok?

So let's close that argument out now. Let's move to the next one. Then he gives the testimony of an Old Testament prophet in verse 11. And then in verse 12 he gives another testimony of Moses from the law in the book of Leviticus.

So here Paul is constantly quoting the Old Testament to prove his point of the grace of Jesus Christ.

So in verse 11 he says, "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.'"¹⁰ This verse is one of the most significant verses in Galatians. There are a few of them. The last verse, this verse and then in chapter two this same principle that the just shall live by faith are also so critical.

You might say that the theme of the book of Galatians is receive the grace of Jesus Christ. Or you might say that the just shall live by faith. That would really get the heart of this book. You want to teach your children what the book of Galatians is all about, either one of those statements will show you what it really means.

So he is actually quoting an Old Testament prophet. He is quoting Habakkuk 2:4 and it reads, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."¹¹

So Paul goes back to the prophets. He first goes to the law and then now he goes to the prophets. How often have you seen him do this in your experience here in the teaching in this church? In the book of Romans he does this constantly. He will go back to the law, the prophets, the psalms. He will go... he is picking from all Old Testament Scripture.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and [it] is profitable."¹² And Paul is demonstrating that right now. He is demonstrating the perfect unity and sufficiency of Scripture, that every single word of Scripture is a word of Jesus Christ. Paul is quoting Christ himself all the way through. And as he quotes the Old Testament he is quoting Jesus Christ himself.

¹⁰ Galatians 3:11.

¹¹ Habakkuk 2:4.

¹² 2 Timothy 3:16.

And so now as he quotes a prophet he is also quoting one of Christ's prophets and the prophet says there are two kinds of people. There are the proud who believe that they can buy God's favor with their works and then there are the just who live by faith. The proud, though they keep the law so nicely in so many ways outwardly. They will burn in hell forever. But the just shall live by faith.

So he goes to the Old Testament prophet here.

You know, this statement, "The just shall live by faith,"¹³ of course was the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation as the Roman Catholic Church had added one thing after another that men might be saved.

Martin Luther's brother tells a story of Martin. He was ill for quite some time. He went to Italy and he stayed there and while he was there, while he was staying in Italy this phrase, "The just shall live by faith,"¹⁴ was dogging him and so he went to Rome and he visited the church Saint John Lateran and the pope had offered an indulgence for the sins of anyone who would mount the stair case in that church because they claimed that the staircase in that church was the identical staircase that came from the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate. And they claimed that Jesus Christ's blood was shed on the stair steps going up.

So the pope said, "I will absolve you of your sins if you mount the staircase of Saint John Lateran."

And so Martin Luther went and he went up the steps, like all the other pilgrims, crawling one step at a time and kissing each step and the spots of blood that were allegedly the blood of Christ. And Martin Luther as his brother knelt and went up the staircase was kissing the blood stained stairs. But he said, "Yet, the law is not of faith. The man who does them shall live by them." And he quotes this and he quotes, "The just shall live by faith."¹⁵

So Martin Luther's brother says that when he was climbing those stairs he was reminding himself that the just shall live by faith, not by the works of the law, not by kissing the staircase of the court of Pontius Pilate because Christ's blood was shed there.

What the apostle Paul is doing here, he is quoting an Old Testament prophet and the words of that prophet will ring in the ears of true believers forever until Christ comes again that the just shall live by faith.

And then he moves on and he quotes Leviticus chapter 18.

Now look at this very carefully. Look at verse 12.

¹³ Galatians 3:11.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

“Yet the law is not of faith.”¹⁶

So he is making a distinction between the law and faith. And he is saying they are two separate things. They are not the same thing. The law is not of faith. So when you think about the law you are trying to teach yourself what God says about the law.

One thing you need to know is that they are two different things. They are not the same at all. And so he says, “The law is not of faith: but, ‘the man who shall do them.’”¹⁷

And that is the quote from Leviticus chapter 18 verse five.

If you look at the context of this statement in Leviticus chapter 18 what you find is that the context is that of a people who have been redeemed out of Egypt. They have been rescued from their destructive worldly life and now they live by the law of God.

It is stated in a positive way. Right in this verse you have the distinction of the law and faith. And he is saying, “Yes, you should live by them.” He says, “The man who does them shall live by them.”¹⁸ That is a good thing, but it is not the same as faith. And that is what he is saying herein verse 12.

The thrust of Leviticus 18 is, “Don’t go back to Egypt. Obey the law of God. Follow God. Don’t let the law of Pharaoh be your guide. Let the law of almighty God be your guide.”

But Paul is interpreting that and saying, “But don’t think that it justifies you.”

So Paul is using Leviticus 18 to prove actually two things all at once, that the law is not of faith, but the law should not be abandoned in every day life, that it cannot save you. So, again, he is just continuing to pile up these evidences.

And they all say this. Don’t rely on obedience for your salvation. Obey the laws, but don’t trust in them.

And then, fifthly, he brings a picture of the redemption of Christ on the cross. So Paul is just continuing to layer in one evidence after another, one argument after another. You know, he is saying the same thing. You know, he is repeating himself and he is repeating himself because we need the repetition, because our human pride so often grips us and we think that if we are able to keep the law we are so much better than someone else or we are perhaps, you know, able to buy God’s favor.

“If I do this, God will like me better.”

¹⁶ Galatians 3:12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Not true. “The just shall live by faith.”¹⁹

So then Paul brings the picture of the redemption of Christ on the cross and he quotes Deuteronomy 21. So now we are back to Deuteronomy.

Here, in just these first 10, 11, 12 and now in 13 most of the words come from the Old Testament in this text. And so he is doing it again now.

In verse 13 he says:

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.²⁰

So Deuteronomy 21, if you recall, is about a scene where someone is guilty of a crime punishable by death, that they will hang on a tree as part of their punishment. It was designed to expose the cursed status before the whole community. But it was required that the body not stay there overnight, but that it be taken down before nightfall. And so you find this pattern being followed in Scripture in Joshua chapter 10 verse 26 when Joshua defeated five Canaanite kings and he hung them. He took them down before nightfall.

When the seven sons of Saul were hung in 2 Samuel chapter 21 the same thing happened. And the same thing happened with the Lord Jesus Christ himself in John chapter 19 verse 31. The text says explicitly that he was taken down before nightfall. This as the pattern that was followed. And so it is a picture of someone hanging on a tree. And it is interesting, you know, how gospel writers go out of their way to use the word tree often when they speak of the crucifixion of Christ.

And so it pictures the substitutionary atonement of Christ, that he hung on a tree and he took all the curses of the law against us into his own body. He absorbed them. He took them all into his own body as he hung on the tree. And here Moses is giving this illustration that will finally be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins were nailed to a tree, all of them. And all of the curses of the law fell on Christ. And that is what that means when Paul says that, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse[s] of the law.”²¹

There are two things. Notice the word “redeemed” and then “curses.” Those are two important words in this sentence. First of all there are the curses, the hundreds of thousands, millions, millions of laws that we have broken in a day and in a month and in a lifetime. That Christ has taken the curses for everyone of our law breakings upon himself. And it is enormous when you think about it that the gospel was so clear to Moses that he would speak of it. He would first of all say that you have to obey the whole law or

¹⁹ Galatians 3:11.

²⁰ Galatians 3:13-14.

²¹ Galatians 3:13.

else you cannot be saved and he would also acknowledge that the just shall live by faith. Moses was after Abraham. And he understood that to be delivered from the curses of the law meant that all of your violations were paid for and that they were paid for by the act of redemption, another really important word.

Everybody needs to understand what the word redemption means. To redeem means to buy back. It means to pay for and buy back a slave and make him free.

So as the curses of the law were laid upon Christ there was a purchase that was made. He purchased our freedom by taking all of the curses upon himself and he redeemed us from the curse of the law.

You know that song? There is a beautiful hymn that I love to sing of what wondrous love is this.

What wondrous love is this,
Oh, my soul, oh, my soul?
What wondrous love is this,
Oh, my soul?
What wondrous love is this,
That caused the Lord of bliss,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul,
For my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?

That song is written out of this text here and Christ bore the dreadful curse and it was a dreadful curse. We have read the curses of Deuteronomy. They are the curses for all who break the law, but Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. The curse of the law is not annulled. It is laid on Christ and Christ alone.

So he gives a picture of the redemption of Christ on the cross that he took all of the curses of the law upon himself and then in verses 15 through 18 he makes the argument that there is a promise of an unbreakable covenant that secures that all of these things.

And so he defend now, again, the completeness of the Bible. He defends salvation by grace and the covenant that was made to Abraham. And so he begins by saying this, "Brethren..." Notice he calls them brethren. "I speak in the manner of men."²²

So he is now going to give a human example. He is going to bring something out of normal every day life, a contract, an agreement that men make when they buy something or they determine to do something together and each has various responsibilities. That is what he is speaking of here, just the human matter of making a contract.

"I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it."²³

²² Galatians 3:15.

²³ Ibid.

So what Paul is saying is, “This example that I am going to give you here can be understood by just thinking about a contract that once you make a contract you can’t add to it and you can’t annul it. You can’t take something back and you can’t put something on it.”

You might walk away and say, “I forgot about that.”

You can’t change it. You might appeal it and if the brother agrees it is a beautiful thing. But if he doesn’t, sorry, you have sworn to your hurt and that happens all the time.

So the apostle Paul is giving this whole illustration of a man’s covenant and that you have to keep it.

And then he says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made.”²⁴

So Paul is saying that there was a covenant made, there was a contract enacted with Abraham and that that promise of Abraham is not taken back. Remember, you know, you have to understand biblical history to understand what is being said here. Abraham 2000 BC, the law approximately 1400 BC, right? So there are many years that spanned this distance. The promise of salvation by faith was given to Abraham and then many, many years, hundreds of years later the law was given. And so what Paul is saying is that, what is given to Abraham is not annulled. Faith is not annulled by the law that came hundreds of years later. The contract remains that the just shall live by faith. Abraham believed God in 2000 BC and it was reckoned to him for righteousness and he was made righteous by faith, not by the works of the law. The centuries passed and then the law was given through Moses.

But the law doesn’t annul the promise of faith. In other words, salvation was never by the law. It was always by faith in the Old Testament. The Jews misunderstood it. The Jews began to say that you were justified by the works of the law and Jesus attacked them for it. Jesus said, “No, you misunderstand the law. You have obliterated the right meaning of Scripture.”

And so when Jesus speaks to the Pharisees as if they are justified by the law, he is really correcting them because the Jewish view of the law was wrong at the time when Christ came. The Jews weren’t doing the right thing. They did believe they were justified by the law. And so what Paul is saying is that justification by faith was established through Abraham and it was not annulled by the law hundreds of years later. So he is giving a historical analysis of this.

And so he is saying that justification by faith is irrevocable and that faith always overrode the law and the law never justified.

²⁴ Galatians 3:16.

And so then he says in verse 16, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds.’”²⁵

This is how seriously Paul viewed the Old Testament. Whether it was singular or plural it made a difference. The authority, the inspiration of Scripture is down to whether it is plural or singular, ok?

“Every word of God is pure.”²⁶

And here he reminds the Galatians that there was one seed. Because the Galatians were saying, “No, there is a way of salvation for the Gentiles and a way of salvation for the Jews.”

And Paul says, “No, there is one. There is only one way of salvation. So he is attacking the Judaizers who think that you are saved by your genealogy. And he is saying the seed is Christ. So if you are Christ’s you are of Abraham’s seed. So there is one internal seed that bears fruit to eternal life. It is the seed of Abraham which is Christ. So when God speaks to Abraham and uses the term “seed” we now know what he means. He means justification by faith in Christ. That is what he means when he uses that term.

And then he uses the word promise. This word is a prominent word in the book of Galatians. It appears eight times. But there is a promise that is unbreakable that survives for all eternity. And that is the promise of faith. You cannot earn a promise. You can only trust in a promise.

And so here the apostle Paul is trying to make something very clear and that is that salvation was never by the works of the law. At the same time, men always want to try to make themselves acceptable. They always want to feel good about themselves by what they do and whether they can keep the law or not. But the problem is it is impossible because men don’t have the option to keep this law or that law. They are obligated to keep every single law and that is impossible.

And so where is the hope? Where is the hope for mankind? It is the hope of a man who hung on a tree and who absorbed all the curses of the law for all the law breakers who would repent of their sins and by his stripes we would be healed.

So here we find in Galatians chapter three in this section the fact that man is only justified by faith and that all of the curses that we deserve for our sins are laid on Christ.

And I really pray that this morning we would see how good God has been to us because we are lawbreakers and we can never stop breaking the law. And so we have to run to Christ.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Proverbs 30:5.

Let me just close with two things. Here is why you should know and obey the law of God and seek to obey it with all of your heart because the more law you know the more grace you will experience. You should seek to know every jot and tittle of the law as Jesus Christ urged us to do.

And as we know the law more, we see the sweetness and the goodness of the heart of God. We find ourselves being condemned by it. We see what great sinners we are. But we also see what a great Savior we have.

If you don't love the law of God you will never love the Savior like you could. You will see how gracious he has been to you. You will make more of him, you will feel that he is greater than he ever was before, the more you know of the law.

But you have to understand that you are not justified by the law. You are justified by faith in Jesus Christ who took all the curses of the law that you deserved as he hung on a tree.

And let me just say this last thing. And when you think of the fact that you are obligated to obey every law and you have not been able to do it, how merciful is God? How merciful is God?

I must take that a step further. If God is so merciful toward you in all of your breakings of the law, how merciful should you be toward your brother, toward your wife, toward your husband who breaks the law all the time and sometimes it affects you?

If we have been brought such a great salvation, we should be ministers of that salvation to one another as well.

Will you pray with me?

Oh Lord, we are so thankful that you have given us the law to show us our sin and to give us a vision of the greatness of Jesus Christ. Oh, I pray that his greatness would be so felt here today and that it would carry the sense of all of his mercies with us, that we would make so much of him and so little of our own righteousness in Jesus' name. Amen.