

Galatians #11

October 6, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: Jesus Christ is the Life Changer; Galatians 3:23-4:7

Our sermon today should be very uplifting. When Jesus came, He came fulfilling the law of God and through faith freeing us, who believe, from the demands of the law.

Paul uses vivid, descriptive imagery to demonstrate the authority of the law in the lives of people. Of course, he is primarily describing the duty of the law of Moses and its authority over the people of Israel, Abraham's physical offspring. But it is not a stretch to say that the law, having been written on the hearts of all people is in view here. Remember, as Galatians 3:23-24 teaches, God's moral principles have been imprinted on the hearts of every person who has ever lived. And therefore, God's timeless moral principles have held all humanity in a prison of sorts and working to "lead us to Christ that we might be justified through faith." And Paul makes it clear in our passage today that this is true for all people whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.

But let's be clear about God's law. The Law of Moses was given to Israel, signaling that they are a unique people belonging to God. But what about the Gentiles? They too are under God's law in this way: God's moral principles of right and wrong are written on the hearts of every person. His moral principles are always true for everyone everywhere. Paul says that even for Gentiles the law, which is written on their hearts has been established for the purpose of leading even the Gentiles to faith in Christ. He says it this way in Romans 2:14-15, "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law [of Moses], do by nature things required by the law [God's eternal moral principles], they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law [of Moses], since they show that the requirements of the law [God's moral principles] are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."

Paul further elaborates on the purpose of the law for all people, whether Jew or Gentile, in Romans 3:9 when he says, "What shall we conclude then? Are we [Jews] any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin." Then he wraps it up this way: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." (Romans 3:19-20)

That last line is a prevailing theme in Paul's teaching on justification: "no one will be declared righteous by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."

This point is driven home in Galatians 3:21 where Paul makes the purpose of the law clear. He says that there is no such law that can "impart life." Therefore, the law [both the Law of Moses and God's moral principles which are written on the hearts of everyone] is powerless to produce a righteousness which can justify sinners. And yet, at the same time, the law is good and serves God's perfect purpose, which is to lead sinners to Christ, who is our righteousness unto justification, which comes through faith!

Today, from Galatians 3:23 – 4:7, we will simply contrast the purpose of the law (both the law of Moses and the timeless moral principles of God), with the perfect purpose of the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of everyone who believes.

l) **The Purpose of the law for everyone under the law.**

- A) (3:23-25) Its duration and termination: "Before *faith* came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until *faith* should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."

- 1) The duration of the law.
 - (a) The law was put in charge until *faith* was revealed.
 - (i) This *faith* is referring to Christ.
 - (a) The law is in effect, doing its work until a person puts their faith in Christ.
 - 2) The power and authority of the law.
 - (a) The law has power to “imprison” and “lock up” everyone until faith is placed in Christ!
 - (i) (3:23) The law held us as prisoners.
 - (a) We were confined as prisoners by our own sin.
 - (ii) (3:23) The law held us under guard.
 - (a) As we were confined under our sin, we were under the protective custody of law.
 1. How does it protect us?
 - a. By first revealing God’s heart: who God is.
 - b. By showing us what is right and therefore, what is wrong in God’s eyes.
 - (iii) (3:24) The law was put in charge.
 - (a) Like a “school master”
 1. The purpose of the law as “school master” is to lead us to Christ.
 - a. That we might be justified (found righteous) through faith in Christ!
 - i. The purpose of the law is fulfilled when we stop trying to justify ourselves through law keeping and turn to Christ by faith!
 2. Jesus used the Law to demonstrate that people could NEVER fulfill it, and instead needed to look outside of their own law keeping for a righteousness infinitely greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (see Matthew 5:17-48).
 - (iv) (3:25) The law functions as the binding authority only until faith is placed in Christ.
 - (a) Once a person comes to faith in Christ, the discipline and lessons gained from the “school master” are not forgotten; we remember the lessons!
 1. But we are no longer under the “school master”, but rather under Christ!
 - a. A new relationship. Paul will cover this later in our text.
- B) (4:1-3) Under the law we are compared to children and slaves. “What I am saying is that as long as the heir [of the promise] is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by God the Father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.”
- 1) (4:1-3) Who are the children Paul has in mind?
 - (a) (4:1-2) Heirs of the promise, but subject to the law!
 - (i) These are the ones who will come to faith in Christ.
 - (a) But until the coming of Christ, or until He is received by faith, the child under the law is no better than a slave.
 1. He is subject to “guardians and trustees” until the time set by his father.”
 - a. In Roman culture, until the father decided it was time for the child to be an adult, the child was directed and cared for by guardians and trustees.
 - i. At the time set by the father, the child would then be adopted, gaining full rights as an heir. There would no longer be a need for the guardians.
 - (b) (4:3) Heirs of promise, but subject to the basic principles of the world (the ABC’s).
 - (i) For the Jew this means that before Christ they were enslaved to the ABC’s of the law.
 - (a) Colossians 2:21: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”
 1. These may be helpful for living and they have their proper place in life.
 2. **But we must not base our relationship to God on worldly principles.**
 - a. “It is by grace you have been saved...and not by works...” (Eph. 2:8a, 9a)
 - (ii) For the Gentile this means that before Christ they were enslaved to the ABC’s of idolatry, false worship, and useless rituals practiced for divine favor, or for good luck, etc.

- C) When a person comes to faith in Christ everything changes. That person is no longer imprisoned or enslaved to law! We become the children of God! This is what we will now look at in our next section.

II) The Purpose of the work of Christ for everyone who believes.

- A) Key verse and the breadth of meaning for all who have faith: **Galatians 3:25**: When [Christ] came!
- 1) For all OT saints who looked forward to the coming of “the Seed of Abraham [Christ],”—when Christ came at just the right time, there is forgiveness of sins and redemption for them!
 - (a) Romans 3:25: “God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood. He did this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—He did it to demonstrate His justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (OT saints too).
 - (b) Hebrews 9:15: “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant!
- B) When Christ came there came with Him a change of relationship to all who believe!
- 1) (3:26-27) By faith we become sons of God!
 - (a) No longer children under law or slaves under the guardianship of the law!
 - (b) But sons (children of God).
 - (i) God is now our loving caring Father who is full of affection for His own!
 - (c) Baptized into Christ!
 - (i) The significance of baptism is that better than being immersed in water, we become immersed in Christ through faith in Him!
 - (a) When a person is baptized into water there is a moment when you no longer see the person. When that person is baptized into Christ you no longer see the person, but rather Christ—or at least that is the idea! **More of Him, less of me!**
 - (d) Clothed with Christ! (His righteousness!) A new team! A new identity in Him!
 - (i) The same idea as baptism. New clothing—new appearance; a new affection for Him!
 - 2) (3:28-29) A new equality; an equal standing with others who come to faith in Christ!
 - (a) A problem in the Galatians churches was that some wanted there to be a distinction between the peoples mentioned.
 - (i) But in Christ, He has “destroyed the barrier of hostility”. (Eph. 2:14b)
 - (ii) He is our peace (Eph. 2:14a).
 - (iii) Together we are heirs of the promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ, the blessing of God!

C) (4:4-7) When Christ came, we were forever spiritually united to God through Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

 - 1) (4:4) Christ came at just the right time, born in full humanity, born under the law.
 - 2) (4:5) He alone, being sinless in His humanity, redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 2:13)!
 - (a) “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ! (Rom. 8:1)
 - 3) (4:6) He has endowed us with the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit who unites us to God, our Father, forever!
 - 4) (4:7) In Christ we are no longer slaves but sons!
 - (a) Full heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ.
 - (i) “Now we are children, ...we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17)!

III) Closing

- A) The last stanza in the hymn “And Can it Be” provides a good summary of the new and complete relationship we have with God through Christ. It says, “No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him is mine! Alive in Him my living Head and clothed with righteousness divine! Bold, I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own.”
- B) Your sonship, your righteousness is in Christ whose performance record won your justification! You find your life in Him alone. What standard of performance is keeping you from enjoying the full salvation Christ won for you?