

Galatians 3B

- Throughout the Bible, we're continually presented with the contention of two spiritual ideas
 - Faith and Law
 - In both the Old and New Testaments, we find countless references to both faith and works of law
 - Men and women called to faith in God's promises
 - Yet at the same time, those same men and women are challenged to accomplish works in keeping with their faith
 - And from the beginning, men have confused one with the other
 - The troubles in Galatia that gave rise to Paul's letter were just another example in that history of confusion
 - False teachers persuaded Greek Christians that the way to eternal life was by becoming a Jew first
 - Then following circumcision, the church must follow the Law
 - They had convinced believers in the church to take circumcision and to adopt a Jewish lifestyle as a prerequisite for pleasing God
 - For the believer, this behavior was destructive
 - It robbed the believer of their liberty in Christ
 - And it sent a confusing message about the relationship between faith and works
 - More troubling, this teaching gave opportunity for the unbelievers to join the congregation merely through works
 - Works cannot save
 - Yet by offering a recipe of works, the Judaizers were encouraging unbelievers to become an illegitimate participant in the church
- So as we've studied, Paul wrote to set straight the relationship between faith and Law

- First, he defended his authority to teach
 - Paul was an apostle with authority and a message given by Christ
 - Paul answered to no man for his teaching
 - And in fact, Paul was even required to correct other apostles to preserve the truth
- Then after re-establishing his base of authority, Paul moved last week to refute the false teaching
 - He is teaching on three central areas of Christian doctrine
 - Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation
 - Israelology, or the doctrine of Israel
 - And ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the church
 - The Judaizers were assaulting all three areas of doctrine with their lies
 - They taught salvation included works of Law
 - They taught that only Jews could be saved, so Gentiles must become Jewish
 - They taught that the church wasn't distinct but rather was to become part of Israel
- So in response, Paul began in Chapter 3 with an appeal to their past experiences and to Israel's history
 - He reminded the Galatians of all they had experienced by faith alone and without works of the Law
 - And he argued the truth of Abraham saved by faith alone
 - And he finished with an examination of the covenant that resulted in the promise of salvation for Gentiles
 - So we can summarize all that Paul taught in the first part of Chapter 3 this way
 - It was the Galatians' faith that brought the church its first experience with the Lord

- And faith has always been the basis of every saint's relationship with the Lord
 - And by that same faith, we receive the blessing reserved for the children of God
 - So the Law of Moses plays no role in justifying nor sanctifying the saint
- Now Paul moves deeper into a discussion of Israelology, particularly as it pertains to the Law
 - And tonight we begin with a simple but profound question, which was set up by his earlier defense of salvation by faith alone

Gal. 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

- Why the Law then?
 - If the Law is not the basis for our faith and blessing, then why did God give it in the first place?
 - The answer to this question is important for the Galatian church, since the Judaizers were distorting the Law
 - But this issue is also important for our church today, because numerous church traditions have over-emphasized the Law
 - Even to the point of teaching Christians to live according to it as a matter of sanctification
 - So the question for us today is how should a Christian relate to the Law, knowing it was not given to save us or sanctify us?
- Paul explains the Law's unique purpose in the next section, beginning with it was "added"
 - The word in Greek translated added means to place something beside
 - So the Law came in a covenant to Israel 430 years after the covenant given to Abraham
 - And it comes alongside the original covenant
 - It doesn't join it

- It doesn't replace it
 - It sits next to it
- Why couldn't the covenant of Law replace the covenant given to Abraham? Because laws cannot make a person righteous
 - Laws exist only to tell us when we are unrighteous
 - For example, we have a law saying I cannot murder
 - So far, I haven't murdered anyone
 - But can we say that this law has made me righteous?
 - No, because righteousness is much more than merely whether I murder
 - And the law itself does not possess power to stop me from murdering should I chose to do so
 - That law only exists to convict me of sin when and if I should choose to murder
 - Therefore, a law's purpose doesn't even go into effect until after someone has already sinned
 - As such, the Law only serves to create greater awareness of sin
- So this is why Paul says the Law was added "because" of transgressions or sins
 - Man's sin necessitated the giving of God's Law
 - Paul teaches the same thing to the Romans in Chapter 3:

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

Rom. 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

- The chief purpose of God's Law was to make clear how unrighteous men truly are
- So, the Law didn't come to ensure the blessing God promised to Abraham

- It came to point out sin, to moderate it and nothing more
- Thirdly, Paul emphasizes that the Law's delivery reflects its different purpose
 - The Law was given to Israel by angels through a mediator
 - The Law came as part of the Old Covenant through a complex delivery mechanism that included God working through angels and a man, Moses, to form His covenant
 - Paul is emphasizing the fundamental difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant
 - When a covenant has a mediator, it tells us that both parties participate in keeping the agreement
 - Both parties have terms to fulfill and penalties if they fail to keep the agreement
 - In the case of a covenant, the penalty is death
 - This means the covenant of Law is a covenant that can only bring blessing if men keep the terms perfectly
 - If we break a covenant, then the terms are forfeited
 - And the only expectation is death
 - But the covenant given to Abraham came very differently
 - It didn't have a mediator
 - God alone made promises
 - Abraham was put to sleep so that he could do nothing but receive what God granted him
 - So that covenant is not based on performance
 - It depends entirely on God being faithful and keeping His promises, which He always does
- That leads us to the final difference Paul lists between the Law and the Promise
 - The Law sits alongside the covenant of Moses only for a time
 - Paul says it was added "until"
 - Don't pass by that word too quickly

- The Law was, until it wasn't
 - The word until makes clear that at a certain point, the covenant of Law ceases
- The Law no longer sits alongside the covenant of Promise once the promised Seed had come
 - Remember, Paul has said that the seed referred to Christ, as indicated by Paul's use of the singular "seed"
 - So when Christ came, He brought an end to the Law
- So Paul says in v.19 that the Law came in a different way than the covenant of Abraham, and exists for different purposes and exists only until the Promised Messiah arrived
 - So why did the Law need to exist for a time alongside the covenant of promise?
 - Paul now explains that answer

Gal. 3:20 Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

Gal. 3:21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

Gal. 3:22 But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

- Again, Paul emphasizes that the covenant of Law required a mediator, while the covenant of the promise only involved God acting by Himself
 - So the Law and the promises of God are two distinct and different covenants
 - But Paul asks another obvious question the reader may be thinking
 - Does this mean the covenant of Law is against or opposed to the covenant of the promise in the sense that there are two competing ways to get to Heaven?
- Paul says not at all...for if any Law were capable of bringing us to righteousness, then God would have said so
 - He would have told us explicitly that the way to the Father was by works of Law

- Instead, Paul says in v.22 that the Law shut everyone up in sin
 - As we read earlier in Romans 3:19
 - Then Paul explains how to understand the relationship between the Law and the covenant of Grace
 - Paul says that the Law's capacity to bring conviction for sin is actually part of God's plan to save those who believe
 - God displays the whole world as guilty for their works according to His Law
 - And that when He granted mercy, it came through an entirely different mechanism
 - By a promise given to those who believe in Jesus Christ
- So how did the Law accomplish its good purpose in bringing men to faith?
 - Paul concludes this examination of Israelology to answer

Gal. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Gal. 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

Gal. 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

- Before you and I came to faith in Jesus Christ, we were in custody under the Law
 - For the Jew, this literally meant it kept Israel separated from the world and under custody of its care
 - But for the Gentile, it carries the opposite meaning
 - The Law shut out the Gentile from the promises of God
 - The Law was a barrier to Gentiles entering into the assembly of God's people
 - So whether you were Jew or Gentile, the Law dictated your relationship to God, either holding you close or holding you off
 - In either case, it served to convict you of sin
 - And demonstrate man's unholiness in comparison to God's holiness

- Meanwhile, Jews and Gentiles could enter into the blessings of God's promises to Abraham and be declared righteous by their faith
- Even still, they would still be required to live under the Law until the Messiah arrived
- During this waiting period of human history, Paul says the Law became a tutor to Christ
 - In the original Greek, it says the Law became the children's teacher about Christ
 - In other words, the Law was a teacher for God's people, teaching of Christ so that we would find him
 - And by faith in Christ, we would be declared righteous
- Now that Christ has come, we no longer find use for the Law
 - We no longer need to rely on the Law to learn about Christ since He has been revealed
 - We don't need a tutor, since Christ Himself has spoken
- Now we can still learn about Him in a study of the Law
 - But studying the Law is very different from following the Law
 - We are encouraged to study about Christ in the Law, because all scripture is useful for instruction
 - But we are not expected to live according to it now that Christ has appeared, because His appearing becomes greater testimony than our attempts to keep the Law
- To illustrate what Paul's saying, let's imagine these two covenants as trains moving on tracks
 - The covenant of promise spoken to Abraham is the Grace train headed in a straight direction to the promised kingdom
 - There are a countless number of cars on this train
 - And in these cars, we find empty seats prepared for the saints of God
 - Suddenly, another train appears on another set of tracks

- This second train is called the Law train, and it's also moving
- But it's going in the opposite direction
- And its destination is the Lake of Fire
- And unlike the Grace train, the Law train is already full to overflowing
- As the people in the Law train consider their surroundings and their destination, they become aware of their jeopardy
 - They come to realize they are on the wrong train, headed to a terrible destination
 - But there's no way to steer the train, because it's glued to the tracks
 - If they stay on this train, there is no avoiding the outcome
 - Then in their search for an answer, some notice the train on the nearby tracks headed in the opposite direction
 - On the side of the train is written the conductor's name, Jesus Christ
 - Immediately, they see their chance
 - They decide to jump from one train to the other
 - They leave the Law train to join the Grace train
 - Instantly they begin to move in the opposite direction
 - Now they are moving toward the Kingdom
 - But then at a point, the tracks diverge and the Law train heads away and fades into the distance
 - Meanwhile, the Grace train continues onward
 - Only now, we notice the train conductor has his head outside the window yelling "All aboard!"
 - And still more people are running up to the train and jumping on
 - When we look out more closely, we notice that train conductor is Christ Himself

- In a sense, that's how Paul describes the relationship between Law and grace
 - The law shut up everyone, made them aware of the jeopardy and gave them reason to look for a better way
 - The Law train was never a solution for sin
 - But it made them aware of the need to find a solution
 - Then at the right time, they encounter the Grace train
 - They come to realize by faith that the promised Christ is the Messiah
 - In that recognition, they must leave a reliance on works of the Law in order to accept the grace of God
 - When they receive grace, they move in a new direction and obtain a new hope in God's promises
 - And then when the conductor of the Grace train made Himself known, the call of the Gospel goes out to the world
 - As that happens, the Law is no longer the vehicle to bring men to Christ
 - Now the name of Christ Himself draws men to salvation
 - So the Law leaves the scene and all that remains is the conductor yelling "all aboard"
- So the Judaizers were teaching that these two trains worked together
 - That somehow God took the Law train and hooked it to the caboose of the Grace train
 - And now these two trains were headed in the same direction
 - Furthermore, they wanted the church to spend all its time in the Law end of the train
 - I think I've run this analogy into the ground, so let's move forward with Paul

Gal. 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Gal. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

- Paul is now turning to the third major area of doctrine, ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church
 - He transitions out of the discussion of the relationship between the Law and grace with a comforting statement
 - All believers are made sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus
 - Our faith alone brings us into the family of God
 - And if we are sons, then we are also heirs
 - Moreover, this new identity takes precedence over any identity we possessed prior to faith
 - We are all baptized into the Body of Christ by faith
 - Believers are clothed in the righteousness of Christ
 - Paul is drawing upon Greek culture, since in Greek society a young person was recognized as an adult when they were allowed to wear a toga
 - Furthermore, that clothing covers over our past distinctions
 - Whether we were Jew or Gentile
 - Whether we were enslaved or a free man
 - If we were man or woman, nevertheless we are all of the same identity having come to faith in Jesus Christ
 - And if we all belong to Christ in this way, then we are all brothers and sisters in the same family
 - Therefore, we are all descendants of Abraham in Christ
 - Remember, Jesus Himself descended from Abraham (in the sense of His earthly affiliation)
 - So if we join Christ's family by faith, then we likewise join Abraham's family
 - So by faith, we all become the descendants of Abraham and of the Seed, Christ

- So we receive the promised blessings
- Before we move further, let's understand what Paul is saying and not saying
 - Paul is saying that believers no longer need to be concerned with issues of Jewishness vs. Gentile ,or other issues of culture in the question of salvation
 - Those distinctions only made sense in the first place because God established them through the Law
 - Choosing to work in Israel to the exclusion of Gentiles for the most part
 - But once Christ came, the Law had met its purpose, and it went away
 - So if the Law has gone away, then distinctions between Jew and Gentile went with it for the purpose of salvation
 - Gone as well are any other earthly distinctions for the purpose of determining righteousness before God
 - Faith in Christ is the great equalizer
 - On the other hand, Paul is not saying that we no longer observe practical differences between members of the Body of Christ
 - Both Jews and Gentiles still exist in the church
 - Men and women still exist
 - And in some cultures and times, slavery still exists
 - The moment a man or woman comes to faith they do not cease being male or female
 - Likewise, other natural distinctions will remain
 - But Paul is teaching that these differences are irrelevant for the purpose of salvation
 - Therefore, as Christians we need not place ourselves back under a Law given to Jews to lead them to Christ

- In other words, we don't need to become Jews to be saved, since salvation doesn't depend on any identity except our identity in Christ
- Now as we enter into Chapter 4, Paul is still talking about being sons of God by faith, but now he begins to raise the question of why the church is submitting to the Law unnecessarily?

Gal. 4:1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

Gal. 4:2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

Gal. 4:3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Gal. 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- Paul is now teaching the church that our entrance into salvation and away from the Law came according to a timing God determined
 - Paul compares believers under Law and awaiting grace as a child
 - In this early stage of life, a child has a status barely better than a slave or servant in the family
 - He can't make his own decisions, he can't direct his own affairs
 - Nevertheless, he is an heir
 - In a date in the future, he will come into the things he is promised as an heir
 - While he awaits that day, the Master places His child under the care and instruction of guardians and managers
 - He is instructed by these authorities
 - He is disciplined by these authorities
 - And he is restrained by these authorities
 - But at a date set by the father, the child is set free from these restrainers

- Likewise, we were under the restraints, conviction and instruction of God's Law or the general conviction of our conscious
 - These things acted to preserve us to a degree until the time the Father appointed
 - And then at the appointed time, we came to faith in Christ
 - By that faith we were set free from the bondage to the Law
 - We were like that child that has matured to the point he is no longer under the custodian
 - Notice that Paul says in v.4 that this time of living under the custodian of the Law existed only until Christ was born
 - At the point that Christ was born of a woman, and He was revealed as the Messiah, the Law was no longer our tutor
 - Now Christ spoke for Himself directly
 - So Paul isn't saying that individually the Law is still in effect until we individually come to faith
 - Paul is speaking in terms of dispensations
 - As the Messiah was revealed in the flesh, then the bondage of the custodian was released for all
 - The dispensation of Law gave way to the dispensation of grace
- So now Paul makes the application for the church

Gal. 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- To conclude, Paul says if we are no longer a slave to works of law, then that can only be true if we have moved to a position of sons by faith
 - And if have become sons of God by faith, then we should expect to receive what sons receive
 - We have been promised an inheritance in Heaven
 - Which means our salvation is assured
 - As every son is a son for life

- So if the Judaizers were putting pressure on the believers to become Jewish or else lose what had been promised, Paul says this isn't possible
 - These blessings came as a result of a covenant God delivered to Abraham by means of a promise
 - If they are the result of a promise, then we need do nothing to earn them or secure them
 - And if we have received them, then we are sons with an inheritance
 - So nothing more is required
- Next week, we'll look at Paul's questioning of the church for their seeming willingness to return to such things
 - And he raise questions of what it means about their claimed faith