

Galatians 3 pt. 4 v.21-29

We continue to read through Paul's instruction to the Galatian churches on how they are to relate to the Law. Part of Paul's instruction also focuses on how the Jewish people related to the Law in times past up until Christ fulfilled all of the requirements of the Law.

The churches in the region of Galatia were striving earnestly to perfect themselves by adding the requirement to observe the Law, that is the mountain of commandments contained in the Old Testament.

As Gentiles this was not designed for them nor was it part of their heritage, and after Christ fulfilled the Law there is no longer a requirement for believers to fulfill them. We can never improve upon Christ's completed work.

It seems then that we come face to face with opposing ideologies.

Justification by works, fulfillment of the Law OR justification by faith in Christ and the promise of God.

So the logical question one might ask is "What purpose does the Law then serve?" That is the rhetorical question that Paul poses in verse 19.

That question is important to ask AND it's important that we who follow Christ and cling to the Book know the answer. This is especially true in our movement where we are committed to verse by verse exposition of all of the Scriptures, which includes the Law.

We believe in faithfully teaching through the Law just as with the rest of the Bible, as challenging as it may be because we believe that, "**ALL** scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that God's people can be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:16-17)

By understanding God's Law we are brought to a clearer understanding of our own need, we are given a broader context and understanding of God's holiness and the human condition throughout time.

V.21-22 So Paul asks and addresses the next logical question that one might ask in verse 21 - "Is the law then against the promises of God?"

We can see that Paul is diligently trying to clear up any misunderstanding of the "either/or" mindset in the churches' doctrine.

We are a people of extremes. Well meaning Christians over the ages have adopted theological positions relating to the Law at two extremes and all along the spectrum between the two.

Some have declared God's Law as meaningless, the Old Testament as void, and unworthy of consideration for the practical Christian life. That is dangerous ground to stand on. Especially since so much of the Law and the Old Testament point to our redeemer Christ.

On the other extreme there have been Christians who have ostensibly come to faith in Christ, but not practically, because they demand that true followers of Christ keep the Law that God gave to the nation of Israel.

Neither one of those positions faithfully represents God's word as delivered to the church by the Holy Spirit.

That is what Paul goes on to explain in the remainder of this book, and in chapter 3.

The law is not against the promises of God. They are not opposed to one another - that is a false dichotomy. It is not either/or.

The Law is the mechanism by which people, having failed to live righteously, come to cling to God's promise that He will make them righteous by His own hand.

Paul even explains that IF one COULD gain righteousness from following requirements for righteousness then God's law would have been the way to do it.

BUT (v.22) rather than making that happen - God's Word, the writings, the scriptures, confined or imprisoned everybody under sin.

About this Matthew Henry writes: "The law discovered their wounds, but could not afford them a remedy: it showed that they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which were manifestly insufficient to take away sin" -Henry, M. (1994). Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume (p. 2298). Peabody: Hendrickson.

So then, imprisoned by our sin, all creation longs for a way to be made whole. People attempt many things and seek many things to fix themselves or achieve perceived wholeness.

The Old Testament saints looked to the horizon for the fulfillment of the promise that was made to them in the Scriptures that God would bring them close.

This notion is confirmed in the New Testament as well: [Heb 11:12-13 NKJV] 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead [Abraham], were born [as many] as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of

them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Those OT believers looked forward to Christ. We benefit from their writings, the Scriptures, the Law and we too look forward to Christ. We are bound together with them in one shared hope, one shared faith, one shared promise.

While they lived under the weight of the Old Covenant, the Law, longing for their redeemer, we live under the new covenant of that redeemer, longing for a blessed reunion with Him. (Incidentally, it is this reflection that gives us some perspective on endurance and patience over time.)

V.23-26 Paul continues to instruct on the purpose of the Law, those 613 requirements, meant to inform God's people on holiness, obedience, and faithfulness.

He chooses to illustrate the relationship between God's people and the Law as a child/student relating to a tutor or school-master.

Please note that this is not an imperative for ignorance or blind faith but rather an education in God's ways.

In this illustration these two parties are not related by blood. Their relationship is academic. The school-master is responsible for teaching the child/student all they should know in order to function properly.

The ultimate goal of this student/teacher relationship is to demonstrate academically/intellectually that the spiritual algebraic equation that we are all faced with is solved by the person and work of Christ.

So once all of the lessons are complete, the student, examining the materials, educated on the subject matter, comes to the reasonable conclusion that the messiah who is found within all of these texts must be the one to reconcile mankind to God.

But there's more! Paul says that the role of the Law is to bring us to Christ so that we might be justified **by faith!** That is far more than an exercise in intellectual dexterity.

That knowledge of Christ, while it might begin in the brain, **MUST** travel to the core of our being - it must turn from knowledge to FAITH, for it is by faith that we are justified in God's sight by Him.

It was the tutor's responsibility to keep the child safe, secure, and also educate them - as it is with children in school's today.

Teachers are only relieved of this role once Mom and Dad come to claim their child and bring them home.

Faith is the thing that brings us to our heavenly Father, to our home.

Paul continues to build on this notion (v.26) - no longer are we bound up in an academic relationship; we are sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ. That is a blood relationship. This is our true family, our true home, where we belong.

V.27 - Paul calls to mind their former choice to follow Jesus Christ - not the Law. They were baptized **into** Christ. They were moved in a very real sense from where they once were in space and time, **INTO** the person of Jesus Christ. So that now they existed geographically, spatially, spiritually, **IN HIM**.

What this means practically is that God views those who are justified by faith, as one with Christ, of the same substance, thereby we are viewed as robed in His righteousness.

[Jhn 14:19-20 NKJV] ...Because I live, you will live also. 20 "At that day you will know that I [am] in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

V.28-29 So then all of those who have undergone this immersion into the personhood of Christ by faith are no longer distinguished from one another

on the basis of race, ethnicity (ἔθνος = gentiles), slavery or freedom, or even gender.

We can make some reasonable inferences on who made up the body in the Galatian churches from Paul's writings: Jewish people, Greeks (non-Jewish people who worshipped the Pantheon of gods/goddesses), slaves, free people, men and women and their families no doubt.

What a diverse crew and on multiple levels - diversity of background, upbringing, relative societal advantage, socio-economic level, there was a lot going on!

Paul says that those identities, those labels, no longer distinguish the believer. Notice the repeated usage of "neither/nor" in Paul's instruction.

When God views the Body he doesn't see Jew, Greek, Slave, Free, Male, Female. He sees the substantive work of Christ - conforming believers into His own image by the working of the Holy Spirit.

We are all something new now, we are all IN CHRIST. The practical application for us is that we should view each other as such. How differently we would treat our brothers and sisters if we committed to seeing the Lord Jesus in their mortal bodies.

God the Father sees us as His own son Jesus Christ, why should we find our identity then in anything else? Why are we so intent on magnifying our uniqueness and personal identity when there is neither Jew, greek, slave, free, male, female - but you are all one. And our unity is in Christ, wherein we magnify Him like a million shining candles burning together for one purpose.

YOU ARE ALL ONE! Why!? Because we have all entered into Christ.

It is timely to reflect back on Paul's words.

[Gal 2:20 NKJV] 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...

This is where the discussion of identity is had. What am I clinging to in order to validate my worth as a human?

For the Galatians they deeply wanted to be part of the team and had bought the lie that in order to do that they had to become Jews. They could never do this completely because they weren't born into the tribes of Israel. They could be proselytes, but even then they carried the stigma of "second class" believers from true Israelites.

The reality, though perhaps less ceremonial, was far more profound. Now-jewish believers were brought close to God by the blood of the cross.

They were reconciled and righteous in God's eyes because Jesus Christ brought them into the Kingdom by His sacrifice.

For us today there are many who deeply want to be part of the team, any team, and will conform their identity to whatever will grant them access to community. Churches have taken up this strategy as well.

We have the hipster church, the reformed church, the surfer church, the flip-flops church, white church, black church. And while these places make people feel comfortable they can sometimes turn into just another form of pharisaical legalism.

If we base our spiritual home on personal identity rather than Christ's identity then we find ourselves selling another set of rules meant to squeeze somebody into. Sometimes the unspoken law is that if you can't or don't look like me then you can't be here. Rubbish!

The truth is that we are all supposed to look like Christ! We were baptized INTO HIM - nobody and nothing else.

We are all one church - the bride of Christ - each of us separately joined to His bone and His body for His glory. We are found in Him and He is to be found in us unpolluted.

[Eph 4:4-6 NKJV] 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who [is] above all, and through all, and in you all.

If we are Christ's, if we are truly found in Him, and He in us then we are children of the promise - we are together heirs to an eternal kingdom that shall never perish, nor shall the gates of hell prevail against it.

And that should give us great comfort, even as it challenges our identities.

This was Paul's reminder for the Galatians and it is so timely for us today.

In some ways Paul's teaching was a call to bring everybody back together from their pet doctrines and legalism in these Galatian churches, reminding them of their shared faith regardless of where they came from.

This is the heart and attitude that we are to adopt, as Christ lives in us and calls us to unity with one another.

[Jhn 17:20-23 NKJV] 20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the

world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.