

LSB Galatians 3:20 - 29 Christ the covering. Christ the equalizer.

20 Now a mediator is not for one person only, whereas God is one. 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 be by law. 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. 23 But before faith came, we were held in custody under the Law, being shut up for the coming faith to be revealed. 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor unto Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

Here we are entering an argument, given by Paul, where he is comparing law and grace, both as a theoretical means of righteousness and fellowship with God.

We are born dead. Spiritually dead in sins. Born condemned. Which system will restore us, indeed quicken us from spiritual death to spiritual life? Which will cause enmity and separation with God to be friendship with God?

So Paul is doing a comparison of two covenants, if you will. Law and grace. Or we could say law of Moses, or gracious unconditional promises of God to differentiate between the two systems of righteousness.

The judaizers have come to Galatia and have said, faith in promises is not enough. Faith alone is not enough for salvation. Jesus is great. Promises are great, But you can't just come to Jesus in faith by itself and expect the promises. No, you have to embrace the Mosaic covenant, the full law of God given through Moses in order to also have Jesus. Faith alone in

promise of blessing alone is not enough. Works of Moses law is required.

So Paul is arguing in every possible way to prove that his gospel of faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works, brings, indeed has brought the promised blessing of favor and friendship with God.

And he's arguing with his theoretical opponents here, because he knows they will argue, *Why the law then?* If God's design for blessing is through faith alone in unconditional promises given to Abraham, why did God give the law?

Their argument is sort of, Paul, you're cherry picking the easy low hanging fruit, but God also gave law. You don't get to just pick the easy part, and ditch the hard stuff Paul. What about all of God's rules??

And so Paul is comparing the two covenants. Law of Moses. Grace of unconditional promises given to Abraham and Abraham's singular seed. Let's talk about both.

Paul is both very thorough and very consistent. In Acts chapter 13, listen to Paul preaching one of his first recorded sermons and he will say exactly what he's saying to the Galatians, again, here;

*32 And we proclaim to you the good news of the **promise made to the fathers**, 33 that God has **fulfilled this promise** to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.' 34 But that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to corruption, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and faithful lovingkindnesses of David.' 35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not give Your Holy One over to see corruption.' 36 For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid among his fathers and saw corruption; 37 but He whom God raised did not see corruption. 38 Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, **that through Him forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you, 39 and that **in Him, everyone who believes is***

*justified from all things which you **could not be justified from through the Law of Moses.***

Paul argues in theory, Why the Law? And Paul is going to explain, by comparison, what the law accomplishes, and what the promised **seed** accomplishes, that singular **Seed** who did not see corruption, but was raised up from the dead.

So let's pick up the discussion of two ways, although one is proven to not be a way, but in their minds it's a way of justification, so Paul compares Law and Grace. We'll go back to vs 18 in order to get our bearings in the context of the argument.

18 For if the inheritance is by law, it is no longer by promise, but God has granted it to Abraham through promise. 19 Why the Law then? It was added because of trespasses, having been ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Two ways. Unconditional promise given to Abraham and to his future seed, Christ, or Law given by Moses. Grace or Law. Which is the way? First Paul says, it's either / or. It isn't both. *For **if the inheritance is by law**, it is **no longer** by promise,*

They had cobbled law onto grace. Jesus can be your saviour, but you have to follow Moses law in order for Him to be saviour. Paul says, no. It's either all of law, or all of promise. *but God has granted it to Abraham through promise.* Paul says.

Then Paul's straw man will ask; *19 Why the Law then?* If justification is totally by unconditional promise, why did God give the Law to Moses? He continues on;

It was added because of trespasses, having been ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise

had been made.

Unconditional blessing and justification is coming. But until that annointed day, God blesses His people with a guardian. The law. Paul is going to humanize the law for the sake of his explanation. The law is a temporary guardian. A tutor. A governor that restrains and teaches and cares for the future recipients of blessing.

So verse 20 is kind of confusing, but consider it in the context of what Paul is doing here laying out the purpose of the law, which cannot save, versus the promise of salvation and blessing given to Abraham which we inherit in the seed, the Christ, which can save us.

20 Now a mediator is not for one person only, whereas God is one.

God approached law and grace in two very different styles. Two opposed approaches.

The promise came quietly and unconditionally to Abraham. God visits Abraham, one on one and gives him an unconditional promise of blessing. A seed will come forth through you who will be a blessing of righteousness and justification for all. Not just jews. All the families of the earth will be blessed.

The law on the other hand came through a mediator between God and men. Moses went up on the mountain and it was terrifying. Fire and earthquakings and lightnings and thunders and fierce warnings to not come close, and angels delivered the law of God, through Moses, to the people.

Nothing friendly about it. Fear and cursing surround the law, very unlike God's quiet visit with His friend, Abram, to tell him of coming blessing through his seed.

Lightning, thunders, fire, earthquakes, loud threats attend the giving of the law to a nation of sinners. Angels and fear and Moses and cursings deliver

the law to a sinful nation. A quiet visit, one on one, friend to friend was how God Himself visited Abram and unfolded the promise of blessing.

Massive difference in how God approaches His law and His grace.

21 Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God?

Does the law which came later supercede and make obsolete the promises given to Abraham.

May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed be by law.

Paul says, it's apples and oranges. Two completely different things. Life can only come through unconditional promise. Law had one job to do and promise had another job to do.

But the law cannot give life. It can only impart death. It does not supercede and make obsolete unconditional promises that God gave to Abraham and to the promised seed, Christ.

The law can only kill, it cannot give life. The promise is for blessing. Justification. Righteousness. Life. Law = death. Promises = life. Apples and oranges.

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.

This is what the law is very effective at accomplishing. The law is a mirror that forces everyone into a corner. The law is good at one job, it forces any honest person into the realization that they are guilty. Sin kills.

The word translated shut up is interesting. sugkleió Phonetic Spelling: (soong-kli'-o) It means to be enclosed in a trap. Imprisoned.

Almost 40 years ago Jeff and I were nearing starvation working together at the Sears Catalog business, when a call came from the BLM looking for two able bodied men with a flat rack truck to go take down a bunch of portable fencing.

The BLM had constructed a trap for rounding up wild horses with fencing on one side and cliffs on the other, and apparently they would chase wild horse herds down the valley, presumably with a helicopter and maybe some cowboys on the ground on horses, and funnel them into this enclosure, chase them in and shut the gate.

There had been threats on peoples lives because it was a hot issue so they needed a couple of useful idiots to go take the portable fencing down. I think it was \$300 bucks for a days hard work for two men. Different times.

Those horses, in that pen, with the gate closed and cliffs on the other side were (soong-kli'-o). Shut up. Imprisoned. That's what God's law does to every sinner. And we are sinners, every one, in a trap. Law is only a mirror that shows us who we are. Sinners all. Locked down. Stuck in that trap.

Keeping some of the laws superficially doesn't spring anyone from the trap. And the Law has another effect on us. It actually excites and incites the indwelling sin that's already within us as fallen sons of Adam. Paul says;

7 What then shall we say? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed, I would not have been mindful of sin if not for the law. For I would not have been aware of coveting if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." 8 But sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from the law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died....Romans 7:7 - 9

Remember, we're comparing the benefits of two systems, law and grace, as to which system is a viable means of justification and righteous standing

before God.

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.

Law shuts us up in prison. Grace gives us the unconditional promises given to Abraham and to his singular seed. But Paul is answering the question, why the law, then. He goes on;

23 But before faith came, we were held in custody under the Law, being shut up for the coming faith to be revealed.

Pam and I have been watching this Amazon Premier series about a police detective named Bosch. I wish I could recommend it but the language is brutal. Brilliantly acted and portrayed. The language is an accurate reflection of the decadence of our current vulgar cultural moment. It is what it is.

There are scenes where they have enough probable cause to round up some person of interest and hand cuff them and take them down to the precinct station for more questioning.

The person will be taken into a room with sound proof deadening on the walls and a Korean war era military gray table and chairs, and one way mirrors where other cops can watch the questioning from beyond the room. It's a perfect picture of vs. 23.

But before faith came, we were held in custody under the Law, being shut up for the coming faith to be revealed.

Held in custody. Under the law. Being shut up. Temporarily imprisoned.

If the person is a person of any means, they call for their lawyer to try to spring them out of that jail. The law held us in custody. We were guilty. It had us in it's prison. The wages of sin are death. We're in that room

waiting for someone to come and help us get free from that mess. Faith is the lawyer that comes to our defense and pays our bail.

It's a poor comparison, but at least perhaps you can think about the situation we were in. Law puts us in the holding tank waiting our judgement. That's all it can do. Faith in Jesus pays the bail and Jesus then takes my full judgement that I was guilty of and due, in my place. Law imprisons us. Grace springs us out of prison. Debt paid in full!

Again, why the law then?

24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor unto Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

A tutor was a steward who had responsibility to care for and teach a rich citizens offspring. Temporary custody with training for later freedom and citizenship. Sort of a surrogate parent. They could be strict and harsh. They had a responsibility to teach and protect those in their charge.

Paul says, the law was like that. The law trapped us into understanding who we are and the seriousness of our offenses to God. The law is a mirror that showed me how bankrupt and vile I actually am. The law is a holding tank until redemption is realized. The law charges you and holds you until either you face the judge and get thrown into outer darkness, or you call out to the saviour who has already paid your debt in full.

The law presses us deeper and deeper into a constricted area until we realize the only hope is Jesus, and flee to safety.

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

The tutor's job is over when the law delivered us safely to our Saviour. The tutor showed us our peril and pressed us towards the safety of a loving Saviour.

When we grasp onto safety and love that God offers us through Jesus, the tutor becomes obsolete. We don't need the stewards care when we are delivered safely into our Father's loving care, through Jesus forgiving our sins.

Now we are sons and daughters of God. We have been purchased. Adopted, at great price. Our Father paid all of the debt that the law had charged us with.

Well, thinking about this, you might say, how would that work, since the promise of blessing was only to a singular seed. Abraham and through Abraham's family a single offspring upon whom the blessing passes. How are we included in the blessing then?

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

Clothing in a spiritual sense has been a theme of scripture from the garden where Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together to make a covering and God rejected that covering and slaughtered animals, blood was let, in order to make a covering of animal skins.

That theme of proper covering is everywhere in scripture. All of it looks forward to this day, when we are IN Christ, clothed with Christ, and He covers our spiritual nakedness and sin. The old is gone. The new has come. We are clothed in His righteousness. *For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*

Look with me in the old testament at a picture of our old clothes, our sinful flesh, and our new clothes. Zechariah chapter 3;

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. 2 And Yahweh said to Satan, "Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Yahweh who has

chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand delivered from the fire?"
3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. 4 And he answered and spoke to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have made your iniquity pass away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." 5 Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.

I love it that Satan is there crying foul. This guy is guilty! He's broken your laws! Guilty! And Yahweh tells Satan to go pound sand.

Then the filthy garments are removed and replaced with festal robes. White and clean! And he is crowned with a clean turban. Pretty excited that I get to wear a turban some day. More excited that Yahweh has told Satan who I'm sure can accuse me of vile filth, to go pound sand. This one belongs to me.

I am clothed with Christ. Listen to a parable that Jesus gave near the end of His earthly ministry as His own crucifixion was already being laid out and plotted within hours. Matthew 22:

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been called to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. 4 Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been called, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast."' 5 But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were called were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, call to the

wedding feast.' 10 And those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

Trust me when I tell you, you DO NOT want to be the guy, made it to the wedding, in filthy garments, and the King comes and says; How dare you defile my Son's wedding feast in filthy rags! Throw him out!

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

I am clothed with white garments, Christ is my covering. I am IN Christ. I have been baptized, by the Holy Spirit, into Christ. I am inside that singular Holy Seed of blessing that was promised to Abraham. I am safe inside the promised seed of blessing.

And of course at this point, the law people in this law and grace discussion are going to be saying, but, but, but, BUT we're jews. We're the chosen people. Doesn't that count for anything? Surely you get a pass if you're a jew, right?

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

Verse 28 is an astonishing truth directly relevant to our current culture. In our land there is unrest and discontent caused by perceived inequality.

And we could further divide all of the division and discontent into some categories. These are the things the social justice folks are burning down cities over.

Racial inequality. Ethnic division between peoples of different levels of melanin in skin tone. Me and Jeff are different. When we were little I would just brown right up like a berry and Jeff would turn red. His fairer skin would just burn while mine tanned.

A whole world of inequality and yes, sin, caused by different colors of skin. We separate into groupings around nationality, skin color and every other possible reason to be divided from some other group that's different from your group.

Privilege. The poverty of the have nots with the blame falling onto the privileged class who oppress the have not class. The people who have wealth crush the people who do not have wealth and indeed, hold them down so they can never get into the privileged class.

Gender inequality, and beyond that, gender confusion. Males oppress females. They're bigger and meaner and they oppress females. And if that wasn't bad enough, now we've got a whole new way to oppress women. In the sports world someone who is a binary male can say they're a female and swim farther, jump higher, whatever a bigger stronger frame can accomplish and take the prize in womens sports.

Social inequality and trouble over Race, Privilege, and gender.

I am here this morning to tell you, I can fix it. I have the solution to all of our social, societal, cultural inequalities and oppressions. I'm like the girl at the Miss America pageant that's going to bring world peace. I have the answer! Are you ready for the solution to all of our discontent and social injustice????

Here it is;

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek,

That fixed all racial and ethnic inequality between people groups of any possible perceived difference. Ethnic injustice. Fixed. Equalized in Christ.

there is neither slave nor free man,

That takes care of class systems and injustice between rich and poor, have and have not, working class, ruling class, whatever else you've got to be discontent about your situation. Everything from hopeless poverty to incredible wealth. Equalized. Fixed. Rich and poor, equalized, in Christ.

there is no male and female,

Doesn't matter how your chromosomes landed. Doesn't matter if you're entirely confused and upset about how your chromosomes happened. Just doesn't matter. No distinction between genders, at all! All of those gender related injustices, fixed. Doesn't matter. At all. Equalized in Christ.

for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Isn't it amazing that somehow Paul, 1950 years ago, looked into the future of the United States, discovered all of the injustices that we're so angry about that we're murdering each other, born or unborn, and he categorized them, and then he summarily dismissed every possible injustice.

Class, Race, Gender. Doesn't matter. Clothe yourself with Jesus, and all of that stuff is in the rear view mirror. Someone needs to tell the evangelical church the good news. None of those previous problems gets dragged into our new identity. In Christ. Clothed with Christ. Every person in Him is equal to every other person, in Him. We all finish this race in a dead heat, in Him.

29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs

according to promise.

The promise of blessing was incredibly narrow. A single seed. From Abraham's body. One singular person in his lineage. All of the promise of blessing is only for a single person. What good is that?

That person owns me. That's how. All of that blessing is given to me by adoption. I'm an adopted son, and a fellow heir to the blessing. And you can be too! I have put that single person, and His promised blessing on, like clothing. Like a covering. I am inside the blessed One!

I have believed in the finished work of redemption, by Abraham's seed, Christ, Jesus, who died on a cross, in full payment for my sins, and then rose from the dead to clothe me in His righteousness. Gracious redemption, apart from the law that I was only guilty of breaking. I am redeemed and clothed by grace.

*29 And **if** you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.*