

96-05-17b

Okay, we're ready to pick up now, and as I mentioned before the break, one of the wonderful things about scripture is that it interprets itself, and more and more times when I hit a difficult passage, I find that it immediately calls for going to other passages to help understand what's being discussed, and that's the case here. We sort of anticipated this in our study of Galatians, and if you will, you might turn over to Galatians chapter 3. Galatians chapter 3, and I'd like to pick up in Galatians chapter 3, verse 18. Now, once again, you may recall in Galatians 3, Abraham comes up as an example.

Paul talks about Abraham and his offspring in the book of Galatians chapter 3. Now, we're very sensitive to these issues here now, aren't we? Because what do you do with a promise? You either believe it or you don't. The issue with a promise is faith. What's the issue with a law? It's what you do.

And inheritance doesn't come by what you do, it comes by what you do. It comes by how you construct reality in your mind day to day. That's really what faith is, isn't it? It's how we view reality.

What are the immovable objects in our mental universe? Is God's faithfulness and God's grace and God's promises, are those things immovable objects? Or are the circumstances of life and the opinions of people and the necessity for us to do and to create and to achieve and so forth, are those the immovable objects? Faith is nothing more than constructing the universe in our mind according to God's plan and God's word instead of our own human experience. And so that's why the inheritance is not by the law. So, verse 19, this looks strangely familiar to us, doesn't it? Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions.

We understand this statement now, don't we? This is what demonstrated, measured and calibrated for us our weakness and our failure and our inability to produce righteousness. God said, here is righteousness, perform it. And we fell flat on our face.

If you transgress in one portion, you've transgressed it all. It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made. And it was ordained by angels through an intermediary.

Now, an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one. We're going to skip that part because here's the part we want to get to. Verse 21, is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not.

This is another one of those real strong negatives in Greek. This is meganoita, God forbid, heck no, whatever you want to substitute there. It's the strongest way you can say no in Greek.

The law is not against the promises of God. For if a law had been given which could make alive,

then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the scripture consigned or concluded or packaged all things under sin, so that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

This is the key. The scripture measured out, calibrated, accounted, made visible to us that everything was under sin. There's no more room for doubt.

Why? So that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who have faith. These are the pistuosin. Pistuo is the verb to believe.

Pistuosin is a present active participle. The ones believing. This is not a point of time.

This is not an aorist tense. The ones who believe in Christ at a point of time are accounted righteous. What is promised to faith in Jesus Christ is given to those who are faithful.

Those who are exercising faith. Those who are being faith ones, however you want to say this. Now what is it that is promised to faith in Jesus Christ? What was promised to Abraham? What was the promise to Abraham and his seed? It is the fulfillment of God's promises.

It is the fact that God will fulfill his plan and his purpose in us. God will declare us righteous when we believe that promise. And that belief in the promise is the means of the promise being fulfilled.

It works just like salvation does. What is the means of God's offer of salvation and promise of salvation being fulfilled? It's believing that it can happen. It's believing the promise.

What is the means of seizing and holding everything that God has for us? That great grand package that is called eternal life for believers. It's believing that God will give it to us. It's operating in faith.

Believing that God's grace is there. Believing that everything that happens to us has a purpose. Believing that our suffering is beneficial.

Believing that our trials serve a purpose. Believing that the things that we endure that we don't find pleasing, that we don't find comforting, that we don't find fulfilling, please and fulfill God's purpose. Please and fulfill God in his plan for us.

And that it's worth it to live that life because God is pleased. That's a completely foreign concept in our modern Christianity. Christianity today advertises itself as a way to be happy, as a way to fulfill one's expectations of life.

It's the great grand placebo. It's the great big Excedrin pill, the big Band-Aid, that this is a way to get your problems solved. My problems are so big, no force on earth can solve them.

I need a higher power to get in and solve my problem. There is truth in that, but that's not God's purpose, is it? God is not here to make me happy. I am here to make God happy.

And it is that decision that constitutes faith. That is belief that life as God planned it and God ordained it and God constituted it serves God's purposes and not our own. Jesus Christ did not live the way he lived, and he didn't go die on the cross because it's what made him happy and it made him the most comfortable and it solved all of his problems and it reconciled his differences with his countrymen and his family and the religious powers that were in those days.

When Jesus Christ obeyed and when Jesus Christ lived in faith, it put him at odds. He did not have a place to lay his head. The birds have nests and the foxes have holes.

The Son of God did not have a place to lay his head. He was despised and rejected by men. Well, what's the point of living life if you're not going to have good circumstances and if you're going to be despised and rejected? Well, that's no kind of life.

That can't be God's plan. That's exactly God's plan, and we can't get past that because we're still living in that pre-Copernican myopic universe where everything revolves around us and our happiness. And faith is believing that the universe revolves around God and his purpose and his pleasure and that by focusing on that, our own happiness is going to overtake us and tackle us and blindside us.

And we weren't even expecting it. We thought, well, by doing this, I'm losing my life. Jesus said, he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

And actually, life is going to find us. It's just going to tackle us from the rear. Right at the point that we've walked away and left it and thought, well, it's over now, we find that that's the very place where God can bless us in ways that we couldn't even dream of.

Eye has not seen or ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has for those who what? Who love him. Where does that love come from? It comes through faith. Faith is the means, hope is the motivation, love is the result in the Christian life.

So this is what Paul is talking about here in Galatians chapter 3. Look at verse 23. Now, before faith came, now here's a shot, here's a jolt. Was there a time before faith? Didn't Adam have faith? Don't we expect to see Adam in the eternal kingdom? What about Abraham? What about Noah? What about Enoch? How can there be a time before faith? Well, we're thinking in salvation terms, aren't we? There never was a time before faith in terms of salvation, so that's not what he's talking about here.

Before faith came, before righteousness through faith came, before the system that we live in today came, we were confined under the law. Here's the clue that tells us when this was. Before faith came.

This is not salvation by faith, this is righteousness by faith. Before righteousness by faith came.

Before the gift, which is promise to faith in Jesus Christ.

Before it came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So the law was our custodian until Christ came. Now we know when faith was revealed.

Faith was revealed at the cross. Faith was revealed in Christ. Faith was revealed on the day of Pentecost, when the law went by the boards.

The law was our custodian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. Look at that phrase, justified by faith. What is he talking about here? Nobody was saved until Christ? Nobody exercised faith in God? What about Genesis 15? Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

What is he talking about here? What is it that rules? What is it that prevails? What is it that characterizes the life of a believer pre-Christ? It's not faith. It's law. It's a system of works and God had a purpose in it.

One of the fascinating things about this, when we come to understand what God is doing in the two phases of his plan, there are more dispensations than that, but if you look in very simple terms at God's plan, you've got before Christ and after Christ. You've got B.C. and A.D. Those are the main phases of God's plan. And that's the way it's presented in the New Testament.

Until Christ came, the law was a custodian. We were held under restraint. What is the law? Paul says the law is for lawbreakers.

The only reason you have a law is because of sin. It's to define sin, to remedy sin, to keep sin from overrunning the human race, to demonstrate what sin is. It's all tied to sin.

The law has as its reason for being sin, not righteousness. When Christ comes, and so the pre-Christ age is all about sin. The post-Christ age is all about righteousness.

It doesn't mean there was no faith before Christ. We know there was. It doesn't mean there was no salvation before Christ.

We know there was. But the focus, the emphasis in that phase of God's plan was, here is sin, here is death, here is non-function, here's everything that you as a creature are able to do that's pleasing to me, and it's a big fat zero. Once Christ comes, that point has been made, and the law was a big part of that purpose.

Nothing wrong with the law. The law is just righteous and good, but the law brought out our sinfulness. It was the big heart meter that showed how diseased we were.

That was the purpose of the law. Christ has come. The big focus now is righteousness through faith.

That's the big emphasis. Well, that's a new thing. That's a different kind of heart.

You don't have to go back and put the electrocardiogram on the new heart because we're not measuring for disease anymore. We're measuring for health. We're measuring for a different quantity.

The law helped us see sin and everything that was a matter with us. Righteousness through faith, which is our calling in this age, is looking at God, looking at righteousness, looking at everything that comes on the positive side of God's plan. So once we get this in our mind, we can see that the law is an anachronism in this age.

Nothing wrong with it, but it's the wrong machine to do the task that we have in this age. Keeping the law is making the point that's already been made. If you want to go back and be proven sinful, go back and try to keep the law.

But you're back a grade. You're living a retro life. You're living in the past.

God's got a new phase of his plan, and he's making a new point. And the new point is righteousness that comes through faith. So the law is anachronistic as any kind of a mission for believers to live their life by.

And when we say the law, we're not just talking about the law of Moses. We're talking about any system whereby people measure their value or their acceptance before God in terms of what they do or how they appear before men or how they appear in their own eyes or any sort of a physical human standard of measurement or acceptance. You should have been born a couple thousand years ago, and you'd have been right at home.

That would have been a great place for you because then you'd chime right in with the law and you could be on the side of proving sin. We have been called to a new thing, and that's why this chapter, Galatians chapter 3, tells us before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint. We had to be restrained.

We were like the demon-possessed man on the other side of the lake. When Jesus and the disciples go across, they had tried to restrain him with fetters and with bonds, and he kept breaking them. The fetters were insufficient.

He would break the chains on his feet. He would grind away the straps and ropes on his arms. No one could control him.

He was out of control. What happens? Christ comes, and the source, the problem that produced that erratic behavior was eliminated. The demons were cast out, and now there's no need for restraint.

Does it mean that he never committed another sin for the rest of his life? Not at all. What it means

is he doesn't have to be under restraint. He was clothed and in his right mind.

We're in the clothed and in our right minds age. We're not in the restraint age, is the point Paul is trying to make. Before faith came, we were restrained under the law, kept under bonds, under restraint, until faith should be revealed.

The law was our custodian. It was our probation officer. It is our guard until Christ came.

This word for custodian is *paideagogos*, which is where we get *pedagogue*, or *paidea*-type learning and so forth is child training. You're under an instructor. You're under a supervisor that trains you.

It reminds me of the Russian athletes. They have a coach that is much more than just a coach. It's a live-in surrogate parent, slash coach, slash mentor, slash teacher.

That person is everything to you and keeps you in the strict lines that you're supposed to be in. That's what the law was until Christ came so that now we are declared righteous by faith. Look at verse 25 of Galatians 3. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the *paideagogen*.

We are no longer under that watchful eye of someone who is going to do our thinking and control us and set our boundaries for us. For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. He's not talking about believing in Christ Jesus, you become sons of God.

He's saying, look, you're in Christ Jesus. You are a son of God. You're an adult son through faith.

Now, that is a calling and an expectation that we have to live up to. It's one thing to be declared a son and it's something else to live as a son. And we came into this standing by faith and we are declared to be sons by faith.

And that's that living faith that he's talking about over in Romans. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. What is baptism? Baptism is identification.

It's union with. It is you are seen in the same glance. When someone glances at you, they see Christ.

When God looks at you, he sees Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. Notice how these are all circumstances of life.

These are expectations that people put on you. Oh, well, you're a Greek. You're not a Jew.

You're an uncircumcised heathen. You're a slave. You're not a freeman.

You're not of noble birth. You're a commoner. You're substandard in some way.

You're a female. You're in a particular role in life and we have certain limits and certain

expectations on you. Paul, when he gives these comparisons, Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, he says, look, that's irrelevant.

He doesn't say they don't exist. He doesn't say you're not going to have to continue to live as a slave or live in the circumstances that you're in. He says that's irrelevant to the discussion of righteousness.

That's irrelevant to the discussion of God's pleasure in your life as a son of God because the arena in which you are being declared righteous is not those circumstances of slave and free, male and female and so forth. What you can do or can't do, it's what you believe or don't believe in your soul. If you are Christ's, you are Abraham's offspring and you are heirs according to promise.

That's the point. Paul was consistent in preaching this gospel. Turn over to Acts chapter 13.

This is very early in the career of the Apostle Paul and he goes to Antioch of Pisidia. If you read long about verse 13 or 14 here in Acts chapter 13, Paul and his company set sail. They went here and there.

They went to Perga and they came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying, Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.

Boy, talk about handing matches to the pyromaniac here. You've got Paul the Apostle in the synagogue. The law and the prophets have just been read.

And the man says, If you've got anything you'd like to say, shoot. Well, this is great because Paul stands up and says, he stood up in motion with his hand. We get a very vivid picture here.

And he says, Men of Israel and you that fear God, listen. Notice that. You've got the men of Israel and you've got some proselytes.

You've got some people that are not considered, but already there's this idea that, well, you may be a Jew by religion, but your ancestors weren't seed of Abraham like mine were and so forth. But Paul addresses them all. Men of Israel and you that fear God, listen.

And then he rehearses the history of Israel all the way up to the time of Christ. And he summarizes this history. He's raised up the son of David and he talks about the preaching of John and he tells them in verse 26, Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham and those among you that fear God, notice he's sensitive to that other component of the audience all the way through.

To us has been sent the message of this deliverance for those who live in Jerusalem and their

rulers because they did not recognize him and understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath. The utterances of the prophets that you just heard here this morning, people in Israel didn't understand them and they crucified the Lord of glory. But in verse 30, God raised him from the dead.

For many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem who are now his witnesses to the people. Now in verse 32, we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, not by crucifying Jesus, by raising Jesus. As also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee.

And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he's spoken this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. Therefore he says in another psalm, you will not let your holy ones see corruption. It talks about David died and saw corruption, but when he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

Let it be known, and here's our point in verse 38, let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. That's salvation. And in verse 39, by him everyone that believes.

And in verse 39 here, these are the Pistuan, the ones exercising faith. Everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Who was the law of Moses for? Believers or unbelievers? Believers.

But it was a form of restraint. It was a form of captivity. It was a form of control.

It demonstrated sin. It was necessary because of sin. The law entered in because of trespasses, and trespasses abounded under that law.

By him everyone that believes is freed from everything that you could not be freed from by the law of Moses. After salvation, after the forgiveness of sins, here you have the issue of righteousness. You still couldn't be declared righteous by keeping the works of the law.

You're still under condemnation as a believer because the law says you failed. You screwed up. Bring a sacrifice.

Bring an offering. Observe a feast. Shed the blood.

Sprinkle that blood. You're unclean. You're outside the camp.

You can't worship. You can't associate. This was for believers, and it kept demonstrating that after believing in God and after our eternal salvation was no longer an issue, we couldn't generate righteousness.

That was the point. But we've been freed from that through Jesus Christ, and this is one of those bigger components of God's plan. When you step back and look at it, it's not just the forgiveness.

It's not just dodging the lake of fire. It's the issue of righteousness, the issue of God's character and what characterizes God as opposed to what characterizes us. So he says, through Christ you can be freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

And this word for freed is very interesting because it is from *dikaiois*. D-I-K-A-I-O-S is the noun. And this is a verb form, and it's not from *Eleutherion*, which is freedom and so forth.

This is *dikaiois*. You can be righteous from the law. Everything that the law could not righteous you from, you can be righteous now.

And the element of righteousness is in this word. When you turn back here to Romans and as we conclude the argument of chapter 5 and look at the beginning of chapter 6, what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? This makes sense to us now, doesn't it? The law came in because of trespasses and the law came in and increased the trespass, sin increased and so forth, and that point was made. So what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin because it was because of those sins and the demonstrated failure on our part that grace came in? So should we judge and demonstrating the greatness of God's grace because we're so sinful? This is one of the things that happens through reformed theology today and any offshoot of it that continues to stress our sinfulness after salvation.

This is a common debate. There's an article in a recent *bibliotheca sacra* talking about, well, are we... how do they put that? Are we... Are we sinners who have been saved or are we saved people who occasionally sin or some such thing? Is the emphasis on the fact that we are saints now, that we've been saved by Jesus Christ and we're in pursuit of righteousness. Are we saints who occasionally sin or are we sinners who have been made saints? And in a lot of theology and in a lot of Christianity today, over and over again, you continue to hear about depravity and sin and the focus continues to be on sin and that point has been made and this is what Paul is saying.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound? Are we to continue under the law? Look at the context. We tend to say, well, are we to continue in a sinful lifestyle so that we can continue to claim God's grace? And that's an application of this but the point that he's making in the end of chapter 5 is through one man's disobedience, we all came under sin. Death reigned.

The law came in and increased the trespass and we were all living in sin and that was... that demonstrated the problem to such a great extent that we now understand God's grace and we've seen God's grace come in. So now the question is, well, are we going to continue in that mode so that grace will continue to abound? And he says, God forbid. We're in a different age.

Christ has come. We're on the post-Christ side of the plan of God. This is A.D., not B.C. and the point now is not sin and God's grace in coping with sin.

The emphasis now doesn't mean that that's not a component of our life but the emphasis now is on righteousness. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Something happened between the B.C. and the A.D. It's the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead. That is a big watershed.

It's a big marker in the plan of God. And do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Same point that he made in Galatians 3. We've been baptized into Christ. We've put on Christ.

Christ lives. The death that he died, he died to sin. That canceled out the old age.

The life that he lives, he lives to God. That's the new age. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death so that there's a purpose in that.

So that we don't go to the lake of fire? No. So that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. That's the purpose.

That's the goal. And that's where we're going to be going as we continue our study in Romans 6. Everything that Paul has built and constructed in the first five chapters are to convince us that works are not the way of righteousness. Works, a system of works such as the Mosaic Law, God introduced that to demonstrate sin, not righteousness.

And if we turn back to any kind of a works-based evaluation, if we worry about the opinion of people, if we worry about the judgment of history, if we worry about how it looks, if we worry about how it's measured, did it profit me? Did I come out ahead? What was my material benefit? Did I succeed? Did I achieve? Any sort of measurement like that partakes of the old age. The measurement in this age is the evaluation in the eyes of God, which is what do you believe? By faith we are declared righteous, and that declaration of righteousness and the faith that characterizes our soul puts us in the position to be flooded with the love that comes through the Holy Spirit, Romans 5.5. The love of God is poured out in our hearts. That's one of those results after that participle and after those two subjunctive mood verbs.

At the point that we begin getting justified by faith and not by works as believers, at the point that we start rejoicing in hope of the glory of God and partaking of the peace that we have with God, that's the point at which our life is going to start to count on the positive side of God's plan. That is the burden on Paul's heart as he writes this church in Rome. That's the burden in his heart as he wrote the Galatians, and he said, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You began so well, and having begun in faith, are you now going to finish up in works? That's the argument of Galatians and it's the argument of Romans.

These two books were written almost simultaneously, and we're going to see now as we continue in chapter 6 and chapter 7 and chapter 8, that when Paul goes back, and I'll give you a little hint of what's coming up. Remember in chapter 7 when he says, I was alive once, apart from the law, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died? What does that sound like? What does that sound like? What have we just covered in chapter 5 and in Galatians 3 and over in Acts 13? It's the age of the law. It's the B.C. age that he's talking about there.

I was alive once, apart from the law. The law came, sin revived, I died. I died operationally.

It demonstrated that I couldn't produce righteousness. How does chapter 8 start? There is therefore now no condemnation. For what the law could not do because it was weak in sin and death, Christ did.

That's what he's building up to. That's where we're going in this whole argument, and you can see how beautifully constructed this letter is, where he tackles the issue of sin, and he says, this is still a problem for believers. He tackles the issue of the law, and he says, here's the place of the law in God's plan, and now he's going forward and he's saying, here's righteousness, and here's the place of righteousness in God's plan, and here's how it comes.

It doesn't come through the sin-measuring mechanism. It comes through faith, and that's what came when Christ came. That's what happened when Christ was raised from the dead, and that's our great opportunity each and every day is to not let people measure us, not measure ourselves by a false standard, but to let God measure us by His own standard, which is the standard of faith, and when we trust Him and when we recognize our role in His plan, righteousness comes in, the love of God comes in, and we are then thoroughly equipped for all of those good works that people are trying so hard to be righteous by.

They are going to happen in a very natural and instinctive way because they're flowing out of the power of God that's been implanted in us. Let's close here in prayer. Father, we thank You for the divine power that You have instilled into the pages of Scripture and that through these words that were written so many years ago, our life today as believers is nourished and we are instructed and guided and enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be what You want us to be and to accomplish what You want us to accomplish in the spiritual realm through these things.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will give us insight and understanding and a recollection of these things when the time comes for application and when we're faced with the choice between living in the world or living in Your plan. These things will guide us and we will have the perspective and have the opportunity to express the faith that will result in being declared righteous and in fulfilling the purpose that You have for us in this age. We ask these things in Jesus' name and for His glory.

Amen.