

Galatians Chapter 3, Full Sermon Notes

Galatians, pt. 17 (Read 3:1-5)

Intro/Call to Study

When I began to study Paul's epistle to the Galatians, back in 2016, I believed I had a fairly good handle on what this epistle was about. But... you will never know what a book of scripture is about until you spend much and serious time studying.

It is amazing to see the original thoughts of Paul develop as I study.

You cannot see these thoughts by just casually reading the bible. I don't want to discourage anyone from reading the bible, that is a must and an excellent place to begin. But if you are interested in getting into the mind of Paul, you've got to invest much time in reading, studying, and meditating on what he wrote, **in the particular culture and context in which he wrote.**

What happens when people study Galatians is that they bring all kinds of baggage - all kinds of ideas to the table with them, most of the time without even realizing it. We all read the bible through a certain lens, a personal lens, a lens that comes from how we were raised, or from what we already think to be true.

So when I began to read and study this epistle, I prayed to Yahweh; that He would help me let go of the baggage I had. I wanted to let go of my own suitcases, and then check my pockets for anything else I might be carrying. I wanted to get rid of Matthew's thoughts. So I prayed... and I believe Yahweh answered my prayer.

I have discovered what I believe to be the original *reason for* and *message of* this epistle. It takes work to do this, but it also takes honesty and a desire for truth.

If you are interested in unearthing concepts and beliefs that are original, then you get to spend the rest of your life doing this: letting go of what you think you know, and spending years studying through and rehearsing a single book of the bible, because your goal is to know what the author originally meant.

Law and Grace

I initially thought that Galatians was about the relationship between law and grace. Are we saved by grace or saved by keeping the law? Can we believe in both law and grace?

I have found that this epistle does deal with these questions to some degree, in general. In the last message I taught on Galatians, we covered chapter 2 verse 21 where Paul wrote, "I do not set aside the grace of the Almighty, for if righteousness comes through the law then Messiah died for nothing."

If we begin believing that our right-standing with Yahweh is based on law, then why did the Messiah come and die? If we could be declared innocent by doing something in the

law, then there was no need for Yeshua to go through the pain and agony and scorn that he went through. Paul was then correcting a first century *misuse* of the law.

His point is that righteousness does NOT come through the law for either Judahite or Gentile. The law is strong in showing us our sin, but it is powerless to remove our sin. The law can only keep telling you what you ought to do, but it cannot cleanse you from your unrighteousness. The gospel of grace in Messiah does what the law cannot do; it removes our sin.

That does not mean that we shouldn't be obedient to the law after being forgiven and made righteous by grace. The life of a disciple of Christ is a life that has been changed from an old nature to a new nature. And walking in that new nature that desires to be obedient, is not a denial of Yeshua, it is a loving response to the gift that you have been given.

So... we are not saved by good works, but we are saved unto good works. Good works naturally flow out of a heart and mind that has been changed by our Creator. But, good works are not the basis of our salvation. The basis of salvation is grace.

The Primary Message (Gentiles)

But the law/grace issue is not the *primary* message of Paul to the Galatians.

I showed at the beginning of this series that Galatians was not written to Judahite believers in Messiah, but rather Gentile believers in Messiah. It is important to correctly identify who the Gentiles were.

The word **Gentile** (*goy* in Hebrew; *ethnos* in Greek) is not a word that means either (1) "divorced-scattered Israelite" or (2) "non-Israelite." It is a word that is used primarily in both the OT and NT to mean **a heathen person, outside of covenant with Yahweh**. It can be referencing divorced Israelites, but it is most often used of non-Israelites in a foreign nations. **The key is that its primary use is a person who was born to and raised by outsiders, not insiders.** You don't arrive at that understanding by just taking 5 minutes to look up a word in Strong's Concordance. You arrive at that understanding by carefully examining how the word is used throughout scripture in context and in ancient culture.

Gentile Males

A Gentile male was uncircumcised, because his family did not serve the Mighty One of Israel. This heathen man might later in life hear the message about Yeshua the Messiah, and believe that message, in order to receive salvation from sin.

Many of the Gentiles who came to believe in Yeshua were already fearers of the Almighty who had been attending Judahite synagogue services, but were still looked upon as second class citizens, and NOT sons of Abraham, because they had not formally converted to Judaism ("*the way of life for the people of Judah*" - see part 7).

Cornelius in Acts 10 is a prime example of this. He is called a good man, who feared the Almighty along with his whole house. He gave charity, always prayed to the Almighty, and had a good reputation among the Judahite people. **But he wasn't considered a covenant member because he was not a Judahite by birth.** And in not being a Judahite by birth, he was not considered an Israelite. He was instead considered to be a *goy*; a heathen outsider, being uncircumcised in the flesh, because of being raised in a non-Israelite home.

The Issue in Galatia

When Gentiles, like Cornelius, came to believe in Messiah, **some of the Judahites by birth - who also professed belief in Messiah - said that for Cornelius to have faith in Yeshua was not enough to be a member of the covenant, i.e. a son of Abraham.** They said he had to first formally convert to Judaism (that is, become a proselyte Judahite), in order to be reckoned on equal footing with the believing Judahites.

Uncircumcised was shorthand for non-Judahite, because ritual circumcision was the primary method by which a male proselytized to Judah.

The same idea effected the females, minus circumcision. Females born to non-Judahite families were considered heathen and low class *goy*.

Paul's gospel (*which came not from himself, but directly from the Messiah, Galatians 1:11-12*) said: "No. Cornelius' sins ARE forgiven, and he has EQUAL covenant status with all the Judahites by birth, because he has placed his trust and faith in the Messiah whom Yahweh has sent."

Cornelius became a son of Abraham by faith - not by ethnicity.

Cornelius became Abraham's seed by faith - *not by genealogy or bloodline.*

This was and is the gospel to the Gentiles.

The Distorted Gospel

Paul warns these Galatian Gentile believers in the very first chapter, about quickly turning away from the gospel of grace in Messiah to another gospel. The distortion of the gospel was that their faith in Messiah was not enough to be a son of Abraham. Some Judahites were teaching the male Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism before they could really be saved. (Get circumcised, according to our parameters, and you've punched your ticket [Gal. 6:13].)

So the false gospel was teaching salvation by being a Judahite rather than salvation by grace through faith in Messiah.

These Judahites weren't saying that a Gentile had no chance at salvation, they were just saying that a Gentile had to go through a formal conversion of becoming a Judahite, in order to receive salvation in Messiah, and become a son of Abraham.

The Elders Agreed with Paul

But Paul (a Torah observant Judahite himself) taught differently than the influencers, and the apostolic elders at Jerusalem (Peter, James, and John - all Torah observant Judahites) agreed with Paul.

(In Galatians 2:1-2) Paul had a private meeting with these elders, and Paul took Titus - a Greek believer in Yeshua - with him to the meeting. These head, Messianic elders in Jerusalem didn't force Titus to become circumcised, because of the false brothers who were making conversion to Judaism a pre-requisite for salvation.

These Messianic elders were all circumcised. They all believed in circumcision. Paul himself was circumcised. But, they didn't **force** Titus the Greek believer in Yeshua to be circumcised, in order to show the false brothers that their doctrine was in error.

It wasn't so much about the commandment of circumcision, as it was about these Judahites thinking that ritual circumcision (as they prescribed it) was the hoop to jump through to get yourself saved. It was these *works of the law* that they held up for salvation. Paul and the Jerusalem Elders were tearing down this false gospel.

Back to Chapter 3

As we began with 3:1-5, Paul is chastising the Gentile believers in Messiah, for caving into the false gospel of some of the Judahite believers. He asks them: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law (that is, a formal conversion to Judaism through ritual circumcision) or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh (ritual circumcision, i.e. becoming a Judahite)?"

Paul asks questions that I believe the Galatian Gentiles immediately knew the answer to. They knew they received the Spirit of Yahweh by hearing with faith, because they knew what happened to uncircumcised Cornelius (as recorded for us in Acts 10-11; Cornelius and friends HEARD the message about Yeshua, believed it, and were baptized with the Holy Spirit, while still being uncircumcised Gentiles).

So why in the world are they now ignoring that experience and caving into the pressure of jumping through someone else's "hoop of salvation"? Why are they trying to go back and do something that's already been done?

If I buy you a genuine leather bible, with your name printed on the front, and I bring it to Sabbath to give to you, and place it in your hands, and say, "Here is a gift from me to you. I want you to have it." Then it's yours, right? You didn't pay for it. You didn't earn it. You don't have to do anything for it. I bought it for you simply because I wanted to do something for you. I wanted to give you a gift.

If you drive over to the bookstore tomorrow, walk up to the cashier, show him the bible, and say, "I want to pay for this bible," the cashier is going to pull up the record, and it is going to say: PAID IN FULL. He will tell you, "Sir (or ma'am) it's already been paid for.

You don't owe anything." How foolish it would be for you to continue to insist that you must pay for a gift that has already been paid for. As Paul said in Galatians 3:1, "Who has hypnotized you?"

Paul is so upset with these Galatian Gentiles, because their status was already a gold membership. It was paid for by Yahweh, through Yeshua the Messiah, at Calvary. They received it by faith, and it was made evident by the gift of the Spirit coming upon them with they heard the message and believed. **In other words, Almighty Yahweh Himself gave them His stamp of approval.** Why then listen to the Judahites who told them they weren't really saved until they went through the ritual conversion process?

When a Judahite told a Gentile they had to meet an extra requirement, above faith in Messiah, in order to be a first-class covenant member, that was a distortion of the gospel, and a cursed teaching.

Next week, we'll look more at Galatians 3:1-5, and compare it with Acts 10-11, showing that the uncircumcised Cornelius (and other Gentiles) received the Spirit of Yahweh by hearing with faith, and not by converting to become proselyte Judahites. There is no better evidence that you are in right-standing with Yahweh than to receive the gift of His Spirit.

Galatians, pt. 18 (Read 3:1-5)

Last week, we did a review to get our minds back into gear with what is going on in Galatians. I used that sermon as an introduction to chapter 3, so today we are just going to move right into chapter 3 and begin going verse-by-verse.

3:1 You foolish Galatians! Who has hypnotized you, before whose eyes Yeshua Messiah was vividly portrayed as crucified?

Being a follower of Christ doesn't mean you instantly get zapped with the power of being immune to false doctrine. The Galatian Gentile believers had been hypnotized into believing false doctrine. They had been *bewitched* into thinking that they weren't really saved until they became proselytes to Judaism.

Brothers and sisters, there are religious men in the world today who are wolves in sheep's clothing, and they will hypnotize you into believing all sorts of false doctrine. Any doctrine that gets your eyes off of Yeshua the Messiah for salvation, is a damnable doctrine.

Recently, I've had a few things come across my desk where people are saying things like, "You don't need a man to teach you, the Spirit teaches you." Or, "You don't need to attend a church, because you are the church, and you can just worship at home."

What I find funny is this: anytime I hear a man tell others, "You don't need a man to teach you, the Spirit teaches you," *they* then go on to do some teaching their self, or direct

people to an article or paper *they* have written on a subject, or someone *they* like has written on a subject.

Make no mistake about it - you are going to learn from someone. No one just sits as a hermit and reads the Bible without any outside influence. **What matters is that you find the right influence.** You need to have solid teachers and biblical influences in your life.

In Exodus 18, the people of Israel would come to Moses and the other appointed leaders to learn the law and to listen to their judgments.

When Philip (in Acts 8) asked the Ethiopian eunuch if he understood what he was reading, the eunuch replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

In Acts 15, when there was a doctrinal dispute in the early church, they all went up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders to consider the matter and listen to what the lead men had to say on the subject.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4 that Yeshua gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastor-teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of the ministry.

In Titus 1 Paul told Timothy to appoint elders in every city when he was establishing congregations, and in 1 Timothy 3, Paul gave the qualifications for such elders. Listen to these qualifications for elders/pastor/teachers as recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an able teacher, not addicted to wine, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy, one who manages his own household competently, having his children under control with all dignity. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the Almighty's congregation?) He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the Devil. Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the Devil's trap.

First off, if a congregation takes heed to these instructions, they will likely weed out the wolves in sheep's clothing that Yeshua warned us about in Matthew 7:15-20. No wolf is going to be able to meet all of these attributes.

Secondarily, elders/pastors/teachers are to set an example for the congregation. Many of the attributes listed in 1 Timothy 3 for elders, are spoken of elsewhere as qualities that all Christians should strive for. For example, all Christians should strive for self-control and gentleness. If the pastor of a congregation excels in these things, the congregants have a good example to look to.

The office of an overseer (elder/pastor) is not an office that a man sees in himself. I don't believe a man should read that text in 1 Timothy 3 and say to himself, "Yep, I meet all of those, where do I sign up?" That's likely a man who isn't qualified for the job.

The attributes are seen in the man **by the congregation, or by people other than himself**. It is others who will see such a lifestyle in a man, and thus will seek for him to be appointed as an overseer for the church as a whole.

It is foolish to see people being told not to listen to pastors teach the Word, and then at the same time be told that they need to listen to the guy that's telling them not to listen to pastors.

Listen saints: if a man is not part of a local congregation, and if a man does not meet the qualities listed as an elder-pastor-teacher, then he has no business teaching the Bible. He needs to join a faithful, local congregation, and submit himself to the elders of that congregation.

The NT teaches that there is no such thing as a lone-ranger-isolated-Christian. We are called to be a part of a congregation of believers. We are called to have elders over us. We are called to be held accountable by other people. We are called not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

If a person does not abide by what the Bible teaches us to do here as believers, they will be more susceptible to the outside influence of false teachers, who **with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (Romans 16:17-18)**.

The Galatian Gentiles had allowed men to come into their midst, after the Apostle Paul left his evangelistic journey, and these men hypnotized them into thinking that the Spiritual experience that had happened in their life wasn't real.

Look again at the end of verse 1. It says, "**before whose eyes Yeshua the Messiah was vividly portrayed as crucified.**" Paul, through the preaching of the Word, had painted a picture for these Galatians of the death of Yeshua on the cross. He made it come alive to the Galatians. It was as though they had been standing there the day Yeshua died.

They were taught vividly that the death of Yeshua is what secured their forgiveness of sins. They heard the word, had faith in the good news, and received the Holy Spirit, but were now thinking that they needed to go back and do something else to secure their salvation. How foolish this was. So Paul asks them:

3:2-3 I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now going to be made complete by the flesh?

Notice Paul addresses these Galatian Gentiles as receivers of Yahweh's Spirit. These are *Christians* here that have been hypnotized. These are *believers* here that Paul is calling foolish.

Paul is asking them if they obtained Yahweh's Holy Spirit by the works of the law (which in this context are specific, outward works being pushed by the influencers as the primary factors for obtaining salvation and covenant status). The main thing the influencers were pushing for salvation was conversion to Judaism through physical circumcision. To the false brothers, there was no way that a Gentile could be saved until he submitted to their plan of salvation through proselytizing.

But was that how the Gentiles received the Spirit? Did they first get circumcised, put on tassels, strap a phylactery to their forehead, and go to the temple to make a sacrifice, and THEN have Yahweh's Spirit come down upon them? Did it happen that way, OR did they receive the Spirit by hearing with faith? Did they hear the gospel message, believe the gospel message, and then receive the Spirit at that time?

The Apostle Peter was chosen by Yahweh to first preach to the Gentiles, when he preached to the centurion Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10:34-43 (the gospel message), and the Bible tells us (vss. 44-46): "While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message, and the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they heard them speaking in other languages and declaring the greatness of the Almighty."

Now the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon (physical) non-Judahites in Acts 2, but the non-Judahites that heard the gospel in Acts 2 were *proselytes*.

Remember, a proselyte to Judaism was a person from another ethnicity or religion, who had ritually converted to Judaism through physical circumcision, a mikvah, and then (if possible) made a sacrifice at the temple. They also adopted all the outward signs in the Torah of a Judahite (like beard, tassels, phylacteries, etc.).

But what happened with Cornelius was different. Cornelius was not a proselyte. He was still looked upon as an outsider by the Judahites. That's the whole purpose of Peter receiving his vision in Acts 10. Yahweh had to show Peter not to call any man common or unclean (Acts 10:28), but in every nation (*ethnos*/ethnicity) he that feareth the Almighty and worketh righteousness is accepted with him (Acts 10:34-35).

So when Paul asks the Galatians (3:2-3) if they received the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith, they knew the answer. **All of them had received the Spirit by hearing with faith.**

Paul said it was foolish for them to go back and think they had to complete their salvation by doing something to their flesh. **I believe Paul uses the word "flesh" here to refer to them converting to Judaism through circumcision.** Paul is telling them, "When you

heard the gospel message and believed, the Spirit indwelt you. The indwelling of the Spirit is the sign that you belong to Yahweh. You don't have to follow someone else's plan of salvation. You don't have to change something in your flesh in order to complete your salvation."

Looking at and meditating on this text has challenged me, and that is because the very first thing that Paul appeals to in the salvation of the Galatian Gentiles is **their experience**. Now, he's about to appeal to the experience of father Abraham, and to the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (as we continue in Galatians 3), so he's not making an argument based only on experience, **but he does appeal first to their very own experience as proof that they have salvation**.

He asks them to think about what happened to them. Was it the works of the law that brought them salvation, or was it the hearing of the Word accompanied with faith? What did you experience?

I think people tend to get caught in the same trap that the Galatians were getting caught in. Some of us, like the Galatians, weren't raised in covenant homes. You weren't raised by parents who practiced Torah, or maybe you weren't raised by parents who practiced the Christian faith to any capacity.

When you had a change in your life, when the Spirit indwelt you, causing you to desire holy things rather than the unholy, did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith? I guarantee you it was by hearing with faith.

You didn't start keeping the outward laws in the Torah and then have the Holy Spirit indwell you. What happened was you HEARD the gospel message. Someone preached the Messiah to you. Someone told you that he was wounded for your transgressions, and that he hung their on the cross for you, in love, to pay the penalty for your sin. When you heard that message, and had faith in it, you received the Spirit (ref. Ephesians 1:13).

Now as the years have passed, you have learned about areas of obedience. You have applied Yahweh's commandments to your life. You're not the same person. You don't live the same way. But the areas of obedience in your life are not what saved you from your sins. The salvation happened long ago when your first had your experience of **hearing with faith**.

For someone to come along and try to rip that from you, and tell you that you must do something in your flesh in order to be saved is distorting the gospel message. The gospel is about what Yahweh did for us in His Messiah. That is *why* you have salvation. That is *how* you have salvation.

Good works come after salvation, not before. We don't get holy to get Yahweh. We get Yahweh to get holy. We don't change our ways to be saved. Our salvation changes our ways.

Don't ever distort the gospel, and don't ever tell someone who has had an experience of hearing the gospel, and who has received that message by faith, that they're not really saved because they haven't done something in their flesh, or because they don't have the right flesh that you think they should have.

No one deserves to be saved. No one qualifies for the blood. No one is pure. No one is good, no not one.

Every single person who has ever been saved has been undeservingly saved by grace through faith. If you can remember that, you won't lift up anything you are or do for salvation. Yahweh did not save you because of who you are. He saved you in spite of who you are.

Galatians, pt. 19 (Read 3:1-5)

How foolish it was for the Galatians to believe that faith in Messiah was not enough for their salvation. Some of the believing Judahites were teaching the Gentiles that they weren't really saved - even though these Gentiles had placed faith in Yeshua - until they proselytized to Judah through the works of the law, particularly circumcision. That was indeed a false gospel. Today we will cover verses 4 and 5 (which continues to center around that thought), and then move into some final thoughts about the gospel message.

3:4 Did you suffer so much for nothing - if in fact it was for nothing?

I believe Paul speaks here of their suffering for the sake of the Gospel. The Gentiles, the people who were once heathens, were now being persecuted because of what they believed about Yeshua of Nazareth.

Paul is asking them, "Does all your suffering (in being persecuted for Yeshua) mean nothing? Has everything that has happened to you as a believer just been fake?"

While Paul was in Galatia evangelizing, he experienced great persecution from both the unbelieving Judahites and the unbelieving Gentiles.

Acts 14:1-2 says, "In Iconium, they (Paul and Barnabus) entered the Judahite synagogue (place of worship) and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Judahites and Greeks believed. But the Judahites who refused to believe stirred up and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against the brothers."

Acts 14:5 says an assault was attempted upon Paul and Barnabus to stone them, and in Acts 14:19 some unbelieving Judahites provoked the crowds of unbelieving Gentiles against Paul and Barnabus, and they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city thinking he was dead.

What Paul and Barnabus suffered, the believing Gentiles began to suffer. It was not popular to believe that Yeshua of Nazareth was the promised Messiah or the Savior of the

world. It wasn't life in America back then. There wasn't a church on every corner. There wasn't a prosperity gospel church where people went and heard about how their life would be glitz and glamour if they accepted Jesus. There was no freedom in Galatia to believe in Yeshua without fear of severe persecution from both Judahite and Gentile unbelievers.

In Acts 14:21-22 we read this: "After they (Paul and Barnabus) had evangelized that town and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch (all cities in Galatia), strengthening the hearts of the disciples (the converted, believing Judahites and Gentiles) by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and by telling them, **'It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of the Almighty.'**"

Becoming a believer was never intended to mean that life all of a sudden got easy. Sometimes I wonder how many Christians in America, including ourselves, would drop the faith if we had to live in a country where it was a crime to believe in Yeshua. Americanized Christianity is about your best life now, where even if we suffer a little bit, we think it's time to pray that the Lord remove it from us. But no, Paul strengthened the disciples of Messiah by telling them that "it is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom."

To clarify and summarize Galatians 3:4, Paul is saying: "Oh Galatians... you have suffered for your belief in Messiah. You haven't proselytized to Judah - in the way the false teachers are requiring of you - but you've still been persecuted for Messiah. Doesn't that mean something? Isn't that proof that you ARE the disciples of Yeshua?"

3:5 So then, does the Almighty supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?

This is similar to verse 2 where Paul asks them how they received the Spirit, but it is slightly different in that Paul speaks of the on-going supply of the Spirit, and also of the working of miracles among the Gentiles.

While Paul and Barnabus were evangelizing Galatia, Yahweh worked miracles by their hands. Acts 14:3 says this: "So they (Paul and Barnabus) stayed there for some time and spoke boldly, in reliance on the Lord, who testified to the message of His grace by granting that signs and wonders be performed through them (Paul and Barnabus)." Notice that carefully: **the Lord testified to the message of His grace**. The signs and wonders were a testimony that the message of grace to the Gentiles was true.

In Acts 15, at the Jerusalem council - which was about this very question of Gentile salvation - we read in verse 12: "The whole assembly fell silent and listened to Barnabus and Paul describing **all the signs and wonders the Almighty had done through them among the Gentiles.**"

Sometimes people think I am anti-miracles because I speak against false miracles. Being against false miracles does not mean you are against miracles. Being against false prophets does not mean you are against prophets. It's charlatans I despise, who sell their product on their stage and claim that they heal people during their crusades. I despise men who milk people of their money, and the people never really get healed from their sickness or disease. I despise men who teach against the law of Yahweh, and then claim they have the power of Yahweh.

But I'm a firm believer that Yahweh can still work miracles today, directly, or through the hands of men that He has specifically appointed. I've experienced a miracle in my own life, and I've heard of a few miracles in the lives of those I know and trust. There were no gimmicks involved. No one had to send in a donation of \$99.95 to receive the miracle. The miracle came from the hand of Yahweh, by faith. Yahweh can still perform miracles today. His hands are not tied.

One such miracle that Barnabus and Paul likely talked about at the Jerusalem council is recorded in Acts 14:8-10. We read: "In Lystra (which was in Galatia) a man without strength in his feet, lame from birth, and who had never walked, sat and heard Paul speaking. After observing him closely and seeing that he had faith to be healed, Paul said in a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he jumped up and started to walk around.

I'm all for authentic miracles. Miracles done by the hand of Yahweh, through righteous men. Miracles that cannot be questioned. Miracles that cannot be explained any other way but by the power of Almighty Yahweh.

And Paul is asking the Galatians in 3:5, "Does Yahweh supply the Spirit to you and work miracles by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?"

Once again, the answer is **by hearing with faith**. The Galatians had not proselytized. The Galatians had not gotten circumcised for salvation. The Galatians were not Judahites ethnically. The Galatian Gentiles had not grown up in the Torah. Yet they received the Spirit, continued to be supplied with the Spirit, and the Lord testified to the message of His grace by working miracles through the hands of Paul and Barnabus while they were evangelizing the Gentile towns.

All of this was done by hearing with faith, and I want you to remember that this was first shown to Apostle Peter. In Acts 15:7-11 (at the Jerusalem Council), we read:

Peter stood up and said to them: "Brothers, **you are aware that in the early days the Almighty made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe**. And the Almighty, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us. **He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith**. Why, then, are you now testing the Almighty by putting on the disciples' necks a yoke that neither our forefathers nor we have been able to bear? **On the**

contrary, we believe we are saved through the grace of the Master Yeshua, in the same way they are."

Peter was the very first Judahite to take the good news about Yeshua to uncircumcised, non-Covenant people (Cornelius and his friends and family, Acts 10-11), telling them they could share in salvation in Messiah.

What's interesting in Acts 15 is that Peter says that this was the same way salvation happened for the circumcised Judahites: hearing with faith. Peter said "neither WE nor OUR fathers were able to bear **the yoke**", and then he said, "Yahweh purified the Gentile hearts by faith, and WE believe WE are saved through the grace of the Master Yeshua, in the same way THEY are." So if the Gentiles received the Spirit by hearing with faith, then the Judahites did too.

What was this yoke that Peter and his fellow Judahites, and the forefathers, were not able to bear? They were all physically circumcised, and they all grew up in Torah. It seems like they bore that. So what was the yoke?

I believe the yoke was telling a man that he has to be **saved** by works rather than by grace. That's exactly what some among the party of the believing Pharisees were teaching. Acts 15:1 and 5: "You must be circumcised after the manner of Moses, and keep the law, or you cannot be saved!"

What that does is place the burden of keeping the law perfectly on a person. Not just circumcision. Not just the dietary laws. Not just the tzitzit. You can't just keep a few outward laws and act like you've earned your way into the kingdom. The burden is keeping **all** of the law, **all** of the time, in order to be saved. Neither the forefathers, or Peter and his fellow Judahites, had been able to bear such a yoke, so why would they place a yoke upon the neck of the believing Gentiles that they couldn't bear themselves?

The reason I believe that **this is the yoke** is because **verse 11 in Acts 15 tells us what the opposite of the yoke is**. If we know for sure what the **opposite** of the yoke is then we can know what the yoke is. Again, Acts 15:11, right after the mentioning of the unbearable yoke, says this: "**On the contrary** (the opposite), we believe WE (Judahites) are **saved** (notice salvation is the subject) through the **grace** (contrasted with works) of the Master Yeshua, in the same way (no distinction) THEY (Gentiles) are."

The people who were looked upon as heathens and second class. The men and women who were not allowed to come into the inner courts of the temple. The people who were considered to be common. They were being brought into the sheep-fold, NOT by converting to become Judahite-Israelites, NOT by keeping all of the law, but simply by grace through faith - when they heard the gospel message and believed the gospel message (Acts 15:7) about Yeshua, Yahweh's Son who had been sent.

And the Judahites. The people who were covenant people. The men and women who were allowed to come into the inner courts of the temple. The people who were

considered holy. They TOO had to be brought into the sheep-fold, by grace - when they heard the gospel message about Yeshua and believed.

Any Torah-keeping-thoroughbred-genetic-Judahites, who rejected Yeshua, were not considered the children of Yahweh. Only those who received the Word of Yahweh made flesh, Yeshua of Nazareth, were given the right to be called the children of Yahweh. Only those who believed in the name of the Only Begotten Son, became sons and daughters themselves. Born not of blood, but born of Yahweh (John 1:13). Peter got the message. "We need to be saved too!" And we aren't saved any different than the Gentiles. The yoke of the law has been too much for us to bear as well! No man can be saved by his works, for we've all failed many times before, and we will fail many times again. A man or woman is saved by grace through faith, when they hear the gospel message about Yeshua, and believe it.

It has been refreshing for me to teach through this epistle without worrying about force-fitting it to fit my doctrinal position. I believe Yahweh's law is holy, and I believe in obeying the law of Yahweh (as He reveals it to us little by little), but that is not what saves a man or a woman, for the simple reason that **the weight of the law for salvation** is an impossible weight for you and I to carry.

But Yeshua carried it for us. He obeyed it all without fail. He carried the yoke of the law **for salvation** on our behalf. If you place your faith in him, your sins are all washed away, as far as the east is from the west. Believe in him today. Believe in Yeshua of Nazareth, the One and only Son, that Almighty Yahweh gave. If you hear the word of truth, the gospel message, and truly place your faith in Yahweh's Salvation, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the down-payment of your inheritance.

But you must *truly believe* in Him for salvation. Why do I stress this? Because even the demons know that Yahweh is the only Almighty, and they shudder at that. Even the demons know that Yeshua is the Son of the Most High, and that he has the power to torment them. They believe, mentally, but they do not believe unto salvation. They do not trust in the work of the Father and the Son. A mental recognition will not save you. Just knowing that Yahweh is real or that Yeshua is real will not save you. You must trust, believe, and have faith that Yahweh is the Savior. You must believe that the only way you can be saved is by trusting in the Son that He sent. If you and I do not believe savingly, we will be just as lost as the demons.

If you are trusting in anything else besides what Yahweh has done for you in and through the Messiah, you will be lost. So believe today. Truly believe. I've preached the gospel message. You've heard the gospel message. But you must believe the gospel message.

It's not about walking down an aisle and coming down to an altar. It's not about repeating a few words and shedding some tears. It's not about asking Christ to come into your heart, and it's certainly not about making him Lord of your life. Brothers and sisters, it's about BELIEVING in the gospel message for your salvation, and continuing in that

believe. Yeshua said in John 8:31, "If you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples."

Do you believe the gospel today? Do I believe the gospel today? It is a question that has eternal consequences. May we each ask it to ourselves in all reverence and seriousness.

Galatians, pt. 20 (Read 3:1-5, 6-9, Intro)

Review

The Galatian Gentiles had heard the gospel message, received the gospel message by faith, and had been given the promised Holy Spirit.

They experienced miracles, done in their midst by the hands of the apostles, and they experienced persecution for their belief in Yeshua.

They went through all of this, yet somehow, certain Judahites hypnotized them into thinking that they weren't really saved. They cast a spell on the Galatians by telling them that unless they became a proselyte Judahite, through a ritual circumcision, they were second class, and not part of the true community in Messiah.

Paul is telling them in Galatians 3:1-5, "If you're not really saved, then why in the world have you been experiencing all of these truths?!"

Today, as we begin verses 6-9, Paul moves on from their experience, into an argument from sacred scripture, specifically to what the scriptures teach us from the life of Abraham.¹

Experience vs. Scripture

Before we begin looking at Abraham, I want to make sure you see that Paul does not argue for the Galatian's salvation from **experience only**. He does appeal to their experience (3:1-5), but he does not stop at their experience. He moves on to an argument from scripture (3:6-9).

If you have an **experience** with Yahweh Almighty, it will always be able to be backed up by the **Word** of Yahweh Almighty. That is because the Spirit of Yahweh that you are experiencing, is the same Spirit of Yahweh who moved upon holy men of old to write down holy scripture.

You can't *just* rely on a good feeling that you have. You can't *just* base your beliefs on your emotions. People get emotional at concerts and ballgames too. People jump and shout for all sorts of things. I've seen people clap and jump because they get a puppy.

I'm not saying that Yahweh's people shouldn't be emotional. I get emotional just thinking about what Yahweh has done for me in forgiving all of my sins. What I'm saying is that if

¹ Don't forget the Paul has already argued for the salvation of the Galatian Gentiles based upon the authority of the apostolic elders (Galatians 2:1-3).

you experience one thing, and the scripture says something different, then what you have experienced should at least be examined, and at most be dismissed, in favor of what the scripture says. Scripture is always first place, not your emotions.

Paul's Argument from Genesis

This is why Paul does not stop at their experience. He goes on to argue what he is teaching from scripture, and he will continue to do so throughout chapters 3 and 4 in this epistle.

The scripture Paul argues from is not the New Testament. *He is writing the New Testament.* The scripture Paul argues from is the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible.

And Paul doesn't start with Deuteronomy, or Numbers, or Leviticus, or even Exodus. Paul doesn't go back to Moses, as great of a man as he was. Paul goes all the way to the book of *Bereshith*, which means "the beginning." We call it by its Greek name, Genesis, which means "origin or birth." And Paul goes back to a man named *Abraham*.

Father Abraham

Why Abraham? Was it strange for Paul to all of a sudden bring up what happened in the life of Abraham? Not at all. Abraham was an exalted man in Hebrew thought. To all Israelites, Abraham was the foremost of the Patriarchs. Abraham is referred to as "father Abraham" (around 13x in the NT), because he was the supreme ancestor and originator of the Israelite people.² Yahweh put things in motion for the nation of Israel, through Abraham.³

Isaiah 51:1-2 says this: "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek Yahweh: look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when I called him he was only one; I blessed him and made him many."

Abraham is called the rock from which the Israelites were cut, thus he was called "father Abraham."

² Once, Yeshua was arguing with some unbelieving Judahites who thought he was a mad man. One of their remarks towards Yeshua was: "Are you greater than our father Abraham? (John 8:53)" The reason they brought up Abraham was because he was looked upon by all Judahites as the foremost of the Patriarchs.

³ Father is sometimes used in scripture to denote the author of something or the first one to do something. For example, Genesis 4:20-21 KJV: "And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." We still hear this usage today when someone says "George Washington is the father of our country (USA)." Abraham was considered the originator of the Israelite people, being that he was the single individual called from the lineage of Shem (Genesis 11:10-32; 12:1-4). Note also that Yeshua is referred to as the son of David and son of Abraham at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel. The phrase "son of" here carries the idea of "descendant of." To be the son of David and Abraham then means that David is your "father" and Abraham is your "father." Neither men were Yeshua's father in the sense that they were directly sired by them, but they were his ancestors, the foremost being father Abraham.

Yahweh Himself says in Isaiah 41:8, "But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, My friend." Yahweh specifies that the Israelites are the descendants of Abraham, and He goes on to call Abraham, "My friend." If Yahweh says about a man, "He is my friend," *that* is a very special man.⁴

For Paul to begin his argument from scripture with father Abraham was not happenstance. **The Judahites who went behind Paul's teaching, and had hypnotized the Galatian Gentiles, likely used scriptures about father Abraham in their missionary efforts.** The influencers probably pointed to Genesis 17 when they talked to the Galatians. They probably told them something like this: "Abraham was given the commandment of circumcision, and if you want to be a child of Abraham you need to first be circumcised."

Circumcised Abraham

Yahweh gave Abraham the sign of circumcision in Genesis 17, and all of the male Judahites who were influencing the Galatian Gentiles in the first century, had been raised in the Torah, and had that sign in their flesh. According to Genesis 17:1, Abraham was 99 years old when he received this command of Yahweh, and he obeyed.

Genesis 17:10-14 reads: "This is My covenant, which you are to keep, between Me and you and your offspring after you: Every one of your males must be circumcised. You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between Me and you. Throughout your generations, every male among you at eight days old is to be circumcised. This includes a slave born in your house and one purchased with money from any foreigner. The one who is not your offspring, a slave born in your house, as well as one purchased with money, must be circumcised. My covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

The influencers were probably sharing this very scripture to the Galatian Gentiles, over and over again. And from this text they were teaching that the Galatian Gentiles were not saved, were not joined to the people of Israel, and were not considered the "children of Abraham," until they were physically circumcised.

⁴ There are other points as these in Jewish literature from around the time of Yeshua. The Israelite historian Josephus says of Abraham in his Antiquities of the Jews, book 1 chapter 7, "He began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, That there was but one God, the Creator of the universe; and that, as to other [gods], if they contributed any thing to the happiness of men, that each of them afforded it only according to his appointment, and not by their own power." The Book of Jubilees 23:9-10 states, "For the days of the forefathers, of their life, were nineteen jubilees; and after the Flood they began to grow less than nineteen jubilees, and to decrease in jubilees, and to grow old quickly, and to be full of their days by reason of manifold tribulation and the wickedness of their ways, with the exception of Abraham. For Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord, and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life; and behold, he did not complete four jubilees in his life, when he had grown old by reason of the wickedness, and was full of his days."

And from this scripture alone, it sounds like they have a pretty good argument. Yet Paul calls the Galatians foolish and hypnotized for believing such an argument.

Paul Went Deeper

Did Paul **NOT** know about Genesis 17? Ha... hardly. Remember, Paul was an educated Israelite. Paul learned at the feet of Gamliel the Elder, a prominent Judahite Rabbi of his day who was held in honor by all the people (Acts 5:34). Paul had been advancing in Judaism above his contemporaries prior to his encounter with Yeshua (Galatians 1:14). Shaul the Pharisee knew the Torah forwards and backwards. So why did he disagree with the influencers insistence on circumcising the Galatian Gentiles for salvation?

Uncircumcised Abraham

Paul didn't disagree with Genesis 17. He just went back further than Genesis 17. He went back to the *call* of Abraham in Genesis 12, and the *faith* of Abraham, in Genesis 15.

See, Abraham was born into a heathen, idolatrous home. In Joshua 24:1-3 we read this: "Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem and summoned Israel's elders, leaders, judges, and officers, and they presented themselves before the Almighty. Joshua said to all the people, "This is what Yahweh, the Mighty One of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other mighty ones. But I took your father Abraham from the region beyond the Euphrates River, led him throughout the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants. I gave him Isaac."

The Book of Jasher (mentioned twice in holy scripture) tells us that Terah (Abraham's father) was a prince of Nimrod's host (Nimrod from Genesis 10:8-10), and that Terah had 12 elohim of large size, made of wood and stone, after the 12 months of the year, and he served each one monthly. Every month Terah would bring his meat offering and drink offering to his elohim.⁵

In the book of Jasher (chapter 11), there is an account of a younger Abram smashing his father's idols while his father was away.

According to Genesis 11, Terah was a descendant of Shem, and Shem was a righteous servant of Yahweh, but just being the descendant of a righteous man doesn't mean you follow in his footsteps. Nor does it mean you are automatically righteous by genealogy. Terah did not follow in Shem's footsteps. And Terah was Abraham's father.

The Call of Abraham

Now sons normally go the way of their fathers, but Yahweh called Abraham (who was then known as Abram) out from his heathen father's house. In Genesis 12:1-4 we read this: "Yahweh said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your

⁵ Jasher 9:9. The book of Jasher also tells us that at an early age Abraham studied under Shem and Noah (Jasher 8:33-36; 9:4-6). The point is that Abram (Abraham) was born to a heathen, idolatrous father. He had to be called away from the lifestyle of his own flesh-and-blood.

father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran."

It's important here to take notice of how old Abraham was when he left his father's house in Haran. He was 75 years old, Genesis 12:4 says. Now, how old was Abraham when he received the sign of circumcision? Genesis 17:1 says he was 99 years old. That means that Yahweh's call to Abraham (in Genesis 12) was about 24 years before he received the sign of circumcision. **Paul knew this because he knew scripture.**

Thus, in Galatians 3:6-9 Paul appeals to the scriptures which speak of Abraham, **prior to the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17.** Which came first? The call of Abraham at 75 or the circumcision of Abraham at 99? The answer is easy.

BUT... Paul doesn't first go to Genesis 12 and the call of Abraham. He does go there, but he first quotes Genesis 15:6 in Galatians 3:6. I'd like to read Galatians 3:2,5, and 6 to close this message out. Listen very carefully as Paul writes to the Galatian Gentiles:

Galatians 3:2,5-6 "I only want to know this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? ... So then, does the Almighty supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? **JUST AS** (*here's the quote from Genesis 15:6*) **'Abraham believed Yahweh, and it was credited to him for righteousness.'**"

Paul saw a parallel between the faith of Abraham and the faith of the Gentiles, so Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 to show that Abraham's **FAITH** was credited to him for righteousness, many years before he was circumcised. In Genesis 12 Abraham was 75. In Genesis 15 when he believed the promise of Yahweh (and I'll show this next week), Abraham was around 85. He didn't get circumcised until he was 99. So in the 14 years between Genesis 15 and Genesis 17 - while Abraham was uncircumcised - was he considered righteous before Yahweh? Yes. How? By faith in the promise of Yahweh.

That is the basis of Paul's argument and appeal to father Abraham.

If what Paul was teaching could be proven in the life of the great Patriarch Abraham, then what Paul was teaching had a solid basis in scripture. We'll get into Genesis 15:6 as well as Galatians 3:7 in detail next week.

Galatians, pt. 21 (Read 3:5-9)

Review and Intro

Last week we began looking at father Abraham, and we found that he is called father because he is the rock from which the Israelites were cut. He is singled out in the lineage of Shem as the great Patriarch of the Hebrew people.

We also saw that Abraham was called out of his heathen father's house in Genesis 12 at the age of 75, but... he wasn't given the sign of circumcision until Genesis 17, at the age of 99. So for 24 years, from Genesis 12 to Genesis 17, Abram (as he was called at that time) walked around as an uncircumcised man, yet he had a relationship with Yahweh.

Paul's Depth

Now... the Judahite influencers knew this. They weren't ignorant of scripture. They knew about the book of beginnings (that we call Genesis). They argued from Genesis 17. **But they didn't go back far enough. They only went so far... and then stopped.** Paul went further. Paul went deeper. Paul challenged their doctrine, not based upon his own personal feelings, but based on the exact same book and person they were arguing from.

Exegesis of Galatians 3:6

So let's look at Paul's point in Galatians 3:6. He writes: "Just as Abraham believed Yahweh, and it was credited to him for righteousness."

Paul first asks the Galatian Gentiles (vss. 2-5), "How did you receive the Spirit? By the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Did you first get circumcised and become proselytes to Judah and *then* receive the Spirit? Or, did you **hear** and **believe** the gospel message, and receive the Spirit?" They knew the answer. It was by hearing with faith.

Then Paul goes to Abraham by saying (vs. 6), "JUST AS Abraham BELIEVED YAHWEH, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Paul is telling them, "You were made righteous by faith **in the same way** Abraham was made righteous by faith."

That's a great argument, coming straight from scripture. Paul goes back to a time period before Abraham was ever circumcised, where Abraham had faith in a promise Yahweh made to him. Let's look at it.

Genesis 15:1-6

1 After these events, the word of the Yahweh came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great.

If you hold your place in Genesis 15, and look over to Genesis 16:3, you'll see that Abram went in unto Hagar (Sarah's handmaid) about 10 years after he moved to Canaan. He was 75 in Genesis 12 when called out of his father's house, so $75+10=85$. Then in Genesis 16:16 it says that Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. **So this means that this encounter between Yahweh and Abram in Genesis 15 happens somewhere around Abram being 85 years old, about 14 years before the sign of circumcision was given to Abram.**

So... the Word of Yahweh comes to Abram in a vision. Yahweh speaks good words to Abram. Words of comfort, peace, and victory. But in spite of these words, Abram is worried. Why?

2 But Abram said, "Yahweh Almighty, what can You give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** Abram continued, "Look, You have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir."

Abram is worried because he doesn't have a son. He's married, but Yahweh has not given him any offspring. But Abram does have a servant named Eliezer, and he is considering passing all of his inheritance down to his servant.

4 Now the word of the Yahweh came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir." **5** He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then He said to him, "Your offspring will be that [numerous]."

Yahweh speaks to Abram again and tells him that Eliezer is not going to be the heir, but instead Abram will have a son. Someone who comes from Abram's own body will be the heir. That's the *first* promise Yahweh gives him.

Then Yahweh takes him outside: "Let's go outside Abram, and look at the sky. Look at all those stars Abram. Can you count them? That's how numerous your offspring will be." That's the *second* promise Yahweh gives to Abram.

6 Abram believed Yahweh, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

There's our verse that Paul quotes in Galatians 3:6. He's showing the Galatians, "You believed *just as* Abraham believed. Yahweh gave Abraham a message. A message of blessing. A message of promise. He believed Yahweh. You've been given a message of blessing. A message of promise, from Yahweh... and you believed."

You Galatians have been given the Gospel. That Yahweh loved you so much, that He gave His only Son Yeshua, so that everyone of you who believes in him, will not perish, but have everlasting life. **Galatians... you believed Yahweh's promise.** And just like Yahweh credited Abraham's faith to him as righteousness, he credits your faith to you as righteousness.

That's what Paul is preaching to the Galatians, and remember... they hadn't proselytized. They hadn't been circumcised. They hadn't taken on the particular works of the law that would distinguish them as proselyte Judahites. **BUT... they had placed faith in the gospel message.**

Who Are Abraham's Sons?

So Paul goes on to write this in Galatians 3:7, "So understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons."

If you have faith, like Abraham had faith, it makes you a son of Abraham. And remember, Paul is writing to uncircumcised people from among the nations outside the land of Israel. People that the covenant-Judahites considered to be *goy* or heathen. The Judahite influencers saw the Galatian Gentiles as non-Israelites, but Paul is telling these Gentiles, "If you have faith, like Abraham, then it doesn't matter if you're not an Israelite. You have salvation and son-ship by faith."

Your faith makes you a son of Abraham, no matter what your fleshly status is. **Paul is arguing for sons of Abraham *spiritually* rather than sons of Abraham *physically*.**

Catch this because it is very important to Paul's point. There were Judahites in his day - in the flesh - with impeccable genealogy. They could track their lineage with papers, just as was required back in the days of Nehemiah.

Proving Genealogy

In Nehemiah 7, the way a person proved they were an Israelite was based on the genealogical record books. They had to be able to show legitimate paper-work that their pedigree went back to a son of Jacob-Israel. Not a might. Not a maybe. Not a, "I think I am," or "I feel like I am." Not, "I can blush so that proves it." No, they had to show detailed paperwork. You'll find that in Nehemiah 7, specifically verses 5 and 61-65. If a male could not prove his ancestry this way, he was excluded from serving in the priesthood. He wasn't kicked out of the nation. He wasn't told he couldn't serve Yahweh. He was just excluded from serving in the Levite priesthood.

But listen, there were Judahites in Paul's day who *could prove* their ancestry **this way**. They could show you: "I come from Judah. I come from Benjamin. I come from Levi. And here's the proof. Look at the detailed, authoritative papers."

But... if these fleshly Israelites did NOT have faith in Yahweh's promise - the message about Yahweh's Salvation (Yeshua the Messiah) - they were NOT considered children of Abraham *salvationally*. Yes, they were a descendant of Abraham in the natural, but not in the spiritual. And what mattered MOST was the spiritual, not the natural.

John the Baptizer's Point

When John preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel (Acts 13:24) it was considered a slap in the face so to speak, because the only people the Israelites baptized (performed a mikvah upon) were the *goy* (heathen) that wanted to become proselytes. For John to tell Israelites that they needed to be baptized was saying, "You are NOT in a right relationship with the Most High."

And John tells the Israelites (Luke 3:7-8), "Don't start saying to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our Father!'" John's point is that physical Israelite ancestry - a physical son

of Abraham - doesn't mean anything as pertaining to salvation. If Yahweh can create a man out of dirt (the first man Adam), Yahweh could create children of Abraham from the stones on the bank of the Jordan River. John was telling the Pharisees that rocks would take their place if they didn't repent.

If a flesh and blood Israelite could be disqualified for his *lack of faith* in Yahweh's gospel promise, then an uncircumcised heathen non-Israelite could be qualified for his *faith* in Yahweh's gospel promise.

That's Paul's point to the Galatians. The influencers were teaching salvation by being a Judahite. They were teaching that if you were a natural son of Abraham, that was the ticket to the kingdom. And they weren't denying the Gentiles salvation, they were just saying that they had to do it their way, by becoming a proselyte. Paul is saying "Don't listen to the influencers Galatians! I know they are telling you that you aren't really saved until you become a proselyte, but you are! You've had faith just like Abraham had faith!" Galatians 3:7 again, "So understand that **those who have faith** are Abraham's sons."

Spiritual Sons (Characteristics)

There is a principle in scripture that when you show forth a characteristic of someone you are considered to be a son of that someone. Not that you are a physical son, but rather a spiritual son; a son by imitating or by following the example of someone.

Let me show you something from the OT. Look at 1 Samuel 2:12 here in the HCSB. It says, "Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for Yahweh." Who was Eli? The high priest, a descendant of Aaron through Ithamar. This in turn means that his sons were descendants of Aaron. But here his sons are called wicked men. However, the HCSB does not give us a literal translation from the Hebrew here, like the KJV does. The KJV says, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not Yahweh." Sons of Belial? I thought the verse just said they were sons of Eli. *Aha...* Sons of Eli naturally, but sons of Belial spiritually, because they carried the qualities and characteristics of Belial.

Who in the world is Belial? Well, turn over to another epistle of Paul, 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14-15 (KJV). We read, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" When I looked up this word in Thayer's Greek-English lexicon, it said, "Worthlessness, wickedness, a name of Satan in 2 Cor. 6:15." My Zondervan's Bible Encyclopedia says that in Jewish apocalyptic books like Jubilees, the Ascension of Isaiah, and the Sibylline Oracles, Belial is used as a proper name for Satan. (*The Syriac version of the NT says "Satan" in 2 Corinthians 6:15; the book of Jubilees calls Belial the angel of lawlessness and ruler of this world; the Dead Sea Scrolls contain a large number of references to Belial as the arch-enemy of Yahweh.*)

Now it is believed among scholars that this use of Belial (*which btw means "without worth" or "worthlessness"*) as a proper descriptive name for Satan is a later, second-temple period use. (1) That may be true, but Paul grabbed it for an argument in the book of 2 Corinthians, and (2) the text in 1 Samuel 2:12 still says in Hebrew, "ben belial," i.e. son of belial. If it is to be taken as "son of worthlessness," the point about being the son of someone or something because of your characteristics or qualities still stands (*cp. Mark 3:17, James and John [disciples] called "sons of thunder." The same holds in John 8:44, "ye are of your father the Devil."*)

I personally believe that Paul and other Israelites read texts like "sons of Belial" in 1 Samuel 2:12, and took these texts to mean that even Israelite men could be called sons of Satan if they were workers of lawlessness.

Now let me show you this same principle from the positive side, in the teachings of Yeshua, in Matthew 5:44-45. Here Yeshua tells us "love your enemies, and do good to those who persecute you," and then he says, "so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Do you see that? When we show forth certain attributes of the Father - love for our enemies, and doing good to those who persecute us - it shows forth that we are sons of our Father in heaven. **Not literal sons.** Yahweh is not our physical father, but He is our *spiritual* Father because we carry his qualities and characteristics of love and service towards our enemies.

This is Paul's exact point in Galatians 3:7. If the Gentiles carry the characteristic of faith in the promise of Yahweh, just like Abraham, it makes them children of Abraham. Not naturally, but spiritually, **and spiritually is what matters most.** The circumcised Judahites looked upon the uncircumcised Gentile Yah-fearers as NOT being children of Abraham, but Paul said they were children of Abraham, by faith.

Galatians, pt. 22 (Read 3:5-9)

Review

In the last lesson, we covered how Abraham's faith in the promise of Yahweh (Genesis 15:1-6) is the basis for the Gentiles being counted righteous by faith (Galatians 3:6-7). Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness (prior to his circumcision), and it was the same for the Galatian Gentiles. It is also the same for any other heathen that cries out to Yahweh in repentance, and believes the promise He has made to us, in and through His Son Yeshua.

The heathen, non-covenant person, can be forgiven of all his or her sin, without becoming a proselyte to Israel. That's Paul's primary message in the book of Galatians. Salvation from sin is not dependent upon one's genealogy or one's flesh. Salvation from sin is available to anyone who repents of their sin and places faith in Yahweh's promise, whether or not they are a physical Israelite, whether or not they were circumcised at eight

days old, and whether or not they grew up in a Torah observant home.

Is the Law Still Relevant?

This does not mean that the law is irrelevant in the life of a Gentile. This does not mean that an uncircumcised non-Judahite that receives the forgiveness of sins (like Cornelius or Titus), should not study the law, and then apply the law of Yahweh to his or her life where appropriate. Ya'acov (James), the Bishop of Jerusalem at the council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), gave the Gentiles who had turned to the Almighty, four necessary laws to begin obeying. But the Gentiles were saved by grace through faith in Messiah before they began obeying any laws. Obedience came as they learned and grew in understanding (not all at the same time or pace). Obedience to Torah, or becoming a proselyte Judahite, was not a pre-requisite for their salvation.

The Gospel to Abraham

Today, as we move into Galatians 3:8, Paul says that the gospel he preaches was actually preached to Abraham, many years ago. Let's read it again

3:8 Now the Scripture saw in advance that the Almighty would justify the Gentiles by faith and told the good news ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you.

That's from the HCSB. Let's read it now from the KJV.

3:8 KJV And the scripture, foreseeing that the Almighty would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

So... how was the gospel preached unto Abraham? Did Yahweh speak to Abraham: "I'm going to beget My son through the womb of a virgin from the house of Judah, through the line of David, and place the fullness of My Spirit within him, and he will live perfectly, and then die on a tree to take the penalty of sin for all those who trust in his righteousness, and then I will raise him from the dead on the third day." Did Yahweh preach that to Abraham? No. Yahweh didn't say any of that to Abraham. So what does Galatians 3:8 mean when it says that **the gospel** was preached to Abraham?

First off, notice how Paul says that *the scripture* saw in advance. Paul isn't saying that holy scripture is a person who can foresee into the future. Paul is using the word "scripture" as a standing for the person of Yahweh the Father. When we read that the "scripture told the good news ahead of time to Abraham," it means that *Yahweh* preached the gospel unto Abraham, and we have that *recorded* in scripture.

Second... what did the scripture foresee? Paul tells us right there in verse 8. Look at it again:

3:8 Now the Scripture foresaw that <**the Almighty would justify the Gentiles by faith**> and foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be

blessed in you.

Paul brings in the word **justify** ("to be declared innocent") here, and it would be good if you drew a circle around the word justify in verse 8, and another circle around the words "credited to him for righteousness" back in verse 6, and then draw a line connecting the two of them. I say this because it is two ways to speak of the same thing.

Crediting your faith to you for righteousness is the same as justifying you. We know that because Paul is linking faith up to both of these statements. Those who have faith are counted as righteous, and those who have faith are justified.

Notice the two ways the word *ethnos* (in Greek) is translated into English in verse 8. The HCSB uses Gentiles, while the KJV uses heathen. Either one is good, but I think the KJV is better, because it conveys the big picture, that during that time, the word *ethnos* was predominantly used of heathen, uncircumcised people, outside of the covenant. Paul is saying that heathens would be justified by faith. I went over this back in covering Galatians 2:7-9, but it's worth repeating again. Look at it from the KJV.

Gal 2:7-9 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the **uncircumcision** was committed unto me, as the gospel of the **circumcision** was unto Peter; For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the **circumcision**, the same was mighty in me toward the **Gentiles**: And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the **heathen**, and they unto the **circumcision**.

The word circumcision is used all three times to describe the people that Peter's ministry was aimed at, but when speaking of the ministry of Paul and Barnabus, one time the KJV says it was to the uncircumcision, one time it says "toward the Gentiles," and the next time it says "unto the heathen." Thus anyone that was not circumcised, by the standards of the Judahites of the time, was considered a heathen, i.e. non-Israelite.

In other words, if a person, *male or female*, grew up outside of Torah, and away from the worship in Jerusalem, they were considered a heathen.

But in Galatians 3:8, Paul is telling us that **the scripture saw in advance** that the Almighty would justify (count as righteous) the Gentiles (heathen, uncircumcised people) by faith (trust in the promise of Yahweh). This lets us know that it was Yahweh's plan to include non-Israelites in the promise of salvation way back in Abraham's time. Yahweh's plan was not originally with Israel, and it was never exclusive to Israel. Israel was chosen in order to be a light to the rest of the families on the earth.

But how did Yahweh *preach* this gospel to Abraham? Galatians 3:8 tells us. Right after Paul says, "told the good news ahead of time to Abraham," he writes, "saying, all the nations will be blessed in you." Paul quotes here from both Genesis 12:3 and 18:18.

If we look at Genesis 12:1-3 it is the call of Abraham out from his father's house. Genesis 18:18 is basically a reiteration of Genesis 12:1-3, so we will pull mainly from Genesis 12.

12:1-3 Yahweh said to Abram: Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse those who treat you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

That last phrase is what Paul quotes in Galatians 3:8 (combining words from Genesis 18:18). All the peoples, or all the nations will be blessed through Abraham. That's the gospel. That's what Paul is talking about being preached to Abraham back in Genesis: **that all the nations, all the peoples, all the families, all the ethnicities of the earth will be blessed through Abraham.**

This blessing here isn't a carnal blessing. I use carnal in the sense of pertaining to the fleshly, earthly realm. This blessing isn't talking about Abraham being nice to everyone, or Abraham's family making sure they are kind to people when they meet them. No, this blessing is speaking of **the spiritual blessing of salvation**, according to Paul's argument in Galatians 3. This blessing is the blessing of the gospel, and it is the gospel to everyone, because Yahweh says, "all peoples on the earth." In Genesis 18:18 Yahweh says, "all nations (*ethnos*, LXX) of the earth."

Paul uses the word *ethnos* in Galatians 3:8, and that is where we get our word ethnicity.

Paul is saying that the scripture saw in advance that the Almighty would justify the heathen by faith, and thus Yahweh preached the gospel to all nations when he told Abraham, "all *ethnos*, or ethnicities, will be blessed through you."

Blessed Through Abraham

How would this blessing of salvation for all ethnicities come through Abraham? By Yahweh sending His Son through Abraham's lineage. Yeshua is of the stock of Abraham, physically and spiritually, and when a person from any nation upon the earth places faith in Yeshua, they are placing faith in the promised seed of Abraham.

Matthew 1:1 says, "The historical record of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

So Paul is saying that the same gospel he is preaching, that the uncircumcised heathens can be saved by faith, was preached to Abraham back when Yahweh told him, "all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you."

Then he wraps up *this* argument from father Abraham by saying in Galatians 3:9, "So those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, who had faith."

Anyone, from any family upon the earth, who places their faith in the promise of

Yahweh, the seed of Abraham (Yeshua the Messiah), is blessed right along with father Abraham who had faith.

That goes back to **verse 7** where Paul writes, "**So understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons.**" This is a spiritual sonship more than a natural sonship, because even the natural branches from Abraham's lineage **must have faith** in Yahweh's gospel promise in order to be part of the true family of Abraham. A natural branch that *does not* have faith in Yeshua, is not part of Abraham's true family. A wild branch that *does* have faith in Yeshua becomes a part of Abraham's true family.

Paul is letting us know that a person from any ethnicity on the earth, can have faith in Yahweh's gospel promise, and even though they may not be a natural branch off of Abraham, they are counted as his son or daughter because they carry with them the characteristic and quality of Abraham - FAITH.

Yes ladies, daughters of Abraham is just as scriptural of a term as sons of Abraham. The daughters are not left out, and are equal with the sons in salvation (see Galatians 3:28; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

This is all so beautiful when you begin to put the pieces together. Paul's primary reason for writing the epistle to the Galatians was to show the Gentiles that they are children of Abraham, they are saved and part of the family of Yahweh, but not by converting to become a Judahite. Not by circumcising themselves so that they can now say they are a proselyte, but instead by faith in the promise of Yahweh, just like Abraham.

James, Peter, and John gave Paul and Barnabus the right hand of fellowship on this. The experience the Gentiles had in receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit gave witness to this. And then lastly (and probably most importantly), the life of Abraham agreed; the scripture testified to the gospel towards them, and their salvation.

The Judahite influencers desired to take this all away from them. "No, no, no! You aren't saved! You must become one of us first! Get circumcised, and then we can boast in your flesh to everyone, that *we* had the hand in getting you right with Elohim!" Nonsense. No one had a hand in Cornelius' salvation. Nobody even touched him when he received the Holy Spirit. He simply heard the gospel message, and believed it, and he was saved by faith.

Let me end today by saying that Paul is not anti-Israel (he's an Israelite himself). Paul is not anti-Torah either. Paul walked orderly and kept the law. Paul is not preaching against obeying the Torah, even the Torah of circumcision. Paul never taught against circumcision.

What Paul is doing is teaching against an ideology of **adding to the gospel**, and causing someone to rely on **an act they do or who they are in the flesh** as the way to salvation.

If you rely on who you are or who you think you are physically - to justify you - you will never be saved from your sins. If you rely on your circumcision or the works of the law to justify you, you are under a curse, and you will never be saved. That's why it was so crucial for Paul to help the Galatians with this letter. Some of them were denying their salvation by faith in Yahweh's promise, and placing their trust in the physical act of circumcision, i.e. becoming a proselyte Judahite. It was a damnable doctrine.

My friends... are *you* trusting in anything else but what Yahweh has done for you in sending His Son Yeshua to save you from your sins? Is your trust in who you are? Is your trust in your supposed genealogy? Is your trust in the tassels you wear? Is your trust in the Sabbath you keep? Is your trust in anything else that you do or think you do? Oh my friends, this is a sobering thought for me too. I want to close my eyes in the sleep of death trusting only in Yahweh's salvation. I don't want to rely on anything else, because I want to be saved from my sins, and I'm just not good enough to save myself. Neither are you. Trust in Yahweh today. Turn to Him and be ye saved.

Galatians, pt. 23 (Read 3:6-10 KJV)

"Of" Faith

In the last three lessons, we looked at Galatians 3:6-9, centering in on our similarity with father Abraham, *by faith*. Today we will just cover one verse, Galatians 3:10, but I'd like to begin by looking at a phrase that is used three times in verses 7-9.

Verse 7 - "know ye therefore that they which are **of faith**"

Verse 8 - "the Almighty would justify the heathen **through faith**"

Verse 9 - So then they which be **of faith**"

Twice we read "of faith," and once we read "through faith." But all three times in the Greek NT, the reading is "*ek pistis*," literally "of faith," in the sense of a place of origin; where something *proceeds from* or *comes out of*.

So we read "of faith" three times in verses 7-9, and then when we get to verse 10 - the verse I am teaching on today - we read:

3:10 "For as many as are **of the works of the law** are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

English bibles differ in how that phrase ("of the works of the law") gets translated, but I've chosen to pull from the KJV today, because it is a literal translation, and it does best in showing the contrast of verse 10 with verses 7-9.

"Of the works of the law" (verse 10) is a contrast to "of faith" (verses 7-9). Remember that I said "of faith" was "*ek pistis*" in Greek. Well, "of the works of the law" is "*ek ergon nomos*" in Greek. "Ek" is the word that gets translated "of," and then you have either "of faith" or "of the works of the law."

Paul is telling us that the "of faith" group is blessed with Abraham who was "of faith," while the "of the works of the law" group is cursed, because of what is written in the law.

Now, what does Paul mean when he writes, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse"? Do we place ourselves under a curse for seeking to obey the law?

Blessed or Cursed?

I remember being a little boy and my parents dropping me and my sister off to spend time with our grandparents. They would always say, "Matthew and Miranda, be on your best behavior." When it was time to come home, they'd question my grandparents, and if we behaved, we were blessed. If we misbehaved, we were cursed, i.e. spanked.

A common way that Galatians 3:10 gets *mis-read* is that if a person seeks to obey the law of Moses, they are cursed. But that doesn't make any sense. That's like saying my sister and I would get in trouble for being good at our grandparents house.

Does Paul teach here that if we make an effort to honor our father and mother, that it places us under a curse? Or if we speak the truth in a court of law, are we cursed? Are we cursed for resting and going to synagogue on the Sabbath? Are we cursed for keeping Passover? Well... of course not.

Paul was an educated Israelite that knew well the law of Moses, which speaks of **blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.**

Paul's Point in 3:10

You can read a verse all by itself, but you will never get the complete truth of a bible verse by just looking at that one bible verse, especially when it's contained in a cohesive letter like Galatians. **Always, always, always** study the context of the book, and the culture of the time.

What we have seen in this epistle is Judahite believers (Jewish believers in Yeshua) that were distorting the gospel Paul preached to the nations (those outside of Judah). The nations were people who grew up in homes that were not Torah (law) observant. These heathens were repenting, coming to faith in Messiah, and being filled with the Holy Spirit while uncircumcised. Paul was okay with that. James, Peter, and John were okay with that. Yahweh was okay with that, for it is He who gave His Spirit to Cornelius in Acts 10! But *some* of the Judahite believers were not okay with that. Some of the Judahite believers were telling the Gentiles "You must be circumcised (i.e. become one of us as a proselyte), or you cannot be saved."

These Judahite believers were placing their trust in the works of the law, and not all the works of the law, but the particular works of the law that outwardly distinguished them from the nations. Starting with circumcision (legal conversion to Judaism) and then branching out from there; works like kosher eating, or wearing tassels and phylacteries, etc. Works that most clearly marked them off as being separated from the heathens.

These Judaizers were saying that until these people from the nations take on the particular works of the law that makes them part of our group, they are not saved. "Do what we require or you're not really saved."

Was My Bearded Dad Saved?

My dad once told me a story about a time he was called to be the minister of music for a camp meeting held at a church he'd never been to. This church taught against beards, so when dad walked into the church for the first night of revival, no one greeted him kindly. He told me they didn't even participate during the song service. Dad went to talk to his pastor, and told the pastor that he would shave his beard off if he wanted him to. This particular preacher had no problem with a beard, and said that he wouldn't require dad to shave. **The revival would go on... bearded.**

Well, my dad felt bad that he was causing the revival meetings to be filled with people who were grieving about what they felt was unholy – his beard. He shaved it off towards the end of the camp meeting and was met at the door of the church with "Praise the Lord!" and "Good to see you Brother!" The people didn't think my dad was saved until he performed their particular work of law.

Now... I believe their "law" was a man-made tradition. But, even if it had been a *true law* of Yahweh, salvation is by grace through faith in Messiah, and not by an outward work of law that a person may not have yet **grown or developed into**, in their walk or sanctification.

Judaizers vs. Paul

The *Judaizers* insisted that the Gentiles, who were turning to the Almighty by coming to faith in Messiah, become *ek ergon nomos* ... of the works of the law as a pre-requisite for salvation. *Paul* is teaching that the way a Gentile becomes a son or daughter of Abraham, is "*ek pistis*" ... by faith in the promise of Yahweh.

Verse 9 KJV, "So then they which be OF FAITH are blessed with faithful Abraham." Verse 10 KJV, "For, as many as are OF THE WORKS OF THE LAW are under a curse."

Why did being "of the works of the law" place one under a curse? Let's examine this deeper.

Paul Pulls from Deuteronomy

Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27 at the end of Galatians 3:10. He says (KJV) "for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Deuteronomy 27 is a chapter that places a curse upon those who *violate* the law, not those who obey the law. It says things like, "Cursed is the one who leads a blind person astray on the road," and "Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's boundary marker."

According to Deuteronomy 27, a person who **lived** in sin was cursed, but a person who lived in obedience was blessed.

Paul's point though comes in at the end of Deuteronomy 27 where it says (in the LXX), "Cursed is every man who does not abide in all the words of this law to do them." In other words, you can't just obey a few works of the law, and think that saves you from your sins. We are to live by ALL the words of the law, not some of the words.

The Judahite influencers (Judaizers) were concerned with their works of the law (circumcision and other outward aspects), but that does not mean they lived lives of repentance and devotion to Torah. It wasn't in their heart.

What is Torah (Law)?

We forget sometimes what Torah is. We reduce Torah to eating kosher or wearing tassels or being circumcised. Those things are Torah, but that's not where Torah ends. We forget that feeding the hungry is Torah. Clothing the naked is Torah. Visiting the sick is Torah. Respecting the elderly is Torah. Hugging your wife is Torah. Yeshua said, "Whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them - for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Torah is a way of life, not a few outward laws. Just being circumcised doesn't make you a Torah-keeper. Just wearing tassels doesn't make you a Torah-keeper. Torah is a lifestyle that flows from a heart that desires to please Yahweh. It's the lifestyle of Yeshua that you take on, because a disciple wants to be like their Teacher.

Sunday Christians

When I grew up in the Pentecostal church you would sometimes hear about "Sunday Christians." People who came to church on Sunday because that's what they were supposed to do. That's what mama and daddy, and grandmamma and granddaddy always did. Put your offering in the plate. Stand up and sing. Bow your head and close your eyes for prayer. Then, walk out the door... and forget about everything until next Sunday.

The truth is... that's not a Christian. That's someone who is going through a few motions. They are treating Christ like he's a trinket to pull out and look at for a little while.

Judaizers Weren't True Believers

Now transfer that back to the Judaizers. They observed the outward works of the law... and that was it. There was no heart. There was no faith. **You can have works without faith, you know? You can.** A person can keep the letter of the law without having genuine, saving faith in their heart. Even a thief can decide he's not going to steal because a police is watching. That doesn't mean his heart doesn't want to steal.

In Galatians 6:12-13 Paul writes this: "Those who want to make a good showing in the flesh are the ones who would compel you to be circumcised - but only to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even the circumcised don't

keep the law themselves; however, they want you to be circumcised in order to boast about your flesh."

The Judaizers were under the curse of the law written in Deuteronomy 27, because they weren't living lives "*ek pistis*" - out of faith. Their obedience didn't **proceed from** faith. Their works didn't **grow out of** a faithful heart. They weren't devoted to Yahweh. They had outward works, but that's it.

Empty Gestures

If I treat my wife harshly all week long. Never pay attention to her, never provide for her materially, never tell her "I love you," never hold her hand, never spend any time with, or tell her how beautiful she is inside and out, and then bring her roses at the end of the week, and hand them to her acting like it makes everything okay (and thinking she should just immediately swoon over me), what do you think she would say? (*I'm afraid to think of what she might say, lol*)... "I don't want flowers Matthew... I want you. I want your heart."

In this case, the gesture of the roses is the equivalent to the act of circumcision for the Judaizers. Yahweh is not interested in someone who is "of the works of the law," that is, someone who relies on a few gestures to make them right with the Almighty. Yahweh's children are those who operate their lives out of faith, which produces covenant faithfulness. I'm not talking about being sinless, I'm talking about being penitent, repentant, faithful, and always growing. Torah is a way of life, not a few gestures.

If you are not living your **life** for Yahweh. If you are not centering everything you do around him, don't think you can just show up to Sabbath and it make everything else okay. Don't think you can just make it to Passover this spring and all your sins will be atoned for. *You're just trying to bring the roses instead of giving your whole self.*

Though you spread your hands in prayer to Yahweh, He says, "I will not listen. Stop bringing useless offerings to Me. You pretender. You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and self indulgence."

A New Heart and Spirit

You will never be saved if you are "of the works of the law." You will never be saved by just going to church once a week, singing a few songs, and bowing your head in prayer. You'll never be saved by just not eating pork, making a set of tassels, and becoming circumcised. You must be "of faith." You must have this salvation on the inside, and not just look like you've got it on the outside.

Without the new heart on the inside, you can't obey Yahweh's law, because it will always be something you "have to do," instead of something you "want to do."

The new heart wants to obey. It's not even a question of "do I have to?" because your desire is to please your Abba. You know what He has told you is for your good, so you live by every word that proceeds from His mouth.

You may ask then, "Brother Matthew... how do I get this on the inside?" It is a gift. Yahweh says, "**I** will **give** you a new heart." If you don't think you have it, pray that Yahweh grant to you a repentant heart of faith, because that is the only way you will be saved from your sins, and filled with the faith that desires to obey His commandments.

Galatians, pt. 24 (Read 3:9-10)

Intro and Review

In the last message I talked about how "of faith" in verses 7-9 is contrasted with "of the works of the law" in verse 10. I presented the understanding that "of the works of the law" refers to people who thought that a certain select, few laws (that marked them out as Judah) secured their salvation.

I used to believe that Galatians 3:10 taught that the reason a person was cursed for being "of the works of the law" was because no person could keep the law perfectly.

I still believe you and I have not and cannot keep the law perfectly, but I don't think that is the point Paul is writing about in Galatians 3:10. I'm thankful for deeper understanding here.

Meditating on Deuteronomy 27

We read last week from Deuteronomy 27 (which Paul quotes in Galatians 3:10), that there is a curse pronounced on people who violate the law, and then a blessing upon people who obey the law (Deuteronomy 28). If I believe a person is cursed for violating the law, then I must believe the opposite: a person is blessed for obeying the law.

This would have to mean that such obedience to the law is not outside of the realm of possibility. It is not too difficult. A person is capable of obeying the law, just like they are capable of disobeying the law.

Now, of course I am not talking about never sinning, and I honestly do not believe that is what Yahweh was talking about in Deuteronomy 27. This is because (*catch this very important point*) **inside the sphere of Torah there exists not only law, but also provisions for atonement, repentance, and the forgiveness of sins.** Forgiveness of sins doesn't exist outside of Torah... But rather inside of Torah.

If Yahweh demanded perfection (sinlessness) of those who followed him, why did He put within the law a remedy for the Israelites when they sinned? Yahweh knew that his people would not be sinless. Yahweh realized men would fail to be perfect, and He gave them a way to get back in touch with Him. So long as they followed that way, they would be blessed. (*Two of the five categories in the sacrificial system dealt with the removal of sin. This makes no sense if forgiveness is not offered inside of the Torah.*)

Family Analogy

When I give my children commands or requirements in my home, I realize that they aren't perfect, sinless children. They huff or murmur things under their breath (just like I did when I was a child). I realize that they won't always obey what I've said. But that doesn't mean there's no place for repentance and forgiveness. There have been times when my children have done wrong, and later asked me to forgive them, and I have. There have been times when *I've* done wrong, and later asked my children to forgive me, and they have.

Our home unit is one of law *and* grace. My children are blessed for obedience, and when they disobey there is punishment, but there is still room for confession, repentance, and forgiveness. So long as they remain in covenant with me and my wife, they are blessed. The curse for disobedience only stays if they refuse to live penitently, and step outside of our family covenant.

I believe it was the same for the children of Israel. Yahweh was in covenant with them. Obey and be blessed, disobey and be cursed... but the curse didn't stay upon those who disobeyed but asked for forgiveness and repented. Yahweh wasn't up there saying, "Strike 1, you're out." If we were out on strike 1, then none of us would be in communion with the Father, much less saved from our sins.

People Can be Righteous

What I'm saying is that no faithful Israelite under the old covenant was sinless, but they were blessed for covenant faithfulness.

In Luke 1:5-6 we read this (*remember this is Old Covenant*): "In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's divisions named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in the Almighty's sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord."

Does this text say that Zechariah and Elizabeth never sinned? No. If you keep reading in Luke 1, you will see that when an angel of Yahweh brought a message to Zechariah, Zechariah doubted. He's human. He's not without fault. Yahweh caused him to be mute for a while because of his doubt, but Zechariah was still a righteous man. Righteous men mess up, but they confess and repent.

If you could watch Zechariah and Elizabeth's lifestyle, you would see commandment keepers. You would not see people who were "*of the works of the law*" like we talked about last week. They didn't just jump through a few outward hoops in the law, and then forget the rest. They lived by every word that proceeded out of Yahweh's mouth.

Getting Galatians 3:10 Right

I believe Galatians 3:10 is teaching that when we sin we *do* fall under the curse of the law, but the curse of the law only remains upon those who have sinned and **do not** ask for forgiveness, repent, and partake of the remedy within the law for atonement. If you were

to ask a faithful Old Covenant Israelite if they were required to be sinless, they'd likely look at you strange, and say, "Why do you think we have sacrifices for sin, and confession, and repentance?"

Under the Old Covenant, the curse was *atoned for* through the proxy of animal sacrifice. Under the New Covenant, the curse is *removed* through the proxy of the Lamb of Yahweh, Yeshua the Messiah.

I now believe that being "of the works of the law" in Galatians 3:10 is a specific reference to those who believed being a Judahite secured their salvation.

Remember this simple point - **verse 10 follows and is linked with verses 6-9**. In verses 6-9 Paul is arguing for sons of Abraham by faith (a *spiritual* son-ship). In verse 10, Paul is condemning those who are "of the works of the law," i.e. those who believe their Judahite status or *physical* son-ship (through certain works of the law) secures their salvation. Always remember: Galatians 6:13 says that those who were compelling the Gentiles to be circumcised didn't keep the law themselves. (**Illustration:** *Some people treat baptism the way the Judaizers treated circumcision. Both are signs, but they are not guarantees of a new heart.*)

The Judaizers were trying to force the Gentile men who already believed in Yeshua to become circumcised, as well as the Gentile women to undergo some kind of conversion process as well. "You've got to be one of our group to be saved, and become a *real* son or daughter of Abraham."

Paul combated this by bringing up father Abraham (who was counted as righteous *by faith* about 14 years before he was circumcised), and by quoting the law.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27, not to show that it's impossible to be sinless in the law, but rather to show that the Judaizers are under the curse of the law because **they are NOT of faith** like Abraham. They are not penitent or repentant, but are living in sin, even though it looks like they are righteous on the outside.

Matthew 23 Parallel

I believe Paul was echoing what Yeshua said to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:23-26.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law-justice, mercy, and faith. These things should have been done without neglecting the others.

24 Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, yet gulp down a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence!

26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so the outside of it may also become clean.

Were the Pharisees doing wrong by paying their tithe? No. Were the Judaizers doing wrong by being circumcised, or wearing tassels, or not marring the edges of their beard? No. The problem was that they were "of the works of the law" ... they were trusting in a few, outward works to justify them

They were not "of faith" like father Abraham. They didn't **live** by all the words of Yahweh. Thus they remained under the curse of the law.

Yeshua said they *neglected* justice, mercy, and faith. Notice that MERCY and FAITH are weighty matters in the law. I believe far too many Christians think that mercy and faith are New Covenant concepts. No, they are whole bible concepts. To omit mercy and faith, yet be meticulous in tithing is like eating a camel for dinner, but making sure the gnat doesn't get in the next guy's soup. It just doesn't make sense does it?

It would be like a man cussing and beating his wife before he leaves for work, and then being careful to tell Zaxby's "no bacon please" when he orders a salad that day for lunch. That act of law ("no bacon") is not going to justify a man that's not loving his wife. Such is not a man of faith, only a man of works. Works without faith is dead, being alone.

Yeshua says that the scribes and Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but not the inside. I don't even want to think about only washing our dishes on the outside. That would just be nasty, wouldn't it? Rosa'lyn is in charge of dishwashing in our home, and she does a great job of it. But what if I told her, "Just do the outside Rose. Don't worry about the inside." How crazy would that be?

The scribes and Pharisees had all the outward stuff on. The Judaizers bragged "We're Judah! Look at us!" And they did *look like* righteous people, but they were unrighteous people. They had no faith.

Now none of this means that the outward laws are bad. Remember, Yeshua said that their tithing was a good thing. He said, "This you ought to do, but don't leave the other undone. Clean first the inside of the cup, that the outside may be clean." But, the outward signs or outward laws mean nothing unless there exists an inward reality of faith. It's like what I said earlier about circumcision and baptism. Both are outward signs of a covenant. But an outward sign does not prove that there is an inward reality.

Conclusion

I believe that many of the Gentile believers actually condemned the Judahite believers by their life of faith. This didn't mean that all Judahite believers were lost. Many of them were "of faith," and they were still circumcised, tassel wearing, kosher eating believers. Those things were not wrong or bad. Those are all good things.

But the key is that those Judahites who were true believers (James, Paul, etc.), didn't rely on a few outward works to make them right with Yahweh. They were sons and daughters of Abraham, **by faith**. They weren't relying on their ethnic status or pedigree to save

them. And they weren't relying on their circumcision to save them. They trusted in Yahweh's Gospel promise; that's what saved them. **They truly were OF FAITH.**

We must be of faith if we are to be saved. Trusting in a few outward works of the law that you do is not going to save you. Salvation is from the inside out, not from the outside in. Salvation is spiritual heart surgery, done by Yahweh the Father, that changes your desires. If any person be in Messiah, they are a new creation. I want to be in Messiah. I want to be OF FAITH.

Galatians, pt. 25 (Read 3:9-10 KJV)

Intro and Review

In the last two messages I've shared with you my understanding of Galatians 3:10. Most Christian scholars disagree with me, but I honestly believe they are interpreting verse 10 based on a pre-conceived inherited doctrine.

I can't be too hard on the scholars though, because I used to hold to the same view. The standard interpretation is: "The reason those who are 'of the works of the law' are cursed, is because no one can keep the law perfectly." That interpretation makes sense, *if* you believe that Yahweh was requiring sinless perfection in Deuteronomy 27 (where Paul quotes from in Galatians 3:10).

Last week I showed you why I don't think Yahweh required sinless perfection from His people in Deuteronomy 27, but rather covenant faithfulness. A part of being faithful to the covenant included taking part in the law's provision for sin. Taking part in penitence, confession of sin, guilt offerings, sin offerings, and the Day of Atonement, was taking part in the Law. No faithful Israelite was sinless, but many were righteous.

The Law is Not Too Difficult to Keep

We actually even find a section in the book of Deuteronomy that explicitly tells us that the law is not too difficult to keep. In the past I've kind of just let this text hang in limbo. I believed it, but I didn't really know what to do with it. Now that I have a better understanding of righteousness, and what Yahweh actually does require, I believe I understand this text more than I ever have before.

Let's look at it, in Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

11 "This command that I give you today is certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach.⁶

⁶ The KJV reads, "it is not hidden from thee" instead of "not too difficult." The Hebrew "pala," is also used in 17:8, translated as "too hard" in reference to a case in court. The ESV gives 30:11 as "not too hard for you." The Septuagint gives "burdensome" or "grievous" as the English translation. I think the context, especially verse 14, lends weight to the idea of the Torah not being too difficult to obey, bear, or carry. This squares nicely with 1 John 5:3.

Now that just contradicts all kinds of standard Christian theology doesn't it? "Why are you trying to keep the law? You can't obey the law! The law is too difficult, too strenuous. You're cursed for being of the works of the law!" Have you heard any of those statements before? I sure have. I've had people say those things to me directly.

I think Deuteronomy 30:11 should be our "go to verse" from now on when someone tells us that no one could keep the law back then. This is Yahweh telling those people at the time of Moses: "It's certainly not too difficult or beyond your reach." (*We are told the same in the NT; 1 John 5:3.*)

Yes, it may take effort. Yes, it may take work. Yes, it may take discipline. But since when does anything good come without effort, work, and discipline? And why do people think words like work, effort, and discipline aren't Christian characteristics?

For example: I believe a husband and wife can have a good marriage, but it doesn't just happen by sitting down, folding your hands, and doing nothing. It takes effort. Likewise, we are not going to get to where we should be in obeying Yahweh's instructions over night, but over a period of time, with effort and training and discipline, we can grow in our sanctification. Look at the next verses.

12 It is not in heaven, so that you have to ask, 'Who will go up to heaven, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?'

13 And it is not across the sea, so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea, get it for us, and proclaim it to us so that we may follow it?'

14 But the message is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may follow it.

Yahweh is not demanding sinlessness here, but covenant faithfulness. You can be faithful to Yahweh, but **you will sin**. My saying that is not giving you permission to sin, nor is it okaying you when you sin. All sin is bad. All sin is an offense to Yahweh. But, the fact is: **you will sin**, and Yahweh knows that ahead of time. The key is that when you do, you don't live in it, but you confess, repent, and strive not to sin in the same way the next time. Over time, you will grow in holiness, which means more obedience.

Proverbs 24:16 says, "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he will get up, but the wicked stumble into ruin." Catch that: **a righteous man** falls seven times. Why is the man still called righteous? I believe it is because he gets up. He is faithful to the covenant in that he doesn't stumble into ruin. He doesn't live in and practice sin without repentance. The righteous man is not a worker of lawlessness.

When we have a heart to obey the law. When we decide to love our neighbor by not stealing from him, or committing adultery with his wife. When we look out for our neighbor's property while they are out of town. When we don't work on the Sabbath. When we keep our word. When stand up to honor the elderly. When we observe Passover. When we do all of these things, we aren't cursed. We are blessed. The curse comes when we refuse to do all of these things that are not too difficult or beyond our reach.

And that my friends is why the Judaizers were under the curse of the law. They weren't faithful to the covenant. They were Judah, yes. They had been circumcised on the 8th day, yes. But they didn't have it in their heart. They were not *of faith* like father Abraham.

I talked last week about Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1, where it says that they were both righteous, walking without blame according to all the commandments and requirements of Yahweh. There's another verse to show someone who says you can't obey the law, Luke 1:5-6. What are we going to do with Zechariah and Elizabeth? Are we going to say that Luke didn't know what he was talking about when he wrote that?

Righteous Hezekiah

Well, let me give you another example in this lesson, with the man named Hezekiah. We've talked about it a lot here in this congregation, but I'm not sure we've ever went and read it out loud or studied it. It's such a good example of what I'm talking about, so I thought we'd look at it.

2 Kings 20:1-6a

1 In those days Hezekiah became terminally ill. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, "This is what Yahweh says: 'Put your affairs in order, for you are about to die; you will not recover.' "

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh,

3 "Please Yahweh, remember how I have walked before You faithfully and wholeheartedly and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Now... what do you think Yahweh would say to a man who prayed that prayer if it wasn't true? "Who do you think you are? You've not served me?" That would be a blasphemous prayer for a man to pray if it were a lie.

Yeshua once told a parable (Luke 18) about a Pharisee who went to the temple to pray, bragging on his righteousness. *"O Elohim... I sure do thank you that I'm not like all the other people - greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector standing beside me. I fast twice a week. I pay all my tithes."* At the end of the parable, the Pharisee did not go home justified, because he was not a man of covenant faithfulness. He exalted himself while putting other people down, and was a man of works without faith. Remember, faith without works is dead, but works apart from faith is also dead.

But Hezekiah? Hezekiah's prayer was not like the Pharisee. He wept while he prayed. He didn't talk down about anyone else. He approached Yahweh with humility, and he pleaded, "Remember how I have walked before You Father. Remember the good deeds I have done." (ref. 2 Kings 18:5-6)

A commentator I generally love, Adam Clarke, makes light of Hezekiah's prayer, going so far to say that Yahweh winked at Hezekiah's ignorance, and that we are taught better in the Gospel. I believe Clarke missed it on this one. There isn't a hint here that

Hezekiah's prayer was unjust or ignorant. Hezekiah prayed, and listen to what the text explicitly says next in verses 4-6.

4 Isaiah had not yet gone out of the inner courtyard when the word of Yahweh came to him:

5 "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of My people, 'This is what Yahweh Elohim of your ancestor David says: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I will heal you. On the third day [from now] you will go up to Yahweh's temple.

6a I will add 15 years to your life..

Do you think Yahweh would have healed Hezekiah if his prayer was a lie? No way. What we have here is a man who really was righteous in the law. He was a blessed man because he was a faithful man.

We need some real tears before Yahweh. Tears of heart-felt repentance. Real tears because of how good He has been to us, and how we would never be in the shape we are in if it weren't for his mighty hand on our life. When you get a new heart, you will weep over Yahweh's mercies. No one with a heart of stone will understand that. You've got to have the new heart to understand.

What Did Paul Mean?

See, verses like these (2 Kings 20:1-6; Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Luke 1:5-6) show us that people are not cursed for obeying the law, and that obeying the law can be done. Verses like these help us see that Paul was not telling the Galatians they were cursed if they kept the law in Galatians 3:10.

Paul was teaching them that they were cursed if they were not **of faith**, but were instead trusting in a few outward works of law to make them righteous before Yahweh. The Galatian Gentiles would be cursed if they fell under the spell of the Judaizers, because the Judaizers weren't faithful to the covenant. They were all about show and not about heart. They wanted others to look at them and think they were righteous. They didn't live by faith which produced faithfulness to the covenant.

And they had a list of things someone needed to do in order to get into their group, and once you did that list, you were in. Their trust was in their list. They were not trusting in the Gospel promise, and living their life based upon that faith. They were trusting in who they thought they were, because of their flesh.

Brothers and sisters, salvation has nothing to do with your flesh. Salvation isn't about what you look like on the outside. Salvation isn't about making sure you are from a tribe of Israel. Salvation isn't about if your parents had you circumcised on the 8th day. **Salvation is based upon whether or not saving faith exists in your heart.** Does your heart trust in the promise of Yahweh? Do you believe in His Son whom He has sent? And does this cause you to live according to the covenant - faithfully? Not out of a have to, but out of a want to?

As we close in prayer today, let's realize that we can obey the law that Yahweh gave us. That doesn't mean we will never sin, but it does mean that it is possible for us to walk in covenant faithfulness to Yahweh, all the while trusting in His Son Yeshua for the forgiveness of our sins.

Galatians, pt. 26 (Read 3:9-12 KJV)

Intro and Review

Last month, we spent some time developing the argument Paul makes in verse 10, showing that being "of the works of the law" is a mindset about the law; an attitude that doing a few outward works makes you righteous before Yahweh. Such an attitude causes the curse of the law to remain upon a person. Before we move into verses 11 and 12 today, I'd like to do some review, and kind of paint a picture of what I've been learning. I hope you've been learning along the way as well.

After studying this epistle for over a year, I believe the central point of Galatians is this: Paul was combating the false gospel of the Judaizers, that stated a person was saved by their ethnicity (Judahite/Israelite). The Judaizers did not believe an uncircumcised heathen could have salvation and equal status with Israel, by faith in Yeshua. They taught that Gentile believers had to *also* go through certain "works of the law" in order to gain ethnic-Israeli status. Only then could they be counted as righteous or saved, because they were now a proselyte Israelite. **That false gospel takes the emphasis off of Yeshua, the promise of Yahweh, and places the emphasis on ones own flesh.**

In Acts chapter 2 we read that there were both **Jews and proselytes** there at the Feast of Pentecost, hearing the Apostles speak of the wonderful works of the Almighty.

The term **Jews** there refers to physical Judahites. People who were born into Israelite families who observed Torah. Men who had been circumcised at 8 days old. Women who had been birthed to mothers in covenant Israel.

Proselytes referred to people from other nations or religions who had decided to convert to Judaism at a later time in their life. Male proselytes would go through the ritual circumcision rite, and then partake in a proselyte baptism as a symbol of washing away the filth of their heathen status. Female proselytes would go through the baptism as well. Once ritually cleansed in the eyes of Judahites, these proselytes were considered full members of Israel. (Thus Peter says to these Jews and Proselytes in Acts 2:22, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words." All full proselytes were considered Israelites.)

Becoming a proselyte did not secure one's salvation, and being a genetic Israelite did not secure salvation. We read on in Acts 2 that 3,000 from among the Jews and proselytes **had to repent to Yahweh of their sin of rejecting Yeshua, and then be baptized, confessing that Yeshua was the promised Messiah and Master of David.**

Among those 3,000 souls that were saved on the day of Pentecost, **there was not a single uncircumcised soul.** The proselytes who were saved that day were not Israelites

ethnically, but they were counted as Israel because of their conversion to Judaism. None of the people saved on that day of Pentecost were considered *goy*, *ethnos*, or Gentiles.

Gentile salvation in Messiah was revealed later on in the book of Acts with a man named Cornelius. Through the preaching of the Apostle Peter, the first Gentile, uncircumcised non-proselyte, received the gospel about Yeshua, by hearing with faith, and then was baptized - *not into Judaism* - but into the Messiah... all without going through the ritual conversion process to Judaism. This Gentile salvation continued in the later ministry of Paul (the apostle to the Gentiles). As Acts 14:27 says, the Almighty, "had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (uncircumcised, non-proselytes)."

This is why I labored so much on Paul's argument for spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham in Galatians 3:6-9. Any non-Judahite/Israelite **who places faith in the promised Seed (Yeshua Messiah)**, is a blessed, spiritual child of Abraham, and counted righteous by faith. **Salvation is not determined by being a physical child of Abraham. Salvation is dependant upon being a spiritual child of Abraham.**

The salvation question is NOT "Are you an Israelite?" The salvation question IS: "Do you believe in Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh?" The Judaizers placed the emphasis on the first question. They taught salvation by ethnicity rather than by faith.

The Righteous Live by Faith

And so we come to verse 11 in chapter 3 where Paul writes: "Now it is clear that no one is justified before the Almighty by the law, because the righteous will live by faith." I believe the reason Paul sees this to be so clear is because he is quoting from the Old Testament. Habbakuk 2:1-4 says (LXX): "I will stand on my watch, mounted upon the rock, and see what He shall say to me, and what might I answer when I am reproved? (2) And [Yahweh] answered me and said, Write the vision distinctly upon a tablet, that he who reads it may flee. (3) For the vision is yet for an appointed time, and it will come up at the end, and it will not be in vain; if he should tarry, wait for him; for he will surely come, and he will not tarry. (4) If any man should shrink back, my soul will not be well-pleased in him: but the righteous shall live by My faith."

What you have here is a man who is trusting in the promise of Yahweh in spite of his surrounding circumstance. It appears that Yahweh isn't around. It appears that Yahweh is delayed, but you continue to trust in what He has promised. The righteous man lives by the faith of Yahweh. (Take note that this is not a lawless man being described, but a faith-filled man. A man whose obedience flows out of the faith that exists in his heart.)

Faith is the beginning component in a person's heart that leads to everything else. Anyone you will ever meet in life who genuinely follows in the Messiah's footsteps, does so because saving faith has been given to them. No man or woman is truly righteous unless they have that gift of faith living inside of them. And that gift of faith produces trust in Yahweh, and faithful living based upon that trust.

Now... I believe Paul uses the word "law" in verse 11 as shorthand for "the works of the law" he just wrote about in verse 10. When Paul says, "Now it is clear that no one is justified before the Almighty by the law," Paul isn't talking about doing good works in general, or living faithfully. Paul is still referring to the few "works of law" by which the Judaizers believed they were counted as righteous. The influencers believed an outsider had to adhere to the particular works they esteemed, in order to join their righteous/saved group.

I believe Paul means this in verse 11: "Now it is clear that no one is justified before the Almighty by being a Judahite or becoming a Judahite through proselytizing." The Judaizers believed a person was counted as righteous before the Almighty by the works of the law that set them apart as a unique people. They trusted in a few outward works, instead of (or on top of) the Messiah, while at the same time neglecting the weightier matters of the law (justice, mercy, faith).

Those who are genuinely righteous are the ones who live their life based upon the faith that has been placed in their heart by Yahweh, and they will live in the world to come because of that faith. Saving faith does lead people to do good works - but the good works are done properly *because they grow out of this faith*. A man or woman who performs the works of the law, apart from faith, is simply putting on a show. A few outward works, without faith, are nothing but dead works that will not save.

Is the Law Based on Faith?

Now look at **verse 12**. It can be an odd verse if not studied in context and with background. Paul writes, "But the law is not based on faith." (**More literally, "the law is not of faith."**) Let's stop there for a moment. Wait a second Paul? The law is not of faith? Did you really write that? Well yes... but what did Paul *mean*?

That statement doesn't make any sense when taken as a "one-liner" by itself, and this is a reason some people decide to throw Paul out. They don't take the time to understand Paul's developed arguments. Paul wasn't a writer that just threw stuff out there and hoped you grabbed it. He was a learned, deep thinker who trained under one of the most respected Rabbi's of his time.

Let me give you two reasons why Paul was not saying that the Law of Yahweh itself is not based on faith. First, from Deuteronomy 32, the song of Moses. The Song of Moses is a song of condemnation towards stubborn, rebellious Israel. The Israelites were to learn the song so that they would be reminded of their stubbornness, and what Yahweh would do to them when they rebelled.

In Deuteronomy 32:19-20 we read this: "When Yahweh saw this, He despised them, provoked to anger by His sons and daughters. He said, 'I will hide my face from them; I will see what will become of them, for they are a perverse generation - unfaithful children.'" That last sentence literally reads, "children in whom is no faith."

Right here in the book of the covenant, we read that the reason so many Israelites were rebellious to Yahweh (in un-repentance) is because faith did not exist **inside** of them. This helps us see that faith is the primary component of salvation *in the Old Testament*. Catch this: no one *in the Old Testament* could keep the law properly apart from saving faith existing inside them. That shows that a person had to be "of faith" to be obedient. **Obedience to the law then must be based upon faith.**

The second reason we know that the law must be based on faith is from Yeshua the Messiah. He said in Matthew 23:23 that the Pharisees rejected the weighty, more important matters in the law - justice, mercy, **and faith**. Yeshua says that FAITH is a weighty matter in the law, and it's because without faith you can't obey the law as it was intended to be obeyed.

So what in the world does Paul mean when he writes, "But the law is not based on faith (or 'of faith')"? I'm going to tell you what I believe he means, in **context**.

I believe "law" here continues to be shorthand for the "works of the law" mentioned in verse 10. The contrast is still between "of faith" (*ek pistis*) and "of the works of the law" (*ek ergon nomos*), just like in verses 9 and 10.

The argument flows from verse 6 all the way to verse 12. Paul isn't speaking of faithful obedience in verse 12, but rather of the Judaizers belief that a few outward works of the law, giving them their status as Judah, justified them. **That mentality is what is not of faith.** **You can go through the motions, and not have faith.**

This becomes even more clear when we look at where Paul quotes from in verse 12. He pulls from Leviticus 18:5 where Yahweh says, "Keep my statutes and ordinances. A person will **live** if he does them." Leviticus 18 is a chapter dealing with how a **faithful person** lived for Yahweh. The faithful person doesn't follow the practices of the heathen, he follows Yahweh's law and lives. Faith comes first, *genuine* obedience second.

I believe Paul is saying the same thing in two different ways in Galatians 3:11-12. He is saying that no one is justified by the outward works of law that distinguish a person as Judah, and that just doing the outward works of law that distinguish a person as Judah is not of faith. The righteous are the ones who **live** by faith (Habakkuk 2). The man who does these things (by faith) will **live** (Leviticus 18). Those are two positive statements from the Old Testament. Just being a circumcised Judahite, who looks righteous, will not save a person. You must have the faith that father Abraham had in order to be saved.

Conclusion

Anyone who is relying on anything other than Yahweh's promise of salvation, through Yeshua the Messiah, will be lost. Many will strive to enter in by other ways, but will never be able to enter. They will be counted as a thief and a robber because they tried to get into the house through the window instead of the door. Anyone who does not have the saving faith of Abraham in their heart will be condemned, no matter their genealogy, and no matter how holy they look on the outside. Justification doesn't come by the works of

the law, but rather by faith which leads to faithfulness. You can perform works until the cows come home, but if those works aren't flowing out of faith, they are in vain.

Galatians, pt. 27 (Read 3:9-14)

Intro and Review

In our last lesson I discussed how verses 11 and 12 are a continuation of verse 10's judgment on those who are "of the works of the law." Being "of the works of the law" has to do with a *mentality about the law*. It's a mentality that is contrasted with being of faith. A man *of faith* is a faithful, penitent man. A man *of the works of the law* looks like a holy man, but is in reality an unholy man relying on a few works and his own flesh to make him righteous. A person can obey outwardly, and not possess inwardly. A person can go through some motions and not have a heart change. A person of faith obeys, but understands that they are forever in this life, in need of a substitute.

Galatians 3:13

And with that thought, we move into verse 13 today which says this: "The Messiah has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

The focus here is on the Messiah, because **Yeshua the Messiah is the vehicle that Yahweh uses to deliver His people from their sins.**

This is echoed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: "Now everything is from the Almighty, who reconciled us to Himself through the Messiah, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that is, in the Messiah, the Almighty was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them..."

This is how the curse is lifted off of us. I believe the phrase "the curse of the law" (in Galatians 3:13) is a reference back to the end of Galatians 3:10 where Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26 about the curses pronounced in the law. A curse is pronounced upon everyone who is not faithful to the covenant... **and that is all of us (then and now) at one time or another. We have all fallen short of the glory of the Almighty.**

The Gentiles are Cursed

For the Gentiles, their life was characterized by unfaithfulness. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6 that some of the Gentile believers in Messiah were formerly idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, and swindlers. Such lifestyles most assuredly carried with them the curse of the law.

According to Leviticus 18:24-25, even the non-Israelite nations were under the curse... and kicked out of their land, because they had defiled it with those heinous sins. Deuteronomy 9:4 echoes that by saying that the pagan nations were being removed due to their wickedness.

When men like Cornelius, uncircumcised in the flesh, came to believe in Yeshua - they had grown up in the same or similar way as the pagan nations in Leviticus 18 and Deuteronomy 9. They hadn't grown up serving Yahweh. They weren't taught the Torah from childhood. That's why they were uncircumcised. They had grown up under the curse.

How could the curse be removed off of Gentile-pagans? The answer is: **The Messiah became a curse for us. The Almighty was in Messiah, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.**

The Messiah acts as a representative for all Gentiles who place their trust in Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by Him. When an idolater, or adulterer, or homosexual, or thief repents of their sin and places their trust in Yeshua (the promise of Yahweh), the curse that fell upon them is removed. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6: "such **were** some of you, but you are washed."

The Judahites are Cursed

But why does Paul write "The Messiah has redeemed **US** from the curse of the law"? Why does Paul say "us" when we know for certain that Paul was not an uncircumcised heathen? Paul was raised in Judaism, circumcised the 8th day, of the tribe of Benjamin. Paul never knew another lifestyle than Torah. Why is Paul using the pronoun "us" to place himself under the curse of the law just like Cornelius who grew up outside of the law as a heathen sinner?

This is why: Paul saw himself under the curse of the law, because he now realized that his former mindset - the mindset of being "of the works of the law" - also placed himself in the same "boat" as the Gentile heathen. The law itself taught repentance. The law itself taught that all of Israel were sinners who needed atonement. The law itself looked forward to the day that the Messiah would come, and he would be wounded for our transgressions. Many Israelites in the first century lost sight of this, and believed they were worthy of salvation because of who they were in the flesh.

Even during the Old Covenant, the only Israelites who exempted themselves from the curse were those who were faithful to *all* that the covenant taught them. The curse was removed *on an earthly scale* by the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer. Those sacrifices really accomplished what Yahweh said they accomplished - but only as it pertained to things in this earthly realm. Hebrews 9:11-15 puts it beautifully.

11 Now the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation),

12 He entered the holy of holies once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who are defiled, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,

14 how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to the Almighty, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living Almighty?

15 Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions [committed] under the first covenant.

So Judahites (Israel) and Gentiles (heathens) all fall under the curse of the law, in one way or another. Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world stands guilty before the Creator. But when anyone - from any nation - places faith in Messiah, he removes the curse of the law from them, by taking the curse upon himself, and gives us a right - not just to enter into an earthly tabernacle made with human hands - but to enter into the eternal inheritance made by the hands of Yahweh. **Yeshua represents us. He takes upon himself our penalty (in our place) so that we don't have to perish eternally.**

Our Only Hope is Messiah

It should have been me hanging on that tree. It should have been you. Those nails rightfully belonged in your hands. That whip rightfully belonged on my back. Those thorns should have pierced into your skull. And I should have been the one hanging there naked in shame for everyone to see. **BUT**, the Almighty was in the Messiah, reconciling the world unto himself.

Yeshua the Messiah became a curse **FOR US** (Paul says). Don't ever leave those two little words out. It was **for us: both those who grew up in Torah as Israel, and those who grew up outside of Torah as non-Israel.** All are one. All are equal in salvation, when we place faith in Yeshua the Messiah, because he hung there in the place of us all. Not two different Messiah's. Not two different ways of salvation or levels of salvation. Not a greater status for the Judahite than the Gentile, but ONE MESSIAH, for everyone who has faith.

The Significance of the Tree

Paul says this curse is removed because of what is written in Deuteronomy 21:23. "If anyone is found guilty of an offense deserving the death penalty and is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, you are not to leave his corpse on the tree overnight but are to bury him that day for anyone hung on a tree is under the Almighty's curse."

This verse has been used throughout history as proof that Yeshua could not have been the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. "How could he be?" they say, "We know that he was cursed because he was hung on a tree as a criminal. Look at him! He's naked, bloody, and hanging on a tree! He's cursed of Elohim!"

But Paul doesn't shy away from the fact that he was hung on that tree. Paul believes it, but he adds in those two little words I told you to never forget about. Paul says "Messiah became a curse FOR US."

His hanging on the tree wasn't because of his own sins, it was because of our sins. He didn't earn the curse. He didn't deserve the curse. He took upon himself the curse FOR US, and it was in accordance with the Law of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 21.

And as Galatians 3:14 says, "The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham [the gospel that was preached to Abraham (vss.7-9)] would come to the Gentiles in Messiah Yeshua, so that we could receive the promise of the Spirit [remember both Judahite and Gentile received the Spirit (Acts 2 & Acts 10)]." The blessing of Abraham - **the gospel** - that all nations would be blessed in Abraham, is made possible to all nations when we place faith in the Seed of Abraham, Yeshua the Anointed One. Through the Messiah, the curse of the law (because of our sins) is lifted.

Conclusion & Summary

Brothers and sisters there is not one of us who is worthy of the blood of Yahweh's Lamb. You need the curse of the law lifted off of you. Even if you are a Judahite like Paul, that curse is still on you, and it will not be removed because of who you are in the flesh. The only way the curse is removed is by placing your faith in the One who became a curse for you.

None of us are good enough to be saved. But let me tell you this too. None of us are bad enough to *not* be saved. Yahweh is in the saving, delivering business, and if He wants to save even a murderer, he can have him knocked down, blinded, and sent to a gospel preacher.

If you've placed faith in the Messiah, the curse has been removed. The Almighty was in the Messiah, reconciling the world to himself, not counting our trespasses against us. Rest in that. That alone is the gospel of grace in the Messiah.

Herein is love, not that we loved Yahweh. but that He loved us, and sent His Son to remove the curse that was upon both Israelite and heathen. I believe Yeshua loved us too. I believe He willingly went to that tree to obey his Father's will. But I think the Father's love gets dismissed by many. Had it not been for the love of Yahweh the Father, Yeshua would have never even come on the scene.

Galatians, pt. 28 (Read 3:15-18)

Opening Exhortation

Today we get back into studying Paul's epistle to the Galatians, and I am thankful. This epistle is where my heart is right now, because it (along with the book of Genesis) has opened my eyes to truth that in times past I was unable to see.

Studying through a book of the Bible, slowly, in context, will do that for you. Interpreting scripture based upon the culture of its own time period will do that for you. But you must be willing to let go of anything you hold that is based upon traditions of men, bias, or a modern day mindset.

If you only desire truth, I believe Yahweh will show it to you.

If you are content to stay in tradition, I also believe Yahweh can leave you there.

Studying the Bible changes us. Yahweh changes us, period. The new heart is not placed inside you to keep you the way that you are by nature. It's put there to make you think and act differently, and in turn believe differently. And the more you study the Bible, the more you are transformed.

Reviewing Galatians 3:6-14

So today we pick this back up in verses 15-18. The last time we were in Galatians was over 2 months ago, so let me review some of what we covered in verses 6-14 leading up to our text today.

Paul's main theme has been those who are "of faith" verses those who are "of the works of the law."

The "of faith" group trusts in the promise of Yahweh, and lives out that trust by faithfully following Yahweh as He leads and guides.

The "of the works of the law" group follow a few outward works in the law that make them *look* like the spiritual group, but the reality is: **they have no faith.**

Works of the law aren't a bad thing, but being "**of** the works of the law" in this context (as opposed to being "of faith") is a bad thing. It's the difference between life and death. It's the difference between being saved or lost. If you're trusting in a few works to save you, you will die a lost person, forever separated from Yahweh.

Paul pointed out that Father Abraham, back in the book of Genesis, was a man "of faith." Yahweh made Abram a promise. Abram believed that promise (there's faith), and Yahweh credited Abram's faith to him as righteousness. When Abram was counted righteous by faith, he was uncircumcised. Yahweh had a relationship with Abram a good 24 years before he was ever circumcised.

This helps us see how the Gentiles who had believed in Yeshua the Messiah, **the ultimate promise of Yahweh**, could be credited as righteous apart from "the works of the law," i.e. the particular works in the law that set-apart Israel as a special people (particularly circumcision).

If the great Patriarch - Abraham - could be justified or counted as righteous by faith apart from circumcision, then so could the Gentiles who were coming to believe in Yahweh's promise.

Paul labors to show that this is the Gospel (good news) that was preached to Abraham. When Yahweh told Abram, back in Genesis 12, "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed," that was Yahweh preaching the Gospel to Abraham.

Yeshua would eventually come through the lineage of Abraham, and any family of the earth, or any *ethnos* of the earth (the Greek word for Gentile or nation) that believed in this descendant of Abraham, became a son or daughter of Abraham by faith. This gospel was preached before there were any Israelites upon the earth, and it went to all the *ethnos* of the earth.

There were Israelites at the time of Yeshua Messiah and Apostle Paul who were relying upon their physical status as circumcised Judah for salvation. They were saying, "Look at us. We are the chosen people. We are circumcised. We have the Temple. We have Jerusalem. We descend from the patriarchs and prophets."

Paul is telling them, "But you are not of faith. You are trusting in your flesh. You are trusting in your genealogy. You are trusting in the works of the law. You aren't trusting in the promise of Yahweh. You aren't placing your faith in Yeshua. You're adding to the gospel, and thus you are distorting the gospel."

Paul is urging the Galatians Gentiles who have placed faith in Messiah not to undergo the peer pressure of the influencers who are telling them, "Unless you convert to become a Judahite through ritual circumcision, you're not really saved."

The Human Illustration (3:15)

So that's the main thrust of Paul's argument in verses 6-14, and today we begin looking at verses 15-16. We'll start by reading verse 15 again (HCSB):

Brothers, I'm using a human illustration. No one sets aside even a human covenant that has been ratified, or makes additions to it.

Paul starts by using an illustration to help us understand. I like that. I use illustrations to explain deeper principles as well. How many have learned through illustrations?

Paul speaks of a human covenant. One way we could understand this is: a person's last will and testament. A person documents their will while they are alive, and ratifies or confirms it with a signature. Once they are dead, that will cannot be changed. You may say, "Well, people try to change it," but that's not the point. The point is that it should not be changed or altered. It is unlawful or illegal to do so.

We might also understand this human covenant as a contract or agreement between two people. Let's say you are selling me something of value, some land, some housing, etc. And we sit down and write up a contract with all of the details and stipulations. We both sign the agreement. After the sale I can't come back and say, "You were supposed to do this," if it was not in the agreement. I can't alter the covenant once it has been ratified or confirmed. That would be a violation of the original agreement.

So Paul here is arguing from the lesser to the greater. He's saying, "Even human covenants cannot be altered once ratified. You can't annul a covenant, or add to a covenant, once confirmed. How much more does this apply to the promises of Yahweh!" Look at the next verse, 16.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but and to your see, referring to one, who is Christ.

Unilateral, Unconditional Promises

So you see here how he is moving from the human illustration into the promises Yahweh made to Abraham. **Notice carefully that the promises were made by Yahweh, to Abraham; NOT by Abraham to Yahweh.** It is very important that you understand this: what we are dealing with here is **unilateral** promises, not conditional promises.

A covenant can be conditional or unconditional. I can write up a will that says, "When I die, Morgen will get \$100,000," period. No strings attached. That's unconditional or unilateral. It's not based on anything Morgen does, but only based upon my promise and my death.

Or, I could write in my last will and testament, "When I die, Morgen will get \$100,000, **IF** she continues in service to Yahweh, and is still married to Josiah." See, I put a couple of conditions on that promise. That's bilateral. It's not just based upon my promise, but also on things that Morgen must do to inherit the \$100,000.

When Yahweh made promises to Abraham back in Genesis 12 through Genesis 15, they were unilateral or unconditional. All Abram had to do was receive them by faith. He had to believe in the promises. We'll talk more about this next week as we move deeper into verses 17 and 18, but I wanted to lay that foundation out for you this week.

Abraham's SEED

Now, back to verse 16. We see that **the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed**, and then Paul makes a play on the singularity of the word "seed." "And to your seed" in Galatians 3:16 is a quotation from Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 17:8, and 24:7. The word seed in Hebrew is "zerah," and it is singular in form, although it can at times carry a plural meaning.

An illustration is found in me saying, "I saw a deer," or "I saw some deer" today. The word doesn't have to be used in a different form to mean plural, it can go either way depending upon the context in which I use the word.

So when we read the Genesis texts from which Paul is pulling, we find that Abraham's seed refers to his descendants, **yet the word is always singular in form.** What Paul is doing is an inspired midrash. A midrash is an exposition or commentary an author makes on the Hebrew text of Scripture. All Rabbi's during the time of Yeshua performed midrash upon Scripture, as they discussed and debated the proper meaning or interpretation of certain texts.

Paul is making a play on the word "seed" throughout the text of Genesis. **Paul sees a reason why the Hebrew word "zarah" is singular in form.** He is saying that the coming of Yeshua has caused a realization that Yeshua is the ultimate goal in Abraham's offspring. When Yahweh made promises to Abraham and his seed (one), the one was referring to what everything else was leading up to: Yeshua of Nazareth.

If the promises were made to Abraham and to his one seed: Messiah (Yeshua), then all who are attached to Messiah (by faith) are inheritors of the promises, no matter if they are Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (Galatians 3:28). Paul is still arguing against the Judahite influencers who are teaching salvation by ethnicity rather than faith.

Closing: Christ = Yeshua

As I close today, let me say that some have attempted to say that the word "Christ" in Galatians 3:16 is not a reference to Yeshua, but rather to only the "anointed" nation of Israel as a whole. I believe this understanding comes not from exegesis of the text at hand, but out of a desire to make the text say something it doesn't say.

While it's true that the word *christos* in Greek means "anointed" or "anointing" (sometimes just referring to the practice of anointing with oil or the anointing of Yahweh), in this context it is absolutely and undeniably referring to *Yeshua* the Christ or the person of THE Messiah.

The easiest way to prove this is to just read a few verses later, in verse 19a.

Why the law then? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come.

Who is "the Seed" that came a long time after the giving of the law? Right, Yeshua the Messiah. Abraham had many descendants before the law was ever given on Mount Sinai, but this Seed in Galatians 3 came many years after the law was added.

There's also mention of Christ in verse 13 referring to Yeshua, and the combination of "Christ Yeshua" in verse 14. So the singular seed in Galatians 3:16 is the one Yeshua, the promised Messiah.

If you are in Messiah, the promise of the gospel is for you. You are a child of Abraham, by faith. Whether Judahite or Greek, slave or free, male or female. You are all equal in Messiah, as pertaining to salvation.

If you are not in Messiah, the promise of the gospel is not for you, no matter your family tree. No matter if you're circumcised. The focal point is Messiah. He is the seed to whom the promise was made. You must be attached to him, by faith.

Galatians, pt. 29 (Read 3:15-18)

Last week we looked at verses 15-16, and today we will center in on verses 17-18. Let me say from the beginning here that I feel the meaning of 17-18 (based upon 15-16) is very easy to understand, if we are willing to accept that salvation, and an inheritance into the kingdom is solely by grace through faith.

Grace vs. Law

Sometimes, when I teach on texts that emphasize grace, I get asked "But what about the law? What about this other text?" Other times, when I teach on texts that emphasize works or obedience, I get asked, "But what about grace? What about this other text?"

I want you all to know that it is okay to believe all of the verses. It's great when we develop a deeper understanding of how all the verses harmonize, but when we are at the point in our walk where we don't yet understand how they all harmonize, it is perfectly fine to just believe all the verses. Don't fight any of them.

Today's text is one which will emphasize our salvation inheritance by grace through faith, and so I will emphasize that. That doesn't mean I don't believe in obeying the commandments. Salvation by grace through faith doesn't mean I'm going to stop honoring my father and mother, and start bearing false witness on everybody.

Review and More Explanation

So, last week we went over how human covenants work, and we talked about *uni-lateral* covenants versus *bi-lateral* covenants. Some covenants or contracts are unconditional, based solely upon one party and their decisions and promises. Other covenants are conditional, based upon more than one party meeting the requirements of the covenant.

In the case of the promises made by Yahweh to Abraham and his seed (which is ultimately Yeshua Messiah, vs. 16) the covenant is uni-lateral, specifically in the promises made in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15. Genesis 12 is where we have the initial calling of Abram out of the Ur of Chaldees, how Yahweh would bless him, and that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him.

Paul quotes Genesis 12 in Galatians 3 and says that the phrase "all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you," is the gospel of grace in Messiah preached to Abraham. When anyone, any ethnicity, any social class, or any gender (male or female) places their faith in the SEED of Abraham (Yeshua), they are blessed by being attached to that seed by faith, and thus share in the inheritance that was promised to Abraham.

Since it is a uni-lateral covenant, given solely by the grace of Yahweh, through faith (our believing it and receiving it), nothing that comes later can contradict that unconditional covenant.

So Paul's argument is: The Gentiles (non-covenant peoples, uncircumcised, not raised in the law like Judah) are coming to faith in Messiah. Some Judahites are saying, "They can't receive the inheritance until they convert to be one of us as a proselyte, through circumcision and keeping of the law of Moses." Paul is responding by bringing up the

gospel preached to Abraham, and the uni-lateral promise made by Yahweh to Abraham and his seed, Christ.

The Gentiles, though not raised in the Torah, which means they were raised outside of covenant with Yahweh, they can receive salvation and an inheritance the same way Abraham received it: by grace through faith.

This doesn't mean the Gentiles can just live any way they want to. No, Yahweh's gifts of grace and faith change a person. If Yahweh grants grace to a heathen, and gives them the gift of faith, it changes that person to a new creation, born of the Spirit, and shapes them into a faithful follower of Yahweh.

But the inheritance is not based on what they become as they grow in knowledge and obedience. The inheritance is based upon the uni-lateral, unconditional promise given by Yahweh to Abraham and his seed, Messiah. Thus Paul says in verse 17 (let's read it again):

17 And I say this: the law, which came 430 years later, does not revoke a covenant that was previously ratified by Yahweh, so as to cancel the promise.

What Law?

So the promise was spoken back in the book of Genesis to Abraham and his seed, Messiah. The law, coming 430 years after this promise, can't revoke the uni-lateral, unconditional promise made by Yahweh.

There's been much said about this statement "430 years later" in reference to what law Paul is referring to. Some say that Paul is only talking about laws that did not exist in the book of Genesis, but only came about during the time of Moses. I don't think that's in Paul's mind at this point.

It is clear that laws of Yahweh existed in Genesis. We have the Sabbath in Genesis 2, as well as the covenant of marriage. We have the clean and unclean animals in Genesis 7, and we even have the law of physical circumcision in Genesis 17. I made a list one time of all the laws of Yahweh that are mentioned in Genesis, and then later get a more detailed examination in Exodus through Deuteronomy. They are numerous.

I don't believe Paul is saying, "Any law that comes 430 years later is done away with, but any law that already existed is not done away with." If you make that a hard, fast rule then you have a problem, because Galatians is primarily about proselytizing through physical circumcision for salvation, and that law most certainly DID NOT come 430 years after the promise made to Abraham, but instead about 14-25 years after the promise made to Abraham. Circumcision is first found in Genesis 17, not in Exodus.

I think Paul's point is more about *the codification of the law* at the time of Moses, and what is now called "The Old Covenant." Yahweh had laws in existence during the time of

Genesis. Even Abraham is said to be a faithful keeper of Yahweh's commandments in Genesis 26:5. So it wasn't like no law existed until Moses.

But the *codified* law, written down on tablets of stone and in some type of book form didn't come about until 430 years after the promise was made to Abraham. **During the time of Moses, a conditional, bi-lateral covenant was made with Yahweh and the nation of Israel.** Yahweh said, "If you do this, I will do this." You can read about this, beginning in Exodus 19. The condition given to Israel was obedience to the codified law. Now that it was written down in once place, transgression was made more apparent.

And what happened? The very promise Israel made to Yahweh - that they would obey everything He told them to obey - was broken.

What I believe Paul is saying in Galatians 3:17 is this: "The later Mosaic Covenant, given 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham and his seed (ultimately Christ), cannot revoke the previous uni-lateral, unconditional covenant made solely by Yahweh back in Genesis."

The Judaizers or influencers were insisting that the Gentiles convert to their faith for salvation. Follow these rules first and then you'll receive the inheritance. In that case, the inheritance would be based upon law and not promise. But what does Paul say in Galatians 3:18?

18 For if the inheritance is from the law, it is no longer from the promise; but Yahweh granted it to Abraham through the promise.

Inheritance through Promise

This means the Gentiles can get in by grace through faith, based upon the unconditional promise made by Yahweh to Abraham. When a person who hasn't been raised to serve Yahweh (like the Judahites had) places faith in the seed of Abraham (Yeshua) they join the covenant made by Yahweh, and are a recipient of the promise.

The inheritance isn't based upon who you are ethnically. It's not based upon what you look like. It's not based upon your social status either. You don't have to fit into a certain income bracket to make it into the kingdom. And it's also not based upon whether you are male or female. If you base the inheritance on any of these things, you are adding to the gospel. (It's like the illustration I gave last week of Morgen receiving an unconditional inheritance from me when I die. It's solely based on my promise to her. All she must do is receive it. There's no conditions or requirements she has to meet.)

The inheritance is based solely upon if a person places faith in the seed of Abraham. Do they genuinely believe that Yeshua of Nazareth is the promised seed, the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh, the sacrifice and atonement for sin? If yes, the promise is to them because they are then attached to the One Seed, Christ. If no, the promise is not to them because they are trying to enter by some other way.

Different "Gospels"

When you try to make anything else a pre-requisite to salvation, you are standing in the camp of the Judaizers. When you look down on someone who believes in Christ as less than you because of their family, or their job, or maybe because they are just different than you are, you are falling into the trap of a different gospel.

Listen... no one chooses what family they are born into. None of my children made a choice to be a Janzen. None of your family members got to pick or had anything to do with who they are, so it is nonsense to look down on someone because they were born into a heathen family who didn't serve Yahweh.

When a person is given grace, and the gift of faith, they are made a new creation. And that is not by their choice either. You may say, "Well they exhibited the faith," and I agree, but the reason they exhibited that faith is because Yahweh put that faith in them. The reason they believed is because grace was shown to them by the sovereign Creator.

No one is saved because of who they are in the natural, and no one is saved because of a condition they meet. No one is saved because they don't worship idols, or don't murder, or don't steal. Righteous living is a *result* of salvation not a *cause* of salvation.

A person is saved by grace through faith in Messiah. A person, Israelite or non-Israelite, is saved because of the promise of Yahweh that says to Abraham, "In your seed, all the peoples, nations, families of the earth will be blessed."

Give all Praise to Yahweh

If you didn't have any say in how you were born naturally, and if you didn't have any say in how you were born spiritually, why would spend time saying anything about yourself? Why not spend that time praising Yahweh for His gifts? Why not spend all your time thanking Yahweh for His promise? Why not say, "I'm just a good-for-nothing servant who is doing what is required." If you are something spiritually, you are what you are by the grace of Yahweh. You are what you are because of the uni-lateral, unconditional gospel promise.

Galatians, pt. 30 (Read 3:15-18; Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-20)

Intro and Review

Before we move into the next section in Galatians (3:19-21), I wanted to concentrate some more on the unconditional, uni-lateral promises Yahweh made to Abraham and his seed (singular), the Messiah.

Remember: an unconditional promise means there are no conditions attached to it. There is no "If you do this, I will do this." Unconditional means that one party is making a covenant with the second party, by a promise. It's not a covenant based on law, but rather a covenant based on promise.

Yahweh made such a covenant with Abraham and his seed in the book of Genesis. A later bi-lateral, conditional covenant (based on law) cannot annul a previous uni-lateral, unconditional covenant made solely by Yahweh.

Yahweh keeps His promises.

Salvation by Grace

Let me at this point say that if inheritance, blessing, salvation, forgiveness of sin - or any way you want to say it - was based upon our obedience to Yahweh, no one would ever be saved. You have broken His law. I have broken His law.

You're alive today in the natural and spiritual because He has not dealt with you as your sins deserve. You are what you are, because of Yahweh's promise to Abraham and his seed, the Messiah. You are what you are by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

I know we are called to live obedient lives. I know we are called to walk as Yeshua walked, and strive for that we should. But the fact is, no one in here has always done that. We try, we fail, we fall down, we get up - rinse and repeat.

It's frivolous to then base someone's salvation on something they do. It's frivolous to tell someone, "You're not saved until you do x, y, and z." No, a person is saved from their sins the moment that *by grace* they believe in the promise of Yahweh made to Abraham. The gospel promise. Great things happen as a result of that belief. Good works *follow* as a result of that belief. But the reason you or anyone else is saved is because Yahweh keeps His promises.

Genesis 12 and 14

So this is why I also read out of Genesis in our opening reading. In Genesis 12 Yahweh promises to Abraham: "I'm giving you some land. I'm making you into a great nation. I'm blessing you. I'm making your name great. You'll be a blessing to everyone. And all the peoples (families, nations) of the earth will be blessed through you."

There are no ifs. There are no buts. It is just the promise of Yahweh. Same in Genesis 14. "Look at all of this land Abraham. I'm giving it to you. I promise you this."

Unconditional, uni-lateral. In Romans 4:13 we see that this promise is interpreted and understood by the Apostle Paul as meaning that Abraham and his children (by faith) would inherit the entire world. That's the kingdom. It's the same thing as when Yeshua said in Matthew 5, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit... the earth." If you're in Abraham, by faith, you get the inheritance. As Galatians 3:7 says, "So then understand that those who have faith are Abraham's children."

Genesis 15a

Then we come to Genesis 15, where in the first section we have the doctrine of justification by faith. Abraham is worried that all of his belongings will have to be left to his servant, but Yahweh promises him a son, and promises him offspring as numerous as

the stars of the sky. Abraham believed Yahweh's promise. He trusted Yahweh's word, and Yahweh credited that trust to Abraham as righteousness. Abraham was justified by faith.

Genesis 15b

The latter part of Genesis 15 is what I want to focus on in this lesson. In Genesis 15:7 Yahweh again tells Abraham, "I'm giving you some land," and Abraham questions Yahweh by saying, "Yahweh, how can I know that I will possess it?"

How can I know Yahweh? Have you ever asked that question? How can I know I am saved? How can I know I'm in Yahweh's family? How can I know I'm going to make it into the kingdom of heaven? How can I know?

You can know brothers and sisters in Messiah. You can be assured, but your assurance is not based upon something in you. Your assurance isn't based on what you do. Your assurance is based upon the promise of Yahweh.

Some say, "That sounds too easy. That sounds too simple." Make it more complicated brother Matthew. Tell me to jump through a set of hoops. Tell me to do a set of prayers. Tell me to keep a set of laws. Make them do-able. Make it based on me. I want to feel like I've accomplished something.

No, no, no. **You need to trust in the promise of Yahweh.** You need to get your eyes off of yourself, and place them on the Most High and the promised seed of Abraham, the Messiah. You need to come to a point where you realize you're not good enough to be saved in yourself, but you're not bad enough for Yahweh to save you by His grace.

Listen, in Genesis 15, Yahweh told Abraham to bring him some animals, and split them down the middle, and Abraham did this and split the pieces opposite one another. So we've got these animals cut in two, and this is interesting because the Hebrew word for covenant (berit) means "to cut." We say "make a covenant," but originally it was understood as "to cut a covenant."

So Abraham brings the animals to the scene, cuts them, lays them opposite one another, and then a deep sleep falls on Abraham as the sun is setting. He's asleep when Yahweh makes this covenant with him. He's not even awake. It's a one-sided promise brothers and sister. It's based solely upon the oath of Yahweh.

As the sun sets, and darkness comes on the land, a smoking fire pot and flaming torch appears and passes between the divided animals. This fire pot and torch are a visible representation of the invisible Yahweh. It's as though Yahweh himself is walking down the aisle to make his promise while Abraham is asleep. "Shhhhhh Abraham. You lay there and rest. You lay there and do nothing. I'll take care of everything. Don't worry."

Hebrews Adds Clarity

This is what I mean when I say uni-lateral, and unconditional. And this is what the author of Hebrews means when he pens **Hebrews 6:13-20**. Let's turn there.

Yahweh swore by himself. There is no one greater than Yahweh. He didn't swear in Genesis 12, and 14, and 15 based on Abraham's greatness, or based on the greatness of anyone around at that time. He swore that He would do what He would do by His own great name, and He is THE COVENANT-KEEPING MIGHTY ONE.

Those of us who have fled to Yahweh for a refuge from the storms of sin and the storms of this life can have a strong encouragement and hope. It's a sure and firm anchor. That anchor is hooked to the Rock of Ages, and it's not coming loose. No devil in heaven or on earth can pull that anchor out of the Rock.

Yahweh the Rock promised a singular Seed of Abraham, and that Seed came and performed exactly as was outlined in holy scripture through prophecy. Yeshua was able to do what he did because he was the stone that broke off of the mountain in Daniel 2. Yahweh kept His promise.

Salvation is of Yahweh

My friends and family, I do not stand here before you today because I'm such a good man. I'm a sinner in need of being saved. I need Yahweh to promise me salvation, because I can't get it on my own. I'm not strong enough. I'm not good enough. I'm not wise enough. I'm not stable enough. So I look to the One who is strong, who is good, who is wise, and who is a firm foundation. I drift and fall, and get up and stumble again. But THE ANCHOR holds.

The law that came later cannot annul the promise. The conditional, Mosaic Covenant cannot revoke a covenant that had been previously made and ratified by Yahweh's promise.

Be thankful for that promise today. It's why you are saved.

Galatians, pt. 31 (Read 3:15-22) "Why the Law?"

Last month we covered verses 15-18; the promises that were made to Abraham and to his seed. We talked about the singular seed being the Messiah. The promises Yahweh made to Abraham and his seed back in the book of Genesis were ultimately made to Abraham and to Yeshua the Messiah - the seed (singular) or offspring of Abraham.

Those promises were unilateral and unconditional, found in Genesis 12, 14, and 15 primarily. Abraham was even in a deep sleep when Yahweh ratified the covenant with him in Genesis 15, as he passed through the pieces of the cut animals.

Those who are "in Messiah" are the seed (collectively) of Abraham, since the promises were ultimately made to the Messiah. As Galatians 3:7 says: "So understand that those who have faith are Abraham's children." If you have faith in Messiah, you are counted as a child of Abraham. If you do not have faith in Messiah, you are excluded. We see this later in the chapter as well in verse 29: "And if you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed (collectively), heirs according to the promise."

It all goes back to those unilateral, unconditional promises Yahweh made to Abraham and Yeshua the Messiah in Genesis.

A law that comes after those covenant promises - a conditional bi-lateral Mosaic Covenant - cannot nullify a covenant that was previously ratified by Yahweh so as to cancel the promise. The inheritance (of the promise) is not based on the law. It is based on the promise of Yahweh.

And let me say that you need to be thankful that the inheritance is based on the promise. Because if it was based on the law, you wouldn't get any inheritance. You've transgressed Yahweh's law far too many times for the inheritance to be based on you. Even father Abraham would get nothing, if the inheritance was based upon him. He had problems just like the rest of us. So be thankful for the promises of Yahweh made to Abraham and the Messiah. Be thankful that by grace through faith you can be a recipient of the inheritance, even though you do not deserve it. The Messiah deserves it. Interlock your arm with his.

This month we'll be centering in on verses 19-22. Those are the verses you'll want to read during the week, and meditate on in order to get more out of these lessons.

And so we will jump right into this with verse 19's question: Why the law then? Why do we need the law if the inheritance is not based on the law? What's the purpose of the law if we have the unilateral, unconditional promise of Yahweh?

Some people have opted for throwing out the law completely. I heard a preacher just this past couple of weeks say that Gentiles are not accountable to the 10 commandments, and that we need to learn how to unhitch our faith from the Old Testament.

But Paul doesn't say those things here. He instead asks "Why the law?" which implies that the law is still a reality for Paul. The law has not vanished. It was given on Mount Sinai, and Paul must have still recognized its validity because he didn't say, "So now we throw it away," but instead said, "What's its purpose?"

The immediate answer he gives in verse 19 to his own question is this: "It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come."

Notice here the Seed (singular) is still a reference to Yeshua the Messiah. He wasn't there at the giving of the law, he came later. He was the seed of Abraham that the promise was made to, but there was time that had to lapse and things that had to be done until the Seed would come.

I want to press this next point a bit even though I already dealt with it in a previous sermon. When Paul says "the law was added," which echoes his earlier statement "the law which came 430 years later," he is not talking about just a law or two. He is not talking about just the feast days, or the tassels that were added after the time of Genesis. He isn't even just talking about the Levitical Priesthood and sacrificial system. Paul is

speaking of the entire law of Yahweh that was added as a written down law-code when the Israelites were at Mount Sinai.

Some pro-law advocates attempt to interpret Galatians like this in order to make sense of it. They say that Paul was only talking about laws that didn't exist in Genesis, but only came later. They say any law added has been abolished, but any law that existed prior to Mount Sinai remains.

The problem is that they are not consistent with their own theology at this point, because things like circumcision and animal sacrifices were not added at Mount Sinai. Those existed in Genesis. Yet the adherents to this understanding do not offer up animal sacrifices, nor do they believe that circumcision is an absolute requirement.

I don't think Paul meant for us to take this understanding from his writing here. I believe Paul is speaking of the entire law of Moses or the Mosaic Covenant. Paul is not denying that commandments of Yahweh existed prior to Mount Sinai, but he is saying that the law-code as one cohesive book (so to speak) or written down covenant was added 430 years after the promise was made to Abraham and his seed.

Look with me to Nehemiah 9, which is a recounting of Yahweh's choosing of Abraham and his grace time and time again on the children of Israel. We won't read the entire chapter, although that would be good for you to do sometime this week. I just want to read verses 11-14 to get a little context and show you that the giving of the law is something that was understood to have taken place at Mount Sinai AFTER the exodus and not before. Look at it:

11 You divided the sea before them, and they crossed through it on dry ground. You hurled their pursuers into the depths like a stone into churning waters.

12 You led them with a pillar of cloud by day, and with a pillar of fire by night, to illuminate the way they should go.

13 You came down on Mount Sinai, and spoke to them from heaven. You gave them impartial ordinances, reliable instructions, and good decrees and commandments.

14 You revealed Your holy Sabbath to them, and gave them commandments, statutes, and a law.

Verses 13-14 is speaking of the same thing Paul speaks of in Galatians 3:17 and 19. This is the law that was given or added 430 years after the promises made to Abraham and his seed. This is what Exodus 31:18 is speaking of in saying: "When He finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets inscribed by the finger of the Almighty." This does not mean that these commandments didn't exist prior to the end of Moses' 40 day fast. It's a reference to the formal giving, the codification, the Mosaic or Sinaitic Covenant.

This is the law that was added because of transgressions - the entire law. The entire law-code-book after the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. The bi-lateral covenant

that said, "If you carefully keep My covenant, you'll be my special treasure Israel." That's what was added.

But why? It doesn't nullify the previous unilateral covenant Yahweh made with Abraham and the Messiah that wasn't conditional. It can't revoke what had already been spoken by the oath of the Almighty. So why? Why the law?

It was added because of transgressions. It was added for the sake of making transgressions clear is how I take that. 19th century Presbyterian pastor Albert Barnes puts it as best as I've read from anyone.

The meaning is, that the Law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to disclose the true nature of sin; to deter people from committing it; to declare its penalty; to convince people of it, and thus to be "ancillary" to, and preparatory to the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the Law of God as given to apostate man, and this use of the Law still exists.

Until a law code is definitely written down transgression is not entirely un-mistakeable, and thus a person cannot be definitively held accountable for wrong doing.

In a classroom, a teacher may have a rule that no one gets up to sharpen their pencil during a test, but if she doesn't vocalize that rule or even better, write it down on the chalkboard the rule is not well established.

A few sermons ago I used brother Frankie's business in an illustration. Brother Frankie could have a rule for his employees to follow while their at the home base office. But, if the rule is just in Frankie's mind and/or floating around by word of mouth, it's not as definitive. The moment he writes it down on paper, and posts it for all the employees to see, and signs his name at the bottom, the rule becomes definitive and it makes transgression apparent.

This is the number 1 reason for the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. "Because of transgressions" means "in order to make transgression apparent." So that sin could be seen for what it really was, and the remedy for sin through blood atonement could be realized clearly.

I believe there exist 3 uses of the law, but the number 1 use is as a mirror: to reveal sin so that there can be no doubt that we are transgressors of the law of Yahweh.

A mirror is a tool you use to look into and see what you need to do to your face. We wake up in the morning and we see messy hair, crusty eyes, a beard out of place for us men, or teeth that need to be brushed. The mirror doesn't do any of those things for us. That mirror is not going to brush your hair or clean out your eyes, but it is marvelous in doing what it is designed to do: show you your flaws.

At the end of the work day I come in the house, and when I look into the mirror, I see dirt that I may not have even known was there. The other day at work my son told me, "Dad you've got something on your eye. I looked into the mirror on the side of my truck and saw the dirt. I saw the problem. The mirror didn't remove the dirt, but it showed me where the dirt was, and revealed to me where I needed to clean.

Why the law? There's 3 main reasons for the law, but today I just want you to understand that it was given to show you your sin in a way that is plain and un-mistakeable. You would not know sin if not for the law. You would not know you were a transgressor unless you read the law-code. There would be no definitive way to determine right and wrong if there was not written down law. And there would be no way for you to know you needed to get clean if there was no law to show you that you were dirty.

There's nothing wrong with the law. The law is perfect... in doing what it is designed to do. It's no different that the best Phillips head screw driver on the planet. It's perfect to use to back out a Phillips head screw. But you don't use a Phillips head screw to hammer in a 16 penny nail. You don't use it to eat cereal with. You don't use it to brush your hair with. It wasn't designed to be used in those ways.

The law was never meant as a tool for justification; as a tool in order to make you innocent in the eyes of the Creator. The law itself reveals our need for atonement. It does such through the sacrificial system. The sacrifices and Levite Priesthood teaches us that we are not holy in and of ourselves, but that we need cleansing, and forgiveness, and blood covering. All of this is taught in the law, and the law is good if a man use it lawfully. But you can't use it to justify yourself, because that is not what it was designed to do.

Why the law? That question should let us know that the law still exists, and is needed. Paul didn't say it was no longer needed, he just gave us the primary answer for its existence. The law was added in order to make us aware of our transgressions, and show us the need we have, the deep need we have, to be cleansed from our sins.

Galatians pt. 32 (Read 3:15-22)

Intro and Review

Why the Law? We began with that question last week by looking at the answer Paul gives us: it was added because of transgressions. Or... *for the sake of* transgressions, or *on account of* transgressions.

I explained to you why I believe Paul was referring to the entire Mosaic Covenant; the writing down of the law code. That's been the law Paul has talked about all through Galatians 2 and 3, so I don't believe he switches gears in mid-stride.

He is pointing out the difference between the Covenant made by promise to Abraham, and the Covenant made by law through Moses.

The later, conditional Mosaic Covenant (based on law) cannot annul the previous unconditional Abrahamic Covenant (based on the promise of Yahweh).

I also explained to you that I believe “added because of transgressions” carries the meaning of “added for the purpose of making transgressions clear.”

Transgressions are most clear when there is a written down, definitive law in place. That’s what the Mosaic Covenant did. It made transgressions unmistakable, and it also made the remedy for transgressions clear; blood atonement by means of an innocent victim. In this case an unblemished animal sacrifice.

This is the primary use of the law. To bring sin to light, and to bring the way sin is dealt with properly, to light.

Three Uses of the Law

But this is not the only use of the law. The law’s primary use is as a mirror, to reveal our transgressions, but that doesn’t mean that is the only use of the law. I believe the law has 2 other important uses.

The Law as a Curb

A second use of the law is found in its civil or governmental use. We might illustrate this as a curb. A curb keeps you inside a boundary. What I mean is: **the law is used to curb evil in the hard hearts of men.**

The law by itself is not designed to change a person’s hard heart, but on a civil level, it can curb the evil that exists in the human heart.

I’m speaking of the judgments in the law. The law has been given by Yahweh to be used on a civil level in order to curb crime from taking place. Although our state does not abide by all of the 10 commandments on a civil plane, it does abide by some. Murder is a crime. Theft is a crime. Rape is a crime. People who commit such crimes, if caught, are not allowed to carry on life amidst society. They are imprisoned.

I don’t believe prison is the solution. (*The law of Yahweh teaches restitution, not degrees of imprisonment.*) I’m just trying to explain another lawful use of the law of Yahweh. It wasn’t given by Yahweh to only show us our sin, and how sin may be forgiven. It was also given by Yahweh to curb evil. The law’s judgments curb how much evil takes place in a society, even when everyone in a society does not love the law. The law exists to keep some level of peace and harmony in a community.

The Law as a Guide

The third use of the law has to do with it being a guide. Once a person has been given a new heart by Yahweh. Once a person has been born of Yahweh. Once a person has been transformed by Yahweh into a Yah-lover rather than a Yah-hater, the law then functions as not only a mirror to show that person their sin, but also a guide to show that person how he or she ought to live.

In this case we read the law and we see “Thou shalt not steal.” We May have been a thief before our transformation, and thus the law showed us our sin. But now that we are transformed we read that law as not only a condemnation of theft, but a guide that we ought not steal. We should be givers and lenders and helpers, not stealers. (*The same applies for all 10 of the commandments.*)

An unregenerate man doesn't read the law that way. It's only a mirror to him, because he is still operating with the natural heart that he was born with. The new man or woman does read the law as a guide, because they are operating with the new heart.

Why the Law?

So you see that the law has 3 foundational uses. “Why the law?” Paul asks in verse 19. **Here's why: it's a mirror, a curb, and a guide.** Just because it's not for justification. Just because it's not there to wash us clean, doesn't mean it has no purpose. Just because you can't use a mirror to wash your face, doesn't mean the mirror has no purpose.

The Issue In Galatia

The Judaizers or influencers were getting the cart before the horse. They were demanding that in order for the Gentiles (the heathen non-Covenant peoples) to enter the Covenant, they needed to submit to certain works of the law (which to the first century Judahite meant the heathen was changing their identity; comp. Galatians 3:28).

Paul was teaching: Entrance into the Covenant is based on faith in the promise of Yahweh, just like it was with father Abraham, who lived prior to the Mosaic Covenant. Abraham got in by faith, and so can the Nations. A persons identity is changed from the flesh to the spirit when they place faith in the promise of Yahweh.

Works are the Result

Faith leads to faithfulness, yes... but entrance and the forgiveness of sins is not based on the the works of the law; a mindset of earning something. Forgiveness of sins is based upon trust in the promise of Yahweh. The promise of Yahweh is Yeshua His Son. He's promised us that if we believe upon His Salvation, we will be forgiven, unconditionally.

You say, “Brother Matthew, but don't you believe those who have faith also have works?” Of course. What would make anyone think I didn't believe that Bible verse too?

The key is, and never forget this: **Works are a result of faith.** Works are never the cause of faith, or a condition for salvation. Works are what happens as a result of the new heart and the gift of faith given to a person. A saved person; a person who has entered the Covenant based on faith in Yahweh's promise... they now have a new heart with new desires. They will grow into a beautiful tree with time. Don't look for quick growth. That's the stony soil. Plants can grow up quick and look good with stony soil, but because they have no root - because the faith is not from Yahweh - the plant withers away.

Look for slow and steady growth. That's the growth that you see in Yahweh's children. Not a sprint, but a marathon.

What about "Until"?

So that takes care of the question of "Why the law?" but now we come to the sentence "until the Seed to whom the promise was made would come."

We know the Seed that the promise was made to is Yeshua the Messiah. He wasn't back there at the giving of the law, according to this verse, but he was the Seed or offspring that would come. So some say, "Now that he has come, we don't need the law anymore. The law was only added UNTIL the Seed would come."

Think about that for a second. If "until" means "up to the Messiah, but not after the Messiah" then is it now okay to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, have other gods, and dishonor our father and our mother?

Someone may say, "Don't be ridiculous." I'm not the one being ridiculous. That argument is what is ridiculous. It's crazy to believe that "until" here means that there is a stopping point of the law code after Messiah, because if the law stops then those things I just mentioned can no longer be sins.

The word "until" in the Bible can carry different meanings and uses depending upon the context. It can mean "up until a point and not including a point," like if I say, "Leave this in the oven until the timer goes off." In that case you know until means up to a point, but not after that point.

But if I say something like, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah **until** Shiloh come," (that's a prophecy in Genesis btw)... the word carries the meaning of up to a point and including that point. The use of the word "until" emphasizes the continuance of the scepter remaining in Judah, not that it's going to leave Judah one day.

Because we know it is ridiculous for the entirety of the law of Yahweh to be null and void, and because we now understand the 3 uses of the law (that still exist), the word "until" can't carry the meaning of an abolishment of the law after Messiah. It rather carries the meaning of all the way up to the Messiah, and then the goal is realized or made fully apparent.

The law was added because of transgressions all the way up till the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. The Seed is the culmination of the law. The law was like a big arrow pointing to Yeshua. **Yeshua is what it looks like to love Yahweh with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. He is what it looks like to love your neighbor as yourself. He is what it looks like to self sacrifice. He is what it looks like to have your sins forgiven.** Yeshua was the goal to which the law pointed.

But that doesn't mean the law is no longer a mirror for sinful humanity. The law still reveals our sin to us, curbs evil on a civil scale, and is a guide to show us how we ought to live.

Discontinuity

You say, "Brother Matthew... what about things like the Levite priesthood, the sacrificial system, the Temple, the city of Jerusalem." All those things were well and good. All those things served a purpose. Nothing is bad that Yahweh commands or does. But those things do not direct our way of life.

When a sky scraper is being built, there are necessary tools that go into its construction. There is scaffolding that is placed on the outer perimeter, in order to lay the block, in order to set the glass, in order the drill in the screws. Once the building is finished, that scaffolding comes down, and certain tools are no longer necessary because something greater than the scaffold and the tools has come.

So it is true that certain aspects *within* the entire scope of the law have come and gone. There is discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants. They're not entirely the same. Some things were in place for a time. They were all good. But Yeshua the Messiah, the promised Seed, is better.

We might even say that there is development between the Covenants, rather than discontinuity. The seeds of all things New are planted in the Old. Everything having to do with Yeshua, His priesthood, His sacrifice, His life, are glorious blossoms of seeds that were sown during the Old Covenant.

For the last 2,000 years we've had no Levite priesthood. For the last 2,000 years we've had no sacrificial system intertwined within that priesthood. And Christians, for the last 2,000 years, have worshiped in Spirit and Truth in many places other than Jerusalem, to Mount Gerizim.

But you know what? Adam, and Seth, and Shem, and Methusaleh, and Noah, and Enoch, and Abraham didn't have any of that either. They worshiped Yahweh too, without all of those things.

There's a reason for that. It's not happenstance. There were some things Yahweh gave at the time of the Mosaic Covenant that were fully in place, but only for a time.

I think that is what the Hebrews author meant in Hebrews 8:13 when he wrote to people living in the first century:

"By saying a new covenant, He has declared that the first is old. And what is old and aging is about to disappear."

It was on the brink of disappearance in the first century, and it disappeared at the coming of the Son of Man in judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Since that time, certain aspects

in the law moved out of the way, because what they were designed to do came to an end with the work of Yeshua.

Continuity

But the law as a way of life? The law as a guide for regenerate people, showing us how we should live? Did that disappear? Not at all.

When you read the law, and you see laws that you have the ability to obey, don't talk yourself out of obeying. Yahweh is not looking for a person who reasons their way out of those laws. He's looking for people who will obey those laws.

Why? Why would you want to dismiss a law that is in your grasp to be obedient to? That doesn't make sense. If you can obey it, obey it.

An unregenerate person looks for a way to get out of obeying. A regenerate person, even if they aren't obeying a certain law as of yet, says: "Yes. I know that's a good law. I'm just not there yet. Help me to obey Father. Enlarge the borders of my heart. Let me love Your law more."

It was asked after last week's sermon: "What about the ceremonial law?" I understand the question, because it's obvious that we *do not* nor *can we* obey everything written in the five Books of Moses. The problem is people start lumping laws they don't want to obey into the ceremonial category. The dietary laws become ceremonial, the tassels become ceremonial.

What we must do is be honest in our studies. If a law does not give our way of life, but was pointing to the greater work of Yeshua, then I get that completely. But if a law is in our grasp to obey, it must then be part of the way we ought to live.

Conclusion

So... here we are at the end of this lesson, and I've still not completed verse 19. Lol The law was added to make transgressions clear, curb evil, and show us how we ought to live, and it all pointed to Yeshua. It was until, or with a view to, or looking forward to Yeshua, the Seed to whom the promise was made.

After Yeshua, some things inside the law were replaced with something better. The scaffold was taken down because the sky scraper was finished. But the law as a way of life remains. Any commandments that we obey as a way of life continue on.

But never forget, and this may be the most important point in this lesson: the law was not given to justify you. It is not a tool to declare you innocent in Yahweh's court of law. That's not its purpose. That mirror doesn't remove the dirt from your face. That mirror can't make you clean.

Only Yahweh, by His means, can make a person clean. The way He accomplishes this is by the Seed that was promised to come, and that has now come. That is how both the

Judahites and the Nations receive first class Covenant status. Not by works of law, but by faith in the promised Seed.

No matter what beginners level you are on today. No matter how little you've advanced in understanding and obeying Yahweh's law, if you've placed faith in Yahweh's Salvation, you're a Covenant member.

And no matter how much you may have advanced in Yahweh's law. No matter how obedient you've become. Your Covenant status is not based on law, or an earning or merit mindset. It is based on the promise. The only reason you obey the way you do is because Yahweh has worked on your soul. He's went in there with his heavenly mechanic tools, and He's done a refurbish and restoration job on you. He's kept His promise. He made you alive.

Galatians pt. 33 (Read 3:15-22)

Intro and Review

The last two weeks we've been in verse 19. It's taken some time to develop, because most of the time, when Galatians 3 is read or taught, little thinking goes into the reasons for the law of Yahweh.

If a person thinks the law is not for us today, it's easy to pass it on by without much thought.

But that's not what we've done. We've looked at the three foundational uses of the law. Does anyone remember how we illustrated those? A mirror... curb... and guide. That's the three uses of the law.

The law was not given to justify you. The law was not given to give you life (as we will see today). But that doesn't mean the law is useless.

If I need to change one of these lightbulbs in the church, I don't need a hammer or a chisel. Those aren't the tools for the job. But this doesn't mean a hammer or chisel is worthless. They do other things.

The law lasted all the way up to the Seed to whom the promise was made would come. The word *until* denotes a continuance towards a goal. The entire law pointed to the Seed of Abraham, Yeshua the Messiah.

The word *until* doesn't mean that the three uses of the law cease once the Seed came, but that we find the culmination or goal of the law with the coming of Yeshua. He embodies everything the law teaches and requires. And He does what the law cannot do; his work justifies us.

Some aspects of the law ceased at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Those parts within the law have not been observed since that time, because Yahweh replaced them

with the finished building. None of those ceremonial things were bad; they were all good. But... Yeshua is better. His priesthood, His sacrifice, His temple, etc.

Any law that governs how we live. Any law that we read about in scripture and can obey... still stands firm. We call this the moral law of Yahweh, or the way of life for the people of Yahweh.

The Law Through Angels

So we come next to the end of verse 19 (and also verse 20), where Paul says "The law was ordered through angels by means of a mediator. Now a mediator is not for just one person, but Yahweh is one."

The law was ordered through *angels*. That's a concept we don't hear much about, but it is something I believe every Hebrew in the first century held to: that the angels were used as the vehicle to bring the law of Yahweh down to mankind.

Stephen, in Acts 7, in His rebuke to the rebellious Israelite leaders of his day says (in verse 51), "You received the law under the direction of angels and yet have not kept it."

Yahweh used His heavenly messengers to share His law with the nation of Israel. Stephen points this out, and adds, "Yet you haven't kept it." You should know it's holy. You should know it's good. It came from Yahweh through His holy angels, but you still haven't kept it.

I think Paul brings up the angels in Galatians 3 for the same reason. He's not bringing up the angels to downplay the law, but to up-play the law. He mentions angels to increase to validity of the law.

The author of Hebrews does this same thing in Hebrews 2:1-2: "We must therefore pay even more attention to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away. For if the message spoken through angels was legally binding, and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment."

He's talking about the law here, and he mentions it was spoken through angels. The author's point is that if the word spoken through angels was important (and it was), how much more important is the word spoken through the Son of Yahweh.

In our day, we don't normally associate the giving of the law with the heavenly messengers of Yahweh, but we should because it's biblical. Deuteronomy 33:2 says, "Yahweh came from Sinai and appeared to them from Seir; He shone on them from Mount Paran and came with ten thousand holy ones, with lightning from His right hand for them." The text goes on to speak of Moses and the giving of the law.

Those 10,000 holy ones... I believe that's a reference to Yahweh's messengers of His truth, and the Septuagint agrees with me, because where we just read the word "lightning" from His right hand, the LXX reads "angels." The angels and the holy ones are the same thing spoken about in two different ways. Yahweh used His angels in the giving of His law.

Moses the Mediator

Paul says in Galatians 3:19, "The law was ordered through angels by means of a mediator." I take that mediator to be *prophet Moses*. Moses is another big figure in the giving of the law, the mediator or go between, between Yahweh and the people.

Deuteronomy 33, the text we just read that spoke of the angels, also says in verse 5, "Moses gave us instruction," and that he became King in Jeshurun. (Jeshurun means Upright or Righteous).

In Exodus 24:12 Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, "Come up to me on the mountain, and stay there, so that I may give you the stone tablets with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction." Verse 18 of Exodus 24 tells us that Moses *alone* went up to the mountain to spend time with Yahweh, remaining there 40 days and 40 nights. That's special. Only Moses was there with Yahweh. He was the mediator between Yahweh and the people, in the giving of the law.

This is why we read in the Bible about "The Law of Moses." The person of Moses is interchangeable here with the person of Yahweh, not because Moses is Yahweh, but because Moses is Yahweh's mouthpiece.

We see the phrase "the law of Moses" as early as the book of Joshua. It's a phrase that used over a dozen times in the Old Testament, and around 7 times in the New Testament. Even Yeshua called the law, "the law of Moses" in John 7:23.

Why Mention This?

So in Galatians 3:19 Paul mentions the angels and Moses the mediator in association with the law. Why? I believe it's to further push the goodness of the law. Any Hebrew that thought about Yahweh's holy angels and the prophet Moses would immediately think of righteousness and truth. I believe Paul brings it up to show that the law is good. Just because it doesn't cancel or override the earlier Abrahamic Covenant of Promise, doesn't mean it has no purpose.

Why Verse 20?

Then Paul mentions in verse 20 that a mediator is not just for one person but Yahweh is one. We know it's a true statement. We know that a mediator comes in for the purpose of mediating peace or terms between two parties, and we also know that Yahweh is one, but why bring this up here?

Paul is continuing to contrast the unilateral Abrahamic Covenant with the bilateral Mosaic Covenant. This is why it's so important for us to read and study in context.

Remember last month I taught heavily on Galatians 3:15-18, and we've still been reading those verses this month. When Yahweh made those promises to Abraham and to his Seed (Yeshua), Yahweh made those promises all by Himself. No go between. No mediator. No conditions. No contract. All Abraham had to do was believe the promise.

The Mosaic Covenant is different. There were angels. There was Moses the mediator. There were conditions.

I think verse 20 is Paul's way of continuing to show the difference between the two covenants here. A mediator shows that the covenant is bilateral. A mediator is not for just one person... but Yahweh is one. He made those promises to Abraham and his seed all by Himself.

Is the Law Bad?

Verse 21: "Is the law therefore contrary to Yahweh's promises?" A lot of Christians would answer "Yes!" But Paul says, "Absolutely not!" That's a big difference in answers.

Paul wants the Galatians and the Judaizers to see that the law had its purpose. It wasn't contrary or contradicting towards Yahweh's promises. The law had its reasons, and we've been over them. But... the law wasn't given to annul the promises. The law wasn't given as a giver of life.

The rest of verse 21 says, "For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly be by the law."

The law is not a life giver. One may object, "But Yahweh says in Deuteronomy (when He lays out the law), choose life! So the law is life Brother Matthew."

My response to that is that the law is *the way of life*, the only way of life. Anytime we go against the moral law in the way we live it brings death, not life.

But Deuteronomy isn't talking about giving life or the impartation of life. Remember, always read things in context. Choosing the best way to live is not the same as being gifted with life, and I'm talking about spiritual life. That's what Paul is talking about in Galatians 3:21.

If a law had been given that was able to give, to impart, to gift life, then righteousness (absolute righteousness, perfection, holiness, innocence) would be by that law.

But the law cannot do that for you. The hammer is not needed to change the light bulb. The law is not designed to give you life.

Do you know how you are gifted life? Yahweh's grace. Grace, grace, Yah's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within. Grace, grace, Yah's grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin.

Your spiritual life comes as a result of grace, not law. And just as I never want my children to forget the importance of the law, I never want my children to forget the importance of grace.

Grace is why I'm alive today. Grace is why I have a desire to please Yahweh today. Grace is why I can sing for joy. Grace is why Yahweh hasn't killed me a long time ago. And everyone in here needs grace to save them. The law will never save you. The law will never give you life, only grace can do that.

In order for you to even be obedient to the law, you have to be given spiritual life first. You've heard of which came first, the chicken or the egg? Well this is which came first, grace or works? Grace! Brothers and sisters grace came first! I am what I am by the grace of Yahweh, and you are what you are by the grace of Yahweh.

The Prison of Sin

As verse 22 says, "Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the promise by faith in Yeshua the Messiah (the Seed) might be given to those who believe."

No one in here, and no one outside of here, is exempt from sin's imprisonment. I don't care how you grew up. I don't care if your family seemed squeaky clean to everyone else, they were still sinners when placed next to the holy and righteous law of Yahweh. Every single one of us has dirty laundry. Every single one of us has skeletons in our closet, and our families closet.

You were imprisoned by sin. You were held under the dominion of sin. You were a slave to sin. But whom the Son sets free is free indeed, and now that we have been freed, BY GRACE, from sin, we are slaves to righteousness. We still have a Master as believers, but it's no longer sin.

Since we all have been imprisoned under the power of sin, there are no big I's or little you's. No one can boast that they are anything in themselves. No one can say, look at my job, or look at my last name, or look at my bloodline, or look at my social status, or look at the color of my skin, or look at the clothes I wear and the way I walk. No. We are all in the same prison boat of sin. We all have that in common.

The promise is by faith in Messiah, to those who believe. You've got to believe in the Seed to whom the promise was made. The promise is not by works, it's by grace, through faith, in Messiah.

Family... as I close today... don't forget where Yahweh brought you from. Don't forget of everything Yahweh has forgiven you of. Don't forget that you deserve death, not life. Don't forget that it was not you that picked your feet up out of the miry clay, and set them upon the solid rock. Don't forget brothers and sisters.

If you think this is too much grace, then you've yet to realize that you can't have too much grace. You need all the grace you can get.

Trust in Yahweh's promise today, and if you have, then I say, keep trusting. Keep placing your faith in Yahweh, not in yourself. Self will let you down, but what Yahweh has promised, He is faithful to perform.

Galatians, pt. 34 (Read 3:19-27) "The Law Does Imprison"

Intro

We ended last month with verse 23, and this month I want to focus on at least verses 24-27. We might get into verses 28-29, but I think that I'm probably going to save those verses for next month.

We are preparing for the feast of Pentecost at the end of this month. As we see it this year, Pentecost falls out in between the last Sabbath of this month and the 5th new moon, so we'll have a three day revival to close out this moon. The only difference between this revival and others is that we didn't schedule this one; Yahweh did. We can't schedule revivals. Yahweh does the scheduling. We are just commanded to show up and worship in spirit and truth.

I thought about teaching some sermons specifically on the feast of Pentecost, but I really didn't want to navigate away from Galatians. We are about to get into a very thick portion of the book. There's some deep waters here at the end of chapter 3. So I'm not going to leave Galatians. We are going to keep swimmin' through the deep.

One thing I might say though is that in a way, these sermons on verses 24-27 are Pentecost sermons, because they will be centered on the law of Yahweh. Pentecost is traditionally considered to be a memorial of the giving of the law. We talked about why the law was given in verses 19-23, and we even talked about the codified law (the law written down on stone tables, and then given by Yahweh to prophet Moses).

So in a way, these next verses about the law being a guardian (or as many know it in the more traditional KJV - "the law was our schoolmaster")... actually will be somewhat Pentecost verses and Pentecost sermons as they relate to the law.

Law = Scripture (Bro. Dan)

Before we get into the verses, I want to point something out that I did not catch in my last sermon. Brother Dan pointed this out to me after I was done teaching. I am always thankful for more insight from my brothers and sisters in the congregation. I listen when you share something with me. *That doesn't mean I always agree*, but I do listen and meditate on anything anyone shares with me. If we lose our ability to listen and learn we've lost everything. If we think we cannot grow anymore or develop further, we are in a bad place.

I shared with you that I believe verse 17's statement, "the law, which came 430 years later" is a reference to the *codified* or *written* law. I don't believe it's a reference to one or two added laws, and I don't believe it's a reference to anything that didn't exist in Abraham's time. Some people teach that, I do not. Some people teach that anything added in Moses' time is abolished, and anything that existed during Abraham's time is still in force. But they don't even believe their own argument, because those who teach this *don't* believe in animal sacrifices (which *did* exist in Abraham's time; [among other laws]). They also *do* believe in things (like the law of the bill of divorcement) which *did not* exist in Abraham's time. So it's a bad argument in my estimation.

The law that came 430 years later (vs. 17), also called the added law (vs. 19), is the **written down, codified law** of Moses. The law that Yahweh gave Moses at the end of his first 40 day fast.

If you'll notice, and maybe you want to circle all these, the word **law** is used in verse 17, 18, 19, and 3x in verse 21. That's 6 uses of the word law. But notice in verse 22 Paul switches and says, "But the SCRIPTURE has imprisoned everything under sin's power." That's the part I did not catch. The use of the word **scripture** gives weight to my understanding that the added law is a reference to the **written law**, because SCRIPTURE means that which has been written. Holy writ.

The Scripture Paul is referring to in verse 21 is... **the law**. It's the law - *the written down law* - that imprisons everything under sin's power. The law - *that we read* - is a fine mirror to show us that we are guilty of transgression. I thought that was an excellent point from brother Dan, and I am glad he shared it with me.

Before Faith?

Now we move on into verse 23: "Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned unto the coming faith was revealed." Before this faith came. Did faith not exist prior to the coming of Yeshua?

There's no way Paul could mean that, because he spent the first part of chapter 3 teaching that Abraham was justified by faith, and that he is the pattern for all those who are justified. Even Yeshua himself says in John 8, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad." Abraham rejoiced to see the day of the Messiah. He didn't see Messiah, but he saw the Messiah's day, and he was glad. **Abraham had faith in the coming Messiah**. He knew of the Messiah to the extent that Yahweh revealed the Messiah at that point in history.

So what does Paul mean when he writes, "Before this faith came, we were confined under the law"? I think Paul is writing about the actual-physical-first coming of the Messiah. Yeshua has always been in Yahweh's plan, or "in the bosom of the Father" (as John 1:18 literally says). Revelation 13:8 tells us that Yeshua was slain before the foundation of the earth. But it was not an accomplished historical occurrence until it literally happened at Calvary. It was predestined. It was promised. It was foreordained.

But it didn't happen until the fullness of time when the Almighty sent forth His Son (as Galatians 4 says).

Before this faith came... before Yeshua the Messiah was physically born, grew up, ministered, obeyed the law, died for sin, resurrected the third day, ascended to heaven to live with the Father. Before all of that came about, Paul says *we* (meaning specifically he and his fellow Israelites) were kept in confinement under the law. They were imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed.

I like that: until the coming faith was revealed. That further shows that it's Yeshua's physical first coming that is being referenced to. It was always coming. It was always predestined. But it wasn't **revealed** until it took place.

Is the Law a Prison?

So how do we then take Paul's point about being confined under the law and imprisoned? The KJV reads "kept under the law, shut up." The ASV and RV1885 read "kept in ward." The Scriptures translation says, "being guarded under Torah."

The more I've meditated on this verse and these translations, I don't really have a problem with any of them. None of them cast a negative light on the law when understood in context.

The HCSB's use of imprisoned is fine so long as we understand that **it is our sins against the law that cause us the imprisonment**. This goes back to the law being a mirror. We break the law, the law shows us our sin, and holds us accountable.

So long as we understand it this way, it is an imprisonment for our own good, not to harm us. It's not that the law itself is a prison, and keeping it is like being in a prison. No, no, no... that's not Paul's point at all. The point is that before Yeshua's physical coming, all Israelites were confined under the law and imprisoned. They were all accountable for their *transgressions* against the law. That's how Paul and his fellow kinsmen were confined.

Paul is recognizing here what he just wrote in verse 22. Scripture has imprisoned everything under sin. Sin is the transgression of the law. Paul and all his fellow kinsmen had committed sin, so they were under the imprisonment of sin until the coming faith was revealed.

No Israelite would have ever received ultimate, final forgiveness for their sins if Yeshua had not come. He was the faith that was to come, and that has now come. Paul is simply stating that apart from Yahweh sending us His own Son, none of us would have any hope of salvation, because we have all transgressed His law.

The law kept us in ward. We were all shut up by the law. **Praise be to Yahweh that we recognize that!** Everyone doesn't recognize that. Some people fight the law. Some people spurn the law. Adultery is rampant in our nation today. This particular month we

are in is dedicated by some as: "Gay Pride Month." Little babies are murdered inside their mother's wombs. All of this is spurning the law of Yahweh. Some people commit adultery, practice homosexuality, and have an abortion without thinking that any of it is wrong. They don't like being kept in ward under the law. They don't like the law telling them they are imprisoned because of sin.

But that's what the law does. It reveals to us our dirt. It shows us our need for a washing. But you've got to admit that. You've got to admit that you are dirty. You've got to admit that you do not deserve to be saved. You've got to admit that you are deserving of punishment. Only then are you proclaiming the goodness of the law.

We Must Admit the Law Imprisoned Us

Catch that: admitting that you are a sinner; confessing your sins; praying to Yahweh to help you obey His law; never okaying or excusing sin; all of these things are ways that you proclaim the law's goodness, holiness, and perfection. Instead of making excuses for your sin, you acknowledge your sin.

I had a conversation this past week concerning how that we are all sinners. Some are repentant sinners and some are practicing, unrepentant sinners.

You can have two children who commit a wrong against their parents. Let's say both lie to their parents in order to cover up their wrong. But as they both walk away, one feels remorse and sorrow for lying, while the other walks away smirking that he got away with the lie.

The one who feels remorse goes back to his parent and confesses and repents. That doesn't mean he will never lie again, but it does mean that this child is one who has just acknowledged the righteousness of the law and his own wickedness. The son who walked away smirking is in open, active, habitual rebellion against not only his parent, but more importantly against Almighty Yahweh.

As I close today, I want you to be willing to admit that no matter what you've done or do, without Yahweh sending His own Son, nothing you could ever do would be good enough to save you. Before faith in Yeshua came... FOR YOU... you were kept in ward, shut up to the faith. Before Yeshua came... before Yahweh sent His own Son... there was no hope for your salvation.

I also want you to recognize that as a Christian, you are still a repentant sinner. This can be a humbling thing to admit, but we all have our hang-ups. What I deal with in my life, and what I struggle with in regards to sin, may not be the same as you. My sin may not look identical to yours, but brother Matthew still struggles. I keep coming back to the Father's feet each day begging for His forgiveness, because I know that I am not good enough to earn or deserve His salvation. Yahweh have mercy upon me, a sinner.

I'm so glad Yahweh sent His Son to us, aren't you? I'm so thankful that although we have broken the holy law of the Creator of the universe, He has made a way that we can be

forgiven in His sight. That makes me happy. It's hard for me to believe sometimes. Some days I even struggle to believe it at all. Me? You love me? But I've done You wrong. But I've sinned so many times against You Yahweh. And you love me? You forgive me?

Yes, my child. If you confess your sins, and repent of your sins, and believe in the One I have sent to forgive you, you are whiter than snow.

That's some amazing grace.

Galatians, pt. 35 (Read 3:19-27)

Intro

We have before us a text that is often used in an attempt to abolish the law of Yahweh. It's the famous "schoolmaster" text in Galatians 3:24-25.

What do we who observe the commandments make of this text? How do we understand and harmonize these verses with other scriptures that show the law's continuance? I hope to show you in this lesson, in an easy to understand way, what Paul meant when he penned these words.

I want to equip you to be able to give an answer in defense of the way we practice our faith. The next time someone tells you "but we are no longer under the schoolmaster," I want you to be able to say, "Let's talk a little bit about this schoolmaster," and then explain the text to them.

Believe the Verses

The first thing I want you to do is: *believe the verses*. There's no need to figure out a way to negate what the verses say. Verse 24 (HCSB), "The law then was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith." That's a beautiful truth. Don't shy away from it. Understand it, yes. Be able to rightly explain it, yes. But don't do away with it. Don't act like the verses aren't there. *(And don't immediately jump to other verses when someone brings these verses up to you.)*

Remember what we learned last week in verse 23. "**Before faith came**" carries the meaning of before Yeshua's first coming. It doesn't mean that saints before Yeshua's first coming didn't have faith, or weren't justified by faith. It means before the first coming of Messiah that Yahweh predestined to take place at the proper time.

Before that happened, Paul says, we (Israelites) were confined under the law. The law imprisoned all of us Israelites (Paul says), because of our sins against it.

Paul is centering in on the time period in history before Yahweh sent His Son. Prior to that occurrence, no one could have ever been saved, because of their sins not being completely and ultimately atoned for by the work of Messiah that was to come in their future.

This is Paul's line of thought here, and in this line of thought he writes that "the law was our guardian until Christ." He is speaking specifically of the time period prior to the first coming of Messiah.

The Paidagogos

Now, I want to teach you a Greek word tonight, and I don't want you to think it's too difficult to understand. I have faith in all of you, and I believe you can leave here with more wisdom and understanding.

The word translated as *guardian* or *schoolmaster* (KJV) is the word *paidagogos*, literally meaning "child-leader," one who leads or guides a child in the way they should go prior to becoming an adult.

Among the Greeks and Romans (which was the culture of the people in Galatia) there were trustworthy slaves or servants who had the job of supervising the life and practice of children who grew up in higher class families. The "child-leader" would make sure the boy or girl knew right from wrong in any given situation. This servant was even responsible for leading the child to the schoolhouse.

The *paidagogos* was not the teacher at the school, but was the servant who led the child to the school, and met the child after their schooling, to lead them back home.

The translation "guardian" in the HCSB is a beautiful rendering of the Greek *paidagogos*. The guardian cared for the child, and kept the child safe, all the way up to adulthood. Paul's says that the law was our child-leader (our guardian) until Christ so that we could be **justified by faith**. So there's a direct reference to how faith in Christ, and not the law, justifies.

The law showed the Israelites right from wrong, leading them and guiding them. The law sought to protect them from harm, and keep them from the immorality of heathen nations.

But the law was leading them to something greater: their justification in Messiah. The law was guarding them until one day when the Messiah would come.

No longer would their sins against the law hold them down, because Yeshua's work during his first coming set them free from all the sins they had committed.

Think about this. When a Roman child was led by the *paidagogos* for his or her entire childhood, and they then came into adulthood, did that mean everything the *guardian* had said, showed, done, or taught was now irrelevant? Of course not. It only meant that the child was now an adult, and capable of moving on to the next phase of his or her life.

Our Fence

I remember when Tisha and I first bought the house where we've lived now for about 12 years. 12 years ago Morgen was 8. Benjamin was 6. Elijah was 4, and Rosa'lyn was 2. David wasn't even born yet. We had 4 small children at the time, and they all needed

guidance and guardianship. They needed to be protected, and molded, and shown the way of life.

One way that I sought to protect them, was by putting a fence around our entire property. I wanted them to play outside and have a fun time, but they were little, and little children do not understand certain dangers that face them.

I didn't want a toy ball to roll outside the property into the road. My small children may have walked right out into the road (had that happened), not realizing the danger of an oncoming truck at 40 mph.

Some people call this "sheltering your children." And yes, that's exactly what we did. I wanted my children sheltered. I wanted them protected.

The truth is, every *good* parent shelters their child. Parents may not all do it in the same exact way, but every good parent looks after and keeps safe their child. The younger the child, the more protection and guardianship they need. That fence I put around my property; that gate I put in my driveway; those things kept my children inside. They enclosed my children in a safe area.

I wasn't doing it to harm them. I was guarding them. I was being a *paidagogos*.

Two of my children are now grown and married. The other two are 16 and 14, and we have a 5th child who is now 9. The fence is still up at my house. What the fence did and taught still remains true. But my adult children... they no longer need the fence, because they understand safety and caution in a way they didn't as children.

Fence Application

Prior to a person's faith in Christ, the law acts as that fence. The law acts as the guardian or child-leader. Even though a person is an adult in the natural, they can still be a child when it comes to spiritual matters.

The law corrects, disciplines, guides, and leads the way. We don't always follow its leading as children, but it nonetheless leads us, in the same way that Roman household servant leads the little Roman boy through adolescence.

When a person places faith in Christ, whether Judahite or Gentile, they become a spiritual adult. They begin to see why the guardian was there. Their eyes begin to open to the beauty of all that instruction that made little sense before. They no longer need the law in the same way they did when they were a child.

The law is still there, just like the guardian. The law is still there, just like the fence. It just doesn't function in the same way once you are a spiritual adult. That is, once you place faith in Christ.

My Dad-Guardian

I used to wonder why my dad restricted me from doing certain things, hanging around certain people, or going to certain places. “Why can’t I do what everyone over there is doing? Why can’t I go where he’s going or she’s going? My dad is holding me back.”

But see... I was a child. I thought I knew a lot, but boy was I ever wrong. My dad was protecting me. My dad sought what he believed was best for me. My dad was a *paidagogos* to me. He was a child-leader, I just didn’t understand the significance of his role at that time in my life.

Now that I’m grown up with 5 children, 2 of them married, and a grand-baby that’s about to be here any day... now I see why my dad did the things he did. I understand his reasons. I get why he was sheltering me. I understand now, because I’ve been a parent for a while.

The older I get, the more I appreciate my dad. The older I get, the more I want to tell my dad, “I’m sorry for not listening and obeying. I just didn’t get it then. What you did, I now see it was for my good.”

The function of my dad in my life is not the same now that I’m an adult... but my dad is still there, and what he taught me still lives on. How he guarded me continues to have relevance.

Dad Application

The law was our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. Once faith comes into your life, once you grow up spiritually, the law is still there, and you appreciate it more than you ever have before, but it doesn’t function in the same way as it used to. Just like my dad.

You realize that you couldn’t be saved without the law, because it taught you about the Messiah. It led you to the Messiah. Your sins were never washed away by the law, because that was never the law’s job. It’s job was to guard you, direct you, instruct you, and lead you to the Messiah. His sacrifice, His blood, that DOES wash away sin.

Are we saints under the law? Not as a child-leader. For those who have placed faith in Christ, they have come into spiritual adulthood, and are no longer in need of the *paidagogos*.

That law that once only condemned is now written on your mind and heart. You appreciate it now more than ever, because you can see now more than ever, that it was teaching you rightly, for your good. And you can see that only in Yeshua, the Son of Yahweh, can you find the forgiveness of sins that you need.

Closing Exhortation

The law then was our child-leader until Messiah, so that we could be justified by faith. But since that faith has come - (since Messiah has come and performed the works of

Yahweh, and since we're grown now and have a relationship with the Messiah that we used to not have), we are no longer under a child-leader.

We are able as spiritual adults to leave the fenced in yard and live for Messiah. We are able as grown ups in the spirit to hug the child-leader, and then walk away remembering what we were taught.

Brothers and sisters, Paul is not bashing the law, he is giving us careful instruction on its function and role. He is warning the Judaizers in Galatia not to make obedience to the law a prerequisite for salvation for believing Gentiles. He is reminding his fellow kinsman of their need for the Savior, and that without the coming of Messiah, they'd still all be children in need of the child-leader.

Galatians, pt. 36 (Read 3:23-27)

Intro and Review

In the last two lessons we've centered in on the function of the law as a guardian until the first coming of the Messiah.

"Before this faith came" (vs. 23), meaning before Yeshua came, everyone was shut up or imprisoned because of their sins against the law. Once Yeshua came and performed the works of Yahweh, the door to salvation was open for all those that *had been* believing in the coming Messiah, and for all those that *would* believe (like us).

Paul emphasized this role of the law by referring to it as a *paidagogos* or **child-leader**. There was a time in history when the law functioned this way, and there is a time in our individual lives that the law functions this way. Once faith comes (once we become spiritual adults), we don't throw the child-leader under the bus, but we are able to move on to spiritual adulthood. We come to Messiah, who is the teacher that the guardian was leading us to.

We vs. You

The next verse we come to in our study is verse 26: "For you are all sons (children, KJV) of (Yahweh) through faith in Messiah Yeshua."

The first thing I want you to notice here is the pronoun switch Paul makes from "we" to "you." In verses 23-25 Paul uses the pronoun "we" 3x and "our" 1x. I explained to you in the last two lessons that I believe Paul is referencing himself and his fellow Israelite kinsman. The Israelites were the people specifically given the law under the Mosaic Covenant, and that's been what Paul has been referring to since Galatians 3:17 (the giving of the codified law, about 430 years after the promises to Abraham).

So when Paul says in verse 23, "Before this faith came WE were confined under the law." And in verse 24, "The law was OUR guardian until Christ, so that WE could be justified by faith," he is speaking specifically of the giving of the codified law to the nation of Israel.

But notice in verse 26 that he switches pronouns to YOU. "For YOU are all sons of Yahweh through faith in Messiah Yeshua." The YOU here is a reference to the Galatian Gentiles. Those considered non-Israel. Those that the Judahites would have looked upon as non-covenant peoples.

Remember that Gentile or Greek is a word often used in both the Old and New Testaments to denote someone who is not in the Covenant. It's a word used for heathens, pagan nations, idol worshipers, etc. But here, Paul is calling the YOU (as separate from the WE) the children of Yahweh! "**You** are all children of Yahweh." Why are they the children of Yahweh? Because of their faith in Messiah! Their faith in Messiah has taken them from outside the Covenant to inside the Covenant.

Children by FAITH

Notice that little word "for" at the beginning of verse 26. "For you are all children of Yahweh through faith in Messiah Yeshua." That word "for" bounces off of verses 23-25.

See, Paul talked about the law being the child-leader of the people of Israel, leading them to the teacher (Yeshua the Messiah), and how once faith has come (once Yeshua comes and an Israelite places faith in Yeshua), that Israelite is no longer under the child-leader.

So when Paul switches pronouns and says: For YOU (Galatian Gentiles) are all children of Yahweh through faith in Messiah Yeshua, Paul is telling the Galatians that they've *also* arrived at the teacher, **through faith**. They are not required to observe certain parts of the Torah in order to get to the teacher; they are already there by faith!

What Paul states in verse 26 is directly related to what he has already stated in verse 7: "So understand that those who have faith are Abraham's sons." Sons of Abraham are also Children of Yahweh.

It's a spiritual attachment here. Being from the bloodline of Abraham doesn't make you part of **this** sonship. You can be from the bloodline of Abraham and still not be a son through faith. And you can be from a different bloodline, but still BE a son through faith. They whole key is spiritual, not physical.

The reason a person is considered to be a child of Abraham is because they walk in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham. Just as Abraham believed the promise Yahweh made to him, so also the Gentile believes the promise Yahweh makes to them. You are a son or daughter of Abraham, because you carry the same characteristic or attribute of Abraham: faith in Yahweh's promise.

Yahweh's promise is that He would send His only begotten Son, and that all those who believe on His Son will receive eternal life. When a person, whether a circumcised Judahite-Israelite or an uncircumcised Greek-Gentile believes in that promise, they become attached to Abraham, and most importantly attached to Yahweh.

In this context, you are considered a son or daughter of Yahweh by faith. Not by bloodline. Not by the will of the flesh. Not by the will of man, but because Yahweh birthed you supernaturally by His Spirit. It is a spiritual birth that you cannot see happen. You can only watch the effects of that birth take place in a person's life.

What you witness is a changed life. A life that loves Yahweh. A life that seeks Yahweh. A life that obeys Yahweh. A life that is humble, penitent, and contrite towards Yahweh. Those are the effects that come about due to Yahweh giving a person a spiritual life of faith. But the birth itself cannot be seen, because it is internal rather than external.

So how is a person a child of Abraham? By faith. How is a person a child of Yahweh? By faith. Paul is letting the Galatians know: "You are all children of Yahweh by faith. You've placed faith in Yahweh's promise just like Abraham. You don't have to be You don't have to convert to Judaism in order to become a child of Yahweh, because you're already a child of Yahweh, by faith!" That's Paul's point... then he continues.

Baptism in Connected to Faith

Verse 27: "For (because) as many of you (Galatian Gentiles) as have been baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah."

That "for" is linked with verse 26. You are all children by faith in Messiah, FOR... as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah. Do you see how baptism here is not opposed to faith, but is linked to faith?

Baptism is often viewed as a work that someone does after they have faith. Christians often debate: "Are we saved by faith or baptism?" But Paul doesn't view baptism that way. He uses the word baptism synonymously with faith. Paul is saying that that faith and baptism are like two sides on the same coin.

In fact: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all linked together, and none are considered works that you do, but gifts that are given to you. Faith is a gift. Repentance is granted. You confess because of those gifts, and you are baptized because of those gifts. Baptism is not something you do to earn Yahweh's favor. Baptism is something Yahweh does for you. He attaches His word to the water. Water is just water, unless Yahweh does something supernatural through it.

"Brother Matthew... do you believe baptism washes away your sins?" By itself? No. When it is accompanied with faith, repentance, and confession? Yes. Why? Why do I believe that baptism washes away a person's sins when accompanied with these gifts? Because of verses like Galatians 3:26-27. Paul says we are children of Yahweh by faith, because we've been baptized into Messiah.

The Urgency of Baptism in the NT

In the early church it would be unfathomable to think of a person who placed faith in Christ that wasn't also baptized into Christ. In Acts 2, after 3,000 souls repented of their sins and placed faith in Messiah, they were baptized *that same day*. Not a month later.

Not on "baptism Sunday" when all the kinfolk could schedule to come out to the baptism service. Nope. **That. Same. Day.**

In Acts 16 there was a jailer that had fear and faith come upon him when an earthquake shook the prison so hard that Paul and Silas and the rest of the prisoners were unshackled and un-caged from their prison cells. The jailer said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas told him, "Believe on the Master Yeshua the Messiah and you will be saved." The text tells us that the jailer believed, and so did his whole household, and they took them **in the middle of the night** and baptized the whole family. They didn't even wait till the sun came up.

There is no such thing in the early church as an un-baptized believer. They were all children of Yahweh by faith, BECAUSE as many of them as were baptized into Messiah put on Messiah. And that's the last part of verse 27. We put on the Messiah in baptism. We are clothed in Messiah, in baptism.

Baptism Clothes us in Messiah

See, baptism is an Old Testament concept carried over into the New Testament. There were many baptisms or washings in the Old Testament. Washings done by the priests before their priestly service in the Tabernacle. Washings done by men and women who were ceremonially unclean. They had to wash before coming into the Tabernacle; before entering into the presence of Yahweh. The act of washing symbolized their impurity before the Almighty. You can't just show up and talk with the Creator. You've got to wash first, because you are filthy in His sight.

This is what it means to be baptized into Messiah. Baptism into Christ means we are trusting in the promise of Yahweh. We are NOT doing a work to merit Yahweh's favor. We are acknowledging in baptism that we CANNOT earn Yahweh's favor. It's Yahweh's gift to us, not our gift to Him. We are unclean. We are filthy. We need to be washed. And when - in faith, repentance, and confession - we are baptized into the Messiah... we are cleansed of our filth and clothed in Messiah.

You're a child of Yahweh through faith, FOR as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah, have PUT ON MESSIAH. You are different now. Yahweh looks at you as being clean - spiritually - because you've put on new clothes. He knows you're not good enough, that's why He sent His Son. That's why He made the way of salvation. It is a gift from the Father. It is Yahweh's salvation.

Baptism, when done in faith, repentance, and confession, does wash away a person's filth. Not naturally. Not like taking a bath to get the dirt out from under your finger nails. But spiritually. Ceremonially. You become pure. You put on the Messiah.

For you are all children of Yahweh through faith in Messiah Yeshua, for as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah, have put on the Messiah.

The Big Picture

The Galatian Gentiles (that had placed faith in Messiah; that had been baptized into Messiah) were being told that they weren't really children of Yahweh, because they hadn't converted to Judaism. The men hadn't went through the prescribed rituals. The women hadn't either. The Judaizers were saying, "You're not really saved until you do these things." Paul says, "You are children of Yahweh by faith because you've already put on Messiah when you were baptized. Your filth has been washed away. You're a new creation in Christ. Yahweh has cleansed you from all of your sins." (*prelude to vs. 28-29*)

Galatians, pt. 37 (Read 3:26-29)

Intro and Review

Today we come to the verse that I believe is the hub of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. If I had to pick one verse to explain this epistle, it would be Galatians 3:28.

In my last sermon in this chapter, we looked at verses 26-27 where Paul told the Galatian Gentiles, "You are all children of Yahweh through faith in Messiah Yeshua, because as many of you as have been baptized into Messiah have put on Messiah."

How are you part of the family of Yahweh? By faith in Yeshua the Messiah. When you are baptized into the Messiah, Yahweh becomes your Father. Yeshua becomes your Brother.

You still belong to a natural family (I'm still a Janzen by genealogy), but by being baptized into **the** Son of Yahweh, I became **a** son of Yahweh, **by faith**. The same goes for you, when *you* received Messiah by faith. We call each other brother and sister now, because we are kin. Not necessarily natural kin, but kin by the Spirit.

Yeshua's Mother and Brothers

Yeshua said it well in **Matthew 12:46-50**.

46 He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly His mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to Him.

47Someone told Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You."

48 But He replied to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, that person is My brother and sister and mother."

See... you can have two people with different last names. You can have two people that look different, sound different, come from different areas of the world, and yet they can

be disciples of the Messiah, and thus brothers or sisters, because they both do the will of the Father.

Yeshua teaches us that just because someone is related to you naturally, doesn't mean they are your friend or family. Yes, they may be family in the physical, but according to Yeshua, the physical is not most important. The physical is not what makes the difference. It is our spirit family, that do the will of Yahweh, that matter most.

Paul echoes this in **Galatians 6:10** where he writes: "As we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the **household of faith**." Faith has a household. You're in by faith. You're out by lack of faith.

**Being of a certain bloodline doesn't make you a child of Yahweh.
Doing Yahweh's will is what makes you a child of Yahweh.**

I met a person the other day I had never seen before. As she sat and talked (sharing her beliefs with me) I kept shaking my head. "Yes, I believe that too. Yes, that's how I see it as well. Yes sister, you and I are on the same page." Now we didn't agree on every single point (none of us do), but as we talked and shared, I felt a bond with this lady that I'd never met before. We didn't belong to the same family, in the natural. I'd never seen her or talked with her. But the bond of the Spirit was there, because she does the will of the Father, and so do I. I met one of my sisters that day. I met a member of the household.

Paul's Main Point

This is Paul's point leading up to Galatians 3:28, and thus he writes this: "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua." His point is that everyone is equal. Everyone is part of the family. Everyone that has placed faith in Messiah is on the same level. There's no difference, as it pertains to salvation and right standing with the Creator. There is no salvation superiority. No one has advantage over someone else in Messiah.

Ethnic Superiority

This verse is what Galatians is about. Some Judahite-Israelite believers in Messiah were balking at the notion that heathens could be saved by faith in Messiah. "After all," they thought "these people don't have the Torah, the Temple, the Feasts, or circumcision. They are not us, and faith in our Messiah is not sufficient for them to be part of this family. They need to convert to be a proselyte Judahite. They need to go through these rituals first."

This is *why* Paul wrote this epistle, because of the ethnic superiority that some of the Judahites had back in the first century. Ethnic pride that said, "Look at us. We are Judah. We are 'pure.' We are the real children of Yahweh. Don't try to join what we are if you're a heathen. You can't be a Greek and be equal with us."

Paul opposes all of this with the gospel of grace in Messiah. The same gospel of grace that was preached to Judah by the Apostle Peter, was also preached to the heathen nations by the Apostle Paul. The gospel didn't change when it went out to the nations. Paul labored that point in this epistle. Paul called the teaching of the influencers a false gospel. He said they were cursed for distorting the gospel of the Messiah. They were cursed for thinking that ethnicity had something to do with their salvation. They were cursed for believing that their bloodline saved them.

The Opposites

Let's begin dissecting verse 28 by noticing the opposites. Paul is dealing with things that are the opposite of each other here. Opposites are like up and down, white and black, right and left, and so on.

Paul says in the middle of this verse, "There is neither... slave or free, male or female." Let's think about this a bit by examining first the idea of male and female.

Male and Female

I'm married... to a female. *Hallelujah*. That's the only kind of marriage there is. That's how Yahweh created and ordained it back in the book of beginnings. He made a male, brought forth a female from the male, and brought Eve to Adam for the first marriage ceremony. Yahweh was the father of Eve that gave Adam permission to marry His daughter.

There was a difference between Adam and Eve. They were not the same. Males are not females, and females are not males. Yahweh created us different and unique, and we are still different and unique from each other to this very day.

There are things women can do that men cannot do. My wife has birthed 5 children. She carried all of them inside of her for about 40 weeks each. I cannot do that. Yahweh did not design my male body to do that.

My wife takes care of our home in a way that I am not able to. I can try. I have tried. But Yahweh did not design me to be a homemaker. I don't have the Mother's touch because I am not a Mother. Just ask my children. If they get hurt they go to Mama. Mama is more tender, because she is a female. A wife and mother is the glue of the home.

But there are things I do that my wife cannot do. The heavier, masculine things in life. I go out and work and sweat and toil. I lift heavy things. I do things that Yahweh designed the male to do from the beginning.

I once wrote in a study on marriage that the difference between masculinity and femininity can be seen in something as simple as a pickle or pepper jar. To this day I'll hear Tisha call for me, "*Matthew... will you please open this jar for me honey.*" And of course I buck up, and walk in the kitchen grunting and say, "Of course dear." Lol,

She needs me to do things for her. I need her to do things for me. We don't play the same role. I need her. She needs me. We are opposites that compliment one another in our roles. The theological term for this is *complementarian*.

So why does Paul say, "There is neither male or female" when there is still male and female? Paul's point is about: SALVATION. Paul is not making a blanket statement that says that all male and female distinctness leaves once we become believers in the Messiah. Paul is saying that male and female, though opposites, are equal when it comes to their salvation in Messiah.

A man can't say to a woman, "I am more saved than you are because I'm a man." Neither can a woman say that. Tisha and I are equal in Christ.

When Yahweh looks at me and Tisha, he doesn't see one of us as more saved than the other. We are one in Christ. She has a relationship with Christ herself. She doesn't have to go through me to get to the Messiah. Yet... we are still different, opposites, do different things, and have different roles in the home and in the church.

Slave or Free

We see another use of opposites in the phrase "slave or free." In the law of Yahweh, even a Hebrew could become a slave to another Hebrew. I know this is not popular, but it is Biblical. **Exodus 21:2** says, "When you buy a Hebrew slave, he is to serve for 6 years; then in the 7th he is to leave as a free man without paying anything."

The master of this sort of slave was not allowed to abuse the slave, beat the slave, or treat the slave unkindly. There were laws governing and regulating slavery.

Please don't take this sermon and tell someone that brother Matthew believes slavery is ok. That's too broad of a description. **I'm against unjust slavery.** I'm against treating them like less than a human being. But I have to be honest with the Bible and recognize that slavery is not always a bad thing. It can actually be a helpful thing for an individual who is in such poverty that he wants to be under a master so that he can have food, clothing, shelter, a job, and live a good life.

The law in Exodus 21 says that there were instances where the Hebrew slave would have it so good that he would choose to stay with his Master when the 7th year rolled around. He would choose to stay and serve for life.

When Paul wrote Galatians, masters and slaves existed, and not just in a bad way, but there were good relationships between masters and slaves in the first century, just like back in the time Exodus 21 was written. A slave had his position. A master had his position. They had different roles, and were not the same in the walk of life.

But suppose a master and his slave both heard the gospel preached, and they believed the message about Yeshua, and they were baptized into Messiah. Paul says they are now "one in Christ," equal in their right-standing before the Creator. Their physical distinction

does not change. They still carry on that master to slave relationship, but their standing before Yahweh is the same. In Messiah, neither is greater.

Jew or Greek Preview

And it's the same with the first phrase in Galatians 3:28. "There is neither Jew or Greek." Those words are opposites just like "male or female," and "slave or free." Jew and Greek are both ethnic and religious terms, and they are opposites. That's Paul's point. Paul is listing statuses that would sometimes be opposed to one another, and saying, "We are all one in Messiah. We belong to the same household now. Let's recognize each other as family."

Next week we will delve into this phrase in detail, and continue to examine our equal status in salvation as believers in the Messiah.

Galatians, pt. 38 (Read 3:26-29 from the NLT)

Intro and Review

We began to look at this last week with the phrases "male or female" and "slave or free." No doubt males and females still exist, and even slaves and masters existed when Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians. Paul's point is not to teach zero distinction in gender or social status, but to teach zero advantage or superiority in value and salvation.

It doesn't matter who you are or where you came from, because you have a new status in Christ. You could've come from the biggest high rise apartment in New York City as a millionaire. You could've come from the lowest, poverty stricken area in a third world country. If you are a believer in and have been baptized into Messiah, you've put on new clothes. None of those old things matter. No ethnic, social, or gender status gives you any advantage.

Neither Jew or Greek

Today we come to another phrase that contains opposites. In Christ, it doesn't matter whether you are Jew or Greek.

There's been a lot that's went through my mind over the last 20 years about these terms "Jew" and "Greek." I went from vaguely understanding them (to begin with), to then thinking that Jew only meant Judah, and Greek only meant the divorced House of Israel (the 10 northern tribes as opposed to the 2 southern tribes). It was not until I decided to start studying and teaching through Galatians that the proper sense of these terms was understood by me. It had been there all along, I just couldn't see it.

This is why we all need to take time to focus on entire books of the Bible for lengthy periods of time. It does no good to just quote snippets here and there, or go to the Bible with a concept you want to believe, and try to look for verses to prove yourself right. This is why I take my time to teach through a book like this. I wish someone would have done this for me when I grew up in church. I wish I could have learned things slowly and in

context. That's why I do it for you all. I want our time each week to be both encouraging and educational.

What "Jew" and "Greek" Mean

In reading, studying, and teaching through Galatians, I have come to learn that the terms Jew and Greek are used by the Apostle Paul to denote (1) those who were circumcised and grew up in the Torah (Jew), versus (2) everybody else (Greek, or Gentile).

It is certainly true that divorced and scattered Israelites from the northern kingdom can be included in the terms Greek or Gentile, but that does not mean the terms Greek or Gentile mean "divorced Israelite."

The words Greek or Gentile in the epistles of Paul, denote the opposite of a Jew.

We learn this right here in Galatians 3:28. **If male and female are opposites, and slave and free are opposites, then Jew and Greek are also opposites.**

How We Learn Word Meanings

This is how we learn what words mean. You don't learn what a word means in a Bible verse by just picking up Strong's Concordance and looking at the definitions given (that's a good place to start, but a bad place to finish). You learn what words mean by noticing the context in which they are used. You look at other words, concepts, and phrases used around them.

This may seem simple, but think about the word bat. If I just say "bat" to you, you don't know what I am talking about. I could be speaking of what a baseball player holds in his hands (a noun). I could be talking about the baseball player going up to bat (a verb). I could be speaking of an animal that flies around at night and sleeps during the day. I could be speaking of how a person may *bat* their eyelashes. You don't know which one I'm referring to until I use the word "bat" in a sentence. I give it a context, and the meaning of that one word becomes apparent.

It's the same way with Biblical words. You can't assume that a word's original meaning is always the real meaning, or that the current meaning of a modern word is always its real meaning. You must define words by the context in which they are used. When you do this, you will rely more on studying a text of scripture than just looking up a word in a Hebrew or Greek lexicon.

Back to Jew and Greek

In the case at hand, the word "Greek" is used only twice in Galatians. One use is here in Galatians 3:28 where we see it is the opposite of Jew, based on the context. A Greek is someone who did not grow up serving Yahweh. It didn't matter if the Greek had *some* Israelite ancestry from the northern kingdom flowing through their veins. Those people were divorced from Yahweh, and became just like the pagan nations into which countries they were scattered. They weren't know as Israel anymore. They lost that name.

A Jew would look at anyone other than their own as dirty, impure, and unclean. If you weren't circumcised and didn't follow Torah, you weren't one of them. That's what Greek

means here. It doesn't mean someone from Greece, or someone who spoke Greek. Even Jews often *spoke* Greek. Greek here means **heathen**.

The other use of "Greek" in Galatians is in **Galatians 2:3**, a passage we've already been over in detail, and it goes right along with Galatians 3:28. It says, "But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." Titus came to Jerusalem with Paul to meet with the Elders about the gospel he preached. Galatians 2:3 shows that Titus was uncircumcised, and he wasn't forced to be circumcised, because of the false brothers that were teaching physical circumcision, or becoming a proselyte Jew was required for salvation.

The point I want you to notice here is that **Greek = uncircumcised**. Any male that was uncircumcised was looked upon as a heathen by the Jews. Paul's gospel was that heathen men could become equal with the Jews by placing faith in Yeshua the Messiah, while still in their uncircumcision.

We also see in Galatians 2 that **the words Greek and Gentile are used synonymously**. While Galatians 2:3 calls Titus a *Greek*, Galatians 2:2 speaks of Paul's gospel to the *Gentiles*.

Galatians 2:8 says: "For He who was at work with Peter in the apostleship to the circumcised was also at work with me among the Gentiles." (Opposites) Verse 9 goes on to say that the Elders of Jerusalem agreed that Paul and Barnabus would preach to the Gentiles, and they would preach to the circumcised, and **Galatians 2:15** Paul speaks of "We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners." There again we have the two categories: Jews (circumcised, Torah observant, Temple, Jerusalem, etc.) and Gentiles (heathen sinners).

Greek and Gentile are words used in Galatians (and in many other places in Scripture I might add) to denote people who are uncircumcised, uncivilized (in many cases), and have no ties to Torah, the Temple, or 1st century Jerusalem.

The word Greek does not just mean divorced and scattered Israelite. Neither does the word Gentile. That is an incorrect understanding, and I am thankful that Yahweh has corrected me of that, by simply taking more time to study His Word.

What Galatians 3:28 is About

So when Paul says in Galatians 3:28 that there is neither Jew or Greek, he is speaking of no ethnic hierarchy because they both have had faith in Christ, been baptized into Christ, and put on new clothes. Jews would normally view themselves as superior both ethnically and religiously. Paul is saying that the Gentiles (uncircumcised heathens) lose all their baggage when they come to the Messiah. They are equal now because the old man has been washed by the blood.

And make no mistake about it, Israelites had to be washed by the blood too. They didn't get in the family by being an Israelite. They had to believe in Yeshua. That had to be

baptized into Messiah. They had to put on new clothes too. And if they did not, they would remain in their sins.

Colossians 3 Parallel

In Colossians 3:9-11 (another epistle of Paul) we have a parallel to Galatians 3:28.

9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices
10 and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator.

11 In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Paul uses circumcision as a synonym with Jew, and uncircumcision as a synonym with Greek, and then he goes deeper into the word Greek by speaking of Barbarians and Scythians. These words help us to understand more about what the word Greek entails in the epistles of Paul.

Barbarians

A Barbarian certainly means a foreigner, a non-Jew, but it goes deeper than that. It refers to an uncultured people. An uneducated class or ethnicity. Paul shows this in **Romans 1:14** where he writes: "I am obligated both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish." Barbarians were looked upon as a stupid people.

Paul also uses this word in **1 Corinthians 14:11** when writing about the gift of tongues. He writes: "Therefore if I don't know the meaning of the language, I will be a barbarian to the speaker, and the speaker will be a barbarian to me." Notice how he uses barbarian in the context of one who doesn't have knowledge.

Barbarians were considered Greeks or heathens, but a lower class of heathens. People who had no education.

Scythians

Then we have *Scythians* mentioned in Colossians 3:11. What Paul does here is go even lower than the Barbarians. The Scythians would have been looked upon by the Judahite-Israelites as the scum of the earth so to speak. They would have been the most uneducated, criminal people known to man. They were known as the savage, the wild, the rude, and the uncultivated, to the utmost extreme.

Vincent's Word Studies on the NT says this in regards to the Scythians:

Hippocrates (400 B.C.) describes them as widely different from the rest of mankind, and like to nothing but themselves, and gives an absurd description of their physical peculiarities. Herodotus (450 B.C.) describes them as living in wagons, offering human sacrifices, scalping and sometimes flaying slain enemies, drinking their blood, and using their skulls for drinking-cups. When a king dies, one of his concubines is strangled and buried with him, and, at the close of a year, fifty of his attendants are strangled, disemboweled, mounted on dead horses, and left in a circle round his

tomb.

Now if you lived as a Hebrew back then; an Israelite, and you knew of these people, the Scythians... you would see a wild, heathen, pagan people. You would see a people who looked as though they were beyond help. You would see a people that would make you think, "They need to be thrown *under* the jail." But... there were some Scythians who had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The lowest of the low, the basest of the base, the barbarianest of the barbarians, had been changed into a new creation in the Messiah.

Albert Barnes puts it beautifully in his commentary on Colossians 3:11: "The name [Scythian] was almost synonymous with barbarian, for they were regarded as a wild and savage race. The meaning here is, that even such a ferocious and uncivilized people were not excluded from the gospel, but they were as welcome as any other, and were entitled to the same privileges as others. No one was excluded because he belonged to the most rude and uncivilized portion of mankind."

How We Think vs. the Bible

You may think that you do not measure up. You may look at yourself as coming from nothing, and you know what... you don't measure up. We are all sinners who have come from nothing. **But none of that matters now.** You get a whole new family in Christ. You get to be a whole new person. Old things pass away. Every bad thing you did or experienced can be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. We are all one in the Messiah Yeshua. The Jew has no advantage over the Greek. The rich has no advantage over the poor. The Hebrew has no advantage over the Scythian.

As John Newton once wrote: "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things; That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour."

Now Jews and Greeks still exist. They continue on just like male and female. Jews and Greeks still have roles and functions in the body of the Messiah, and they are not the same. Brother Matthew will not take King David's place or Prophet Moses' place in the Kingdom. They each have special roles. But you know what? Even if I am but a doorkeeper in the Kingdom, I will still be IN. THE. KINGDOM. And that is because: in worth, in value, and in salvation, I am equal with King David and Prophet Moses. AND SO ARE YOU!

Oh what a blessed truth this is! And oh what a weight it lifts off of a person like me who feels like they just aren't good enough to amount to anything. It doesn't matter who you are in the natural, it matters who you are in the spiritual. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly. He is a Jew who is one inwardly.

Yahweh didn't choose you because of anything in you. He didn't look down through time and see how good you were going to be. He didn't choose you because of your last name, or the color of your skin, or your wealth, or your gender. He chose you and changed you because of His own free-will. You had nothing to do with it. All the glory goes to Him.

This truth has changed my life brothers and sisters. This truth has helped me see people with the eyes of Messiah. Next week, I plan on sharing a personal testimony of what has happened in my life in the past 3 years or so. It will not be easy for me to share, it is embarrassing in some regard, but I will share nonetheless in hopes of breaking others free from the Satanic chains that may bind them.

Galatians Cured My Racism

Today's sermon will be different. I'm going to share a testimony of with you. Something that has happened to me in the last 3 years, because of things going on in my mind for many years before that.

I almost decided not to share all of this today. It's difficult, because it reveals a part of me that you may not be aware of. I have no clue how each individual person is going to handle what I say. I have no clue if some will lose faith in me as a teacher, or if some will gain faith in me as a teacher.

Let me tell you first why I've decided to do this. I've always tried to teach my children that it is best to confess your sins, and ask for forgiveness, and repent. Get it out in the open. That way Yahweh *for sure* will forgive you, and hopefully the person you wronged will forgive you as well. People aren't as forgiving as Yahweh, but that doesn't matter. You are still called to do your part.

You will never heal from a sin that you do not admit to be a sin. The wound will never have a chance to scab over if you're not willing to say: "I have sinned, I am so sorry, please forgive me." We humans do not like admitting failure, because of our pride. We don't like to admit when we are wrong. But in this case, we must, if we want Yahweh to forgive us.

Yahweh is under no obligation to forgive someone that doesn't confess, ask, and repent. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper. He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy.

So out of a desire to practice what I teach my children, I would like to confess to you today my sin of racism and bigotry in the past. Yahweh had to deliver me from racism, and He used Paul's epistle to the Galatians to do it. Galatians cured my racism.

I started reading Galatians in 2015, with the thoughts in my head of teaching through the entire epistle. The main reason I wanted to teach through it is because I get so many questions about Galatians in relation to the Law of Yahweh. I would always answer people by quoting pieces of Galatians, and doing the best I knew how in context, but I knew that a detailed study and teaching of the epistle would be the best way to fully answer any and all questions someone had to give.

I'm 38 sermons into this series. If you count today, this is 39, and I'm only half-way through the book. I don't plan on speeding up the process. I've enjoyed reading, studying, and teaching through this epistle. Most of all, I've enjoyed learning things, and being corrected myself.

When I started reading and studying Galatians, I never knew that my own pre-conceptions would be challenged. I'll be honest, I thought I knew much about the book then. Little did I know just how *little* I knew.

In my early years of teaching the Bible, I became aware of what is called the Israelite Identity message. That the so-called 10 lost tribes of Israel were to be found in the Caucasian people of the earth. I am not saying that everyone who believes that doctrine hates or dislikes other people because of their skin color. **I can only speak for myself.** There was a time in my life where I began to judge, dislike, and sometimes hate people who looked different than me. And those feelings stemmed from my attachment to this particular doctrine.

When pride is involved it is easy to get in a rut, because it makes you feel puffed up about yourself. I know that's how it made me feel. "I'm chosen, and he is not. I'm better than that man over there." I didn't vocalize those words often, but the thoughts sure went through my head.

The more I would think those things, the deeper of an addict I would become. It's no different than being hooked on drugs or alcohol. A drug user needs his fix. A bigot needs his fix. The way a bigot gets a fix is by thinking highly of himself because of his skin color, and looking down and treating others differently because of their skin color.

I wasn't taught to do this growing up. I was taught to treat everyone kindly. I have to say that anytime in my adulthood when my racism would raise its ugly head, it wouldn't feel right. I would have thoughts like, "What has this person done to me? Why am I acting like this? What is your problem Matthew?" But I would quench those thoughts because I had a problem. I was bound by the sin of thinking that other people were the problem because of how they looked.

Thankfully, Yahweh never gave me over to Satan completely. I never began thinking African people, or Mexican people, or Chinese people, were less than human. But I did treat them differently, and not in a good way. And I almost got to the point where I believed a person couldn't be saved if they weren't white.

I told you this would be a hard testimony to give. I know it may be hard for you to listen to. But I'm doing this, as an example to my children. I've already made my peace with Yahweh. I've confessed my sin to Him, and repented of it. I don't want anything that I thought or said to stick with my children. I want to give them an example of open repentance.

Never, ever, ever be afraid to admit you are wrong. Never be afraid to confess and repent of your sin. It's not worth your salvation to hang on to something that will condemn you. Yahweh will always forgive you, if you confess and repent.

I remember the first time I caught a glimpse of what Galatians is really about. I was riding a lawnmower and meditating. Part of what I was thinking about was Galatians 3:28, which I believe is the hub of the book. When I caught that first glimpse of seeing: "This book is about the prejudice and bigotry of certain Jews who believed other people were less than them because of who they were in the flesh." When I saw that, I didn't fight it. I just said, "Yahweh, lead me. Help me to see. Change my heart to be like You. That's all I want."

And He did. You've heard of people being delivered from drugs. You've heard of people being delivered from alcohol, or pornography, or from being a thief. Those are all great deliverances. Well now you can say you've heard of someone being delivered from racism.

When I say racism this is what I mean: the belief that you are superior in value because of the color of your skin, and the degrading of people of other skin color. It's silly when you really stop and think about it.

I had nothing to do with the color of my skin. I had nothing to do with who my parents were. Nothing. I didn't choose to be a Janzen. I didn't choose to have a dad who was born in Uruguay, South America. I didn't choose to have a Mama who was born in Rockdale County Georgia. I chose none of that.

And neither did the black man down the street. He didn't choose to be black. He didn't cause himself to be black no more than I could cause myself to be white. So why in the world would I think more highly of me than him, simply because of the way I look?

And what made me think I was so good anyhow? No one is pure because of who they are in the flesh.

Job 14:1-4 says, "Man born of woman is short of days and full of trouble. He blossoms like a flower, then withers; he flees like a shadow and does not last... Who can produce something pure from what is impure? No one!"

Job 25:4-6 says, "How can a person be justified before the Almighty? How can one born of a woman be pure? If even the moon does not shine and the stars are not pure in His sight, how much less man, who is a maggot, and the son of man who is a worm?"

That's me. That's not based on my race or ethnicity. That's based upon me being a human. The Bible tells me in Ephesians 2:4 I'm by nature a child of wrath. In Romans 3 I'm told that I am not a seeker of Yahweh. My throat is an open grave. I deceive with my tongue. Ruin and wretchedness are in my path, and I have no fear of Yahweh before my eyes. That's who I am by nature. That's the natural Matthew.

Psalm 143:2 says that no one alive is righteous in Yahweh's sight, and Ecclesiastes 7:20 says that there is not a righteous man on earth who always does good and never sins.

I need to be saved... from myself. I'm the problem, not someone else. I have to be changed. I have to be delivered. I'm not pure. I'm not holy. I'm not good in and of myself.

John 1:11-13 tells us that Yahweh's children are born - not of blood. It's not based on bloodline. It's not based on my genealogy papers. Who in the world knows what my genealogy papers show anyhow? I only know back a short ways. I know my dad's parents, and my mom's parents. And then I know the two sets of parents to those parents. But it keeps branching off from there to more and more people, and I had no control over any of that. I stand here before you today, as just me. I am who I am. This is what you get.

But Yahweh's children are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man. They are born... of Yahweh. Yahweh changed me into a new creature. That's what matters. My flesh doesn't matter. My skin color doesn't matter when it comes to my relationship with Yahweh.

In Christ, there is no Jew or Greek. There is no barbarian or Scythian. Anyone can come to Christ and be freed from their sins. Anyone, no matter their background, race, former religion, former way of life... none of that matters. You don't have to pass a qualification test to come to Christ. You don't have to get a DNA test to come to Christ. Only weak, impure, corrupt sinners are allowed. And that's me. That's all of us.

You know... you can legislate race relations. You can write up new laws on the books. You can offer sensitivity courses. You can try to teach people how to interact with each other. But nothing - NOTHING - can change a racist heart like the Gospel of the Messiah. Nothing can turn a hater into a lover like the Gospel.

I love meeting everyone now, and have for a while. I love dealing with and judging people on a personal basis. Not by their family. Not by their nation. Not by their race. But by **them**: how they act, talk, think, live, etc. I see everyone as a possible candidate for salvation, and I see every person I meet as an opportunity to show them how non-discriminating the love of Yahweh is. Of a truth I now understand that Yahweh is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him.

I'm no longer worried about my ancestry. You know what I am worried about? Doing the will of the Father. I want to be Yeshua's brother, and he said his brothers are only those who do the will of Yahweh. That's what I concern myself with. Not the way I look or what my last name is.

I appreciate you listening to me today. This was not easy for me to do. To my children... treat every person you ever meet like you want to be treated. Daddy loves all of you.