| Galatians<br>Summary: **God cares about the heart, not external metrics** | 1:1-2:14<br>'My message is true' | 2:15-5:26<br>'Here's my message' | 6:1-18<br>'Go and implement my message' |
|---|---|---|---|

**Galatians 2:15-3:29 (ESVUK)** **Sunday 1 November 2026**

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;
16 yet we know that a person is not justified[a] by works of the law
but through faith in Jesus Christ,
so we also have believed in Christ Jesus,
in order to be justified by faith in Christ
and not by works of the law,
because by works of the law no one will be justified

17 But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ,
we [Jews] too were found to be sinners,
is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

18 For if I rebuild what I tore down,
I prove myself to be a transgressor.

19 For through the law I died to the law,
so that I might live to[b] God.
20 I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God,
for if righteousness[c] were through the law,
then Christ died for no purpose.

**1. Summary abstract: faith ✅ law ❌ (2:15-21)**

- main idea (2:15-16)
  even we Jews know that
  faith ✅ law ❌ (×3)
- sidebar (2:17-21)
  responding to Jewish worry:
  - not obeying the law is not sin
  - obeying the law is sin
    - because faith is what matters now
    - saying Jesus died for no purpose is sinful!

**3** O foolish Galatians!
Who has bewitched you?
It was before your eyes
that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

2 Let me ask you only this:
i. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law
or by hearing with faith?
ii. 3 Are you so foolish?
iii. Having begun by the Spirit,
are you now being perfected by[d] the flesh?
iv. 4 Did you suffer[e] so many things in vain
—if indeed it was in vain?

**2. Main argument: faith and law don't mix as they have opposite outcomes (3:1-18)**

- main idea (3:1-5)
  faith and law do not mix (×3)




[a] Or ~~counted~~ *righteous* (three times in 2:16); also 2:17
[b] CSB, NASB, NIV, LSB all supply *for*
[c] Or *justification*
[d] Or *now ending with*
[e] Or *experience*

Andover Bible Church

v. [5] Does he who supplies the Spirit to you
and works miracles among you
do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

- faith explained (3:6-9)
faith leads to blessings
(and always has!)

[6] Just as Abraham
"believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness", [Gen 15:6]
[7] know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.
[8] And the Scripture,
foreseeing that God would justify[a] the Gentiles by faith,
preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying,
"In you shall all the nations be blessed." [Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18]
[9] So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham,
the man of faith.

- law explained (3:10)
works of the law leads to curses
(and always has!)

[10] For all who rely on[b] works of the law are under a curse;
for it is written,
"Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things
written in the Book of the Law, and do them." [Deu 27:26]

- conclusion (3:11-12)
faith and law do not mix

[11] Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law,
for "The righteous shall live by faith."[c] [Hab 2:4]
[12] But the law is not of faith,
rather "The one who does them shall live by them." [Lev 18:5]

- what about cursed Jews? (3:13-14)
good news – the Messiah both:
a. releases Jews from curses
b. gifts blessings to Gentiles

[13] Christ redeemed us [Jewish believers] from the curse of the law
by becoming a curse for us [Deu 21:23]
—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—
- [14] so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham
might come to the Gentiles,
- so that we [Jewish believers]
might receive the promised Spirit[d] through faith.

- one implication of faith and law not mixing (3:15-18)
  - how covenants work (3:15)

[15] To give a human example, brothers:[e]
even with a man-made covenant,
no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

  - covenants to Abraham & Moses have different recipients – they do not contradict

[16] Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.
It does not say, "And to offsprings", referring to many,
but referring to one, "And to your offspring", [Gen 12:7; 13:15; 24:7]
who is Christ.

[a] Or ~~count~~ *righteous*; also verses 11, 24
[b] Original Greek lacks *rely on*; KJV, LSB, NASB opt for *are of*
[c] Or *The one who by faith is righteous will live*
[d] Greek *receive the promise of the Spirit*
[e] Or *brothers and sisters*

In Hebrew, Greek and English, 'offspring' can refer to one descendant or many, without needing to become 'offsprings'.

Paul's cheeky grammar *illustrates*, rather than *justifies*, his point that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants have different recipients. This is already evident from 3:6-12!

17 This is what I mean: the law,
which came 430 years afterwards,
does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God,
so as to make the promise void.
18 For if the inheritance comes by the law,
it no longer comes by promise;
but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

19 Why then the law?
It was added because of transgressions,
until the offspring should come
to whom the promise had been made,
and it [law] was put in place through angels by an intermediary.
20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, [re. law]
but God is one. [re. Abraham] { 1. God was the only party; or 2. God acted alone

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God?
Certainly not!
For if a law had been given that could give life,
then righteousness would indeed be by the law.
22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin,
so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ
might be given to those who believe.
23 Now before [the object of] faith came,
we [Jews] were held captive under the law, imprisoned
until the coming [the object of] faith would be revealed.
24 So then, the law was our guardian
until Christ came, in order that we [Jews]
might be justified by faith.
25 But now that faith has come,
we [Jews] are no longer under a guardian,
26 for[a] in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ
have put on Christ.
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek,
there is neither slave nor free,
there is no male and female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
29 And if you are Christ's,
then you are Abraham's offspring,
heirs according to promise.

## 3. Why does the law exist at all?
## To point to faith in Jesus (3:19-29)

- law shows an impossible way to blessings… (×5)
- …so Israel were to remember God's unconditional (and certain) promise of blessing to Abraham's offspring (×5)

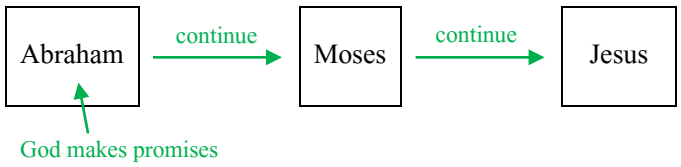
- now anyone of any background can be included in God's promises to Abraham!

[a] γὰρ, translated *for*, can also have an affirmative meaning 'truly/indeed/certainly'.
See Bauer et al. (2000), *Greek-English Lexicon* (BDAG), 3rd edn., p. 190, s.v. 'γάρ', sense 3.

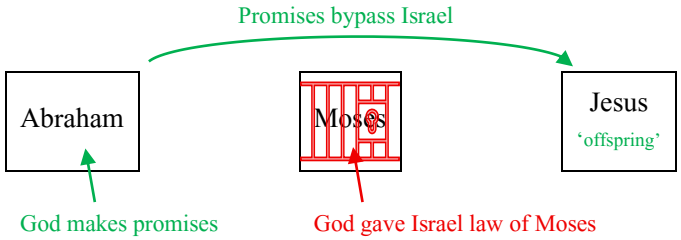
Next Sunday (8 Nov):
- Galatians 4:1-31
- No AFC parking restrictions

## How promises to Abraham fit law of Moses

a. Oversimplified, wrong model




b. Biblically correct model




## Small group discussion

2:15-21 1. To what extent do you feel you are able to re-read and understand this section by yourself?

3:1-18 2. How do you feel about the simplicity of Paul's argument that faith and law do not mix? What objections or concerns do you still have?

3:19-29 3. A non-Christian friend asks you what the purpose of the law was. How would you explain this?

## Getting back into Galatians 2:15-3:29

2:15-16 1. What is the effect of Paul saying 'yet [even] we [Jews] know' in 2:16? Why would he start his argument in this way?

2. What do you make of Paul's repetition of themes in 2:15-16?

2:17-21 3. Articulate the Jewish worry that 2:17-21 addresses. Why would this worry be such a potent one?

4. What logical possibilities does 2:17 leave open, that 2:18 shuts down?

5. How do you feel about the way Paul wrote 2:19-20 and the number of potential theological rabbit holes the reader could go down?

6. How does *nullifying the grace of God* by saying, or behaving as if, 'Christ died for no purpose' feel on the spectrum on sinful behaviours and attitudes?

3:1-5 7. What do you make of Paul's tone in 3:1-5?

8. What is the rhetorical effect of having 5 questions between 3:2-5?

3:6-9 9. To what extent is Paul's argument reassuringly simple and familiar? Does the simplicity create any doubts, concerns or objections?

3:10 10. Does this single verse feel *reassuringly* simple or *dubiously* simple? Why?

3:11-12 11. How does Paul's use of Habakkuk and Leviticus bolster his argument?

12. By the end of 3:12, how confident are you of the conclusion that 'the law is not *of* faith'?

3:13-14 13. What do you make of the way Paul inserts *Gentile blessing* within a paragraph about Jewish believers being redeemed from the curses of the law of Moses? Why does he do this?

3:15-18 14. Someone says, 'if Paul weren't an apostle and were merely e.g. a contemporary lecturer in theology, I'd find the way he wrote 3:16 with *offsprings* very annoying.' Discuss!

15. Two models are presented: (a) oversimplified but wrong; and (b) biblically correct. Which did you already think before studying Galatians? How persuaded are you now of (b)?

16. How would holding to (b) fit with e.g. a church seeking to do a 10-week sermon series on each of the 10 commandments?

3:19-29 17. Paul contrasts some form of law-based-restriction, with Christ-centred-blessing five times! What is the effect of this repetition? Were there any particular pairs that caught your eye?

18. How persuaded are that the law's role/function as guardian was *temporary*?