

Christ Crucified: there is no greater thing

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[0 : 00] We'll do turn to Galatians chapter 3, and we're going to have our noses closely in the text tonight, because this is a dense argument to follow.

The title tonight would have to be this, Christ crucified, there is no greater thing. No greater thing. We spent the last three studies looking at the paragraph that goes before Galatians 2, 15 to 21. We said that was the central proposition of this letter, and it's densely packed. But in a sense, the argument of the whole book is there. The central thing is justification by faith. That's what hinges the whole letter.

That's the thing everything hinges upon. And everybody's agreed on that, verses 15 and 16. Peter, Paul, the Galatians, the false teachers, everybody. They're all agreed on this doctrine.

But, while in principle they might all be agreed, in practice they're very much disagreed. Actually, their practice shows up that in fact they're at odds with what it really means.

[1 : 10] Chapter 2, verse 14 is very important. You're walking out of step, not in step, with the truth of the gospel. Now, it's often been the biggest problem in church history, hasn't it?

It's not been actually official belief or doctrinal standards that have been rejected. But the fact is that often in practice, many great doctrines have been denied, and therefore shown that these things have never been believed or trusted in the first place.

And Paul insists that justification has great implications. The first of which he talks about in verses 17 and 18. It has implications for the church. We're all one.

We're united in Christ. So there can no longer be any division of Jew and Gentile on ethnic grounds. And our behavior must reflect this in the church.

Secondly, justification has huge implications for the Christian life. We're united with Christ. We're united to him. And our behavior as individuals must reflect that fact. We just can't have any truck with the old life, the old identity, the old I, as we saw last week, has gone.

[2 : 20] There's a new I. Christ living in me. And now Paul goes on in the rest of the letter really to unpack these two statements further.

And he argues this case, first of all, from the experience of the Galatians, and he comes back to that again and again. And then also by backing everything up from the Old Testament scriptures.

We might call Galatians chapter 3 and 4 then justification under church, its true story.

And chapter 5 and chapter 6, loosely justification under Christian, his or her true story. So Galatians 3 and 4 fleshes out really chapter 2 verses 17 and 18.

It's all about what the coming age of the Spirit, through Christ's work, now accomplished on the cross, what that means for the life of the people of God, now as the body of Christ.

In other words, it's about the right way to read the Old Testament and the New Testament as a story, as the unfolding of God's plan of redemption.

[3 : 25] And the message, just as we've been seeing in Matthew's Gospel, the message is one of both continuity and climax. It's the same Gospel promise right from the very start.

It's the same faith of Abraham and of all the saints throughout the Old Testament. And yet it is the new age of the Spirit that has come, that's fulfilled the latter days are here.

Christ has come. And that's where Paul and the Judaizing teachers that he's arguing against here, that's where they're at odds. See, they're saying, oh yes, we follow Christ.

We preach grace through faith, just like Paul does. That's, of course, how you start a Christian life.

But we've got more, you see, because Paul didn't say, Paul didn't say, but now that Christ has come, of course, Christ wants to teach you about Moses and about Abraham.

For the fulfillment of your experience, for the fulfillment of your identity, the completion, he needs to take you back to them. And Paul hasn't done that properly. But we will offer you that.

[4 : 40] We can offer you a fuller, better experience to help you really get on in the Christian life. You see, you need to become a true inheritor of Abraham, one of his seed. And Paul, by contrast, says, no, absolutely not.

Your identity, now that Christ has come, is all in Christ. It's by his Spirit. Whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, whether you're male or female, whether you're a slave or a free, no, your identity is all in Christ Jesus.

That's why the climax of chapter 3 comes with, chapter 3, verse 28, you're all one in Christ Jesus. Then again, at the end of chapter 4, he says, you're all children of promise, children of the free woman, not of the slave woman.

Christ has come and all has changed. And that's what's at issue. It's called eschatology. The fact that the last things, the end of the ages, has begun. And the opponents, Paul's opponents, just didn't grasp that God's plan, right from the very beginning, had always been heading towards that climax.

And so they misunderstood their Old Testament. That was their great fault. Bluntly, we could put it this way. The issue in Galatians is whether Jesus is just an addition to the Old Testament way of salvation, or if he is in fact always what the whole Old Testament story was about right from the beginning.

[6 : 15] And those are two very different things. If it's the first, you see, then it means that Christ came, yes, to bring Gentiles into the kingdom, but to point Gentiles back to Moses for a full experience of salvation.

But if it's the second, if it's Paul's way of looking at things, Moses and the whole Torah, the law and the prophets, that always existed to point Jews forward to Christ for full salvation.

You see, both groups recognised that, yes, there is now a place in the kingdom for Gentiles, but for the Judaizers, the whole thing was still really Jewish-centred.

Gentiles, in other words, were now being granted the privileges of Israel to become Jews and come into the covenant. But for Paul, it was quite different.

The whole process, the whole plan had been cosmic right from the very beginning. And that meant that Israel's history as a nation was only ever as a vehicle for that greater plan for God's salvation to all the nations.

[7 : 26] Israel's history wasn't an end in itself, it was part of God's plan for the cosmos. You see, there's a great, huge gulf between them.

Ultimately, you see, really, when it comes down to it, the Judaizers had a man-centred gospel. God serves the purposes of people. The Jewish nation is the focus and God serves them.

Whereas for Paul, it was a God-centred gospel. And men and women were, whoever they were, Jew or Gentile, being caught up in God's great plan of salvation from eternity to eternity.

That's the wonder of the gospel. It's God marching on and you are being caught up into it. Polar opposites, you see. So, because the story of salvation is now climaxed, because Christ has come, because the fullness of the time has come, as chapter 4, verse 4 says, there's been a seismic shift in everything.

That's Paul's argument. Because Christ has come, chapter 4, verse 4, his spirit has come, chapter 4, verse 6. And that means, that means three things.

[8 : 38] There is a now, Paul says. Now, chapter 4, verse 7, we are sons in Christ alone, by faith. But there's also a no longer, same verse, you're no longer a slave.

In other words, the age of slavery, the age of the Torah, the age of the Jewish way, the age of the Mosaic way of salvation, is past. There's a no longer.

And also, there's a not yet. He says, we're heirs. And heirs, though they may be sons, are still waiting for a climax of their inheritance. That's why, in chapter 5, verse 5, he says, that we wait in hope for righteousness.

And so, in chapter 5 and chapter 6, he speaks about justification in the Christian life. In other words, what does the coming of this new age of the Spirit mean for every believer?

And that's an exercise, really, in how to read the Old Testament and the New Testament, not so much as an unfolding story, but as the authority of full and complete revelation of God's holiness.

[9 : 48] The Judaizers, you see, were saying, well, yes, Christ has come, you have the Spirit, but he takes you back to the law of Moses to know how to live a holy life, to perfect yourselves in holiness. So you need that too.

Paul says, no, no, no, you're quite right, we don't reject God's law in terms of his commands, his way of righteousness, but we don't go back to Moses anymore as our teacher, no, he's been superseded.

Rather, we fulfill the law, we fulfill the whole law, in fact, by the Spirit of Christ living in us, and by the life of his holiness as we keep in step with him. Again, you see, there's continuity.

God's holy standards don't change, they're not any less. Now that he's come, we're seeing that so clearly in Matthew's Gospel, aren't we? You must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect, it's not less, it's more.

Obedience isn't the issue in Galatians. In chapter 5, verse 7, Paul urges them to obey the truth. It's who you obey. And what Paul's saying is Moses is not the focus any longer.

[10:52] Moses has been superseded, a greater than Moses has come. That's why in chapter 6, verse 2, he says, we keep the law of Christ. He's the climax of God's revelation of holiness and perfection.

So we don't reject God's law, we fulfil it, but we fulfil it by the Spirit of Christ in us, by faith as we walk with him. So just as there is for the whole people of God, so for the individual, there's a now. We walk in the Spirit, we fulfil the law as promised, that was the promise of the new covenant. But there's also a no longer, we're no longer in the flesh in the sense that we live according to the ways of the old age.

That's put behind us, there's a new I. But of course, there's also a not yet. The Spirit of the new creation is living in us, yes, it's begun, but as we all know, we still live in bodies of flesh that are tainted by the present evil age and that's why life is a struggle for the Christian.

That's why it's inevitable, that's why chapter 5 talks about the war between the flesh and the Spirit. Christian life is a struggle against sin from beginning to end. But the point is that Paul is crucially making the power for going on in that struggle is not finding something more than Christ or something in addition to the Holy Spirit that we have or something different from the faith that we began with.

[12:23] No! We go on as you begun by faith through Christ alone. And that's true Christian experience for Paul. There's nothing greater this side of glory than going on in the faith that we have in Christ alone.

So with that by way of introduction then, let's look closely at chapter 3 verses 1 to 14 tonight to see how Paul begins this argument to the Galatians.

And he's showing them that what they already have in the gospel life is what the whole story of God's plan of salvation was about all along. They have in their experience what God promised from the very beginning.

In the face of that you see the Judaizers were claiming to them that their experience was still somehow deficient. That Christ by faith was fine to begin but not enough to go on.

And in contrast to that Paul emphatically in these verses tells them three things. He says, no, you have a complete experience of salvation. Then he goes on to argue from Scripture that they have a consistent experience of salvation with all the Old Testament saints.

[13:39] Then thirdly he goes on to say that actually they have a climactic experience of salvation. Something more than ever before. Through chapter 3 we have to say that there are some verses which can be very tricky and it may not be easy to grasp the whole meaning of every single little bit but the big picture of the argument I think is very clear and I hope at least tonight that we can get that in our minds.

So look first of all at verses 1 to 5. Paul is assuring the Galatians here that they have a complete and full Christian experience of salvation.

By faith in Christ alone it's all theirs. There's nothing that they can add to this without totally negating the whole meaning of the cross of Christ without saying as he says in chapter 2 verse 21 Christ died for no purpose.

And he begins with a stern rebuke in verse 1 you foolish Galatians. Just as remember in chapter 1 verse 6 he began with a rebuke to their disloyalty to him as an apostle and to the gospel that they'd received.

Now he's rebuking their foolishness. They can't see they can't seem to see the dire consequences of what they're experiencing from these false teachers. He's frustrated it's as though they've been bewitched.

[15:02] And he appeals to their experience to the facts of history. He bombards them with questions it's rather like a parent isn't it scolding a child. Come on tell me what happened tell me you know what happened how did it happen tell me.

See he's telling them that there's absolutely nothing deficient in their experience. It began verse 1 with authentic gospel proclamation Christ was publicly portrayed before you as crucified.

That is they were confronted by the message of the risen Christ they were confronted by Jesus Christ himself as Paul preached. Christ crucified that is the apostolic faith.

That's what I preached said Paul in chapter 1 that's what you received. that's what brought you deliverance remember chapter 1 verse 4 from this evil age into the new creation that's what delivered you.

What could be greater than that? If Christ has once delivered you from darkness into light from the kingdom of the evil one into the kingdom of his son from the old age into the new age if he's delivered you in that monumental way what possible more could you need?

[16:17] what place can there be for things like deliverance ministries and that sort of thing? It just doesn't make sense. There can't be any advance on that mighty miracle. And he says and you at that moment at that moment verse 2 received the unmistakable mark of God's acceptance of you you received the Holy Spirit.

Now this is the first reference in the letter to the Holy Spirit but it's very emphatic did you notice it begins and ends our section verse 14 the promised spirit. Three times here in verse 2 and 3 he says you received the spirit you began with the spirit God supplied the spirit to you.

Why does he emphasize that? Because the gift of the Holy Spirit is the authenticating mark of acceptance with God of justification. Vital for us to grasp this you must grasp it Do you see here how Christ and his spirit is absolutely inseparable?

You see that all the way through the chapter. Christ crucified was portrayed to you his spirit was given to you. Christ's work for us in justification and Christ's work in us by the spirit for newness of life are inseparable in the New Testament.

You cannot have one without the other. So the Galatians had it all. And the point Paul makes here is that they were therefore at one with all known believers with all the Jewish believers with the apostles themselves.

[17:55] Turn back to Acts chapter 10 briefly this is an important cross reference but I do want you to see it clearly. Look at chapter 10 verse 44 of Acts this is when Peter was preaching to Cornelius and the Gentiles and when Peter was still saying these things that is he was preaching Christ crucified the Holy Spirit fell on all them who heard the word.

And the believers from among the circumcised the Jews who were come with Peter were amazed. Why? Because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. Look forward to chapter 11 verse 18.

How was this explained to the brothers? To the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life. You see the gift of the Spirit is the mark of justification of acceptance with God of repentance that leads to life.

Look forward to Acts chapter 15 the great council at Jerusalem that was all about the very issues that Galatians precipitated. What do we read there in verse 8?

And God who knows the heart bore witness to them by giving them, the Gentiles the Holy Spirit just as he did to us. And he made no distinction between us and them having cleansed their hearts by faith.

[19:24] You see only an experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit can make us justified by God's grace. The two are inseparable. Romans chapter 5 Paul talks about us having been justified by grace because the Holy Spirit has been shed abroad in our hearts.

Bob Pyle was preaching to the other week from chapter 3 of Titus when he talks about renewal coming by the Holy Spirit poured into our hearts through Jesus Christ our Saviour so that we are justified by his grace.

Absolutely inseparable. And there says Paul you have it all. You have the evidence from God that you are accepted with him and everything he's promised is yours.

And how? How did you get that? How did that happen to you? On what basis? By the works of the law? No. Verse 2 by faith alone by the hearing of faith.

So verse 3 he says are you not? That's my translation of the Greek. If that's how this great miracle began how on earth do you think it could go on any other way?

[20 : 38] By the mere flesh. Think about your subsequent experience verse 4. Have you experienced all these things? Verse 5 the miracles you've seen may well be he's talking here about signs and wonders but even more impressive is the miracle of their faith.

Their translation from paganism to the faith of Christ. The growth of the church in Galatia that's a huge miracle. How did all that come about says Paul? By works of the law? Did you do those things? Did you do them? Or was it God doing them? By his spirit? Of course it was. What was your part in them?

Well it was to receive them wasn't it? By faith. You see every believer who has trusted in the gospel of Christ crucified has a full experience of salvation.

As full an experience of salvation as you will have until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again to complete that experience in eternity. You have the fullness of the Holy Spirit within you.

[21 : 49] You have full acceptance with God through his death on the cross for you. You need absolutely nothing more. You can have nothing more. You begin by God's grace through faith and you go on by God's grace through faith by his spirit at work in your heart.

But the fact is that many today as in these days many prey on believers feelings of weakness or feelings of inadequacy or sense of their own sin and sense of their own frustration and they want to offer more and want to offer a separate experience as though the experience of Christ and the Holy Spirit were different.

As if you begin with one thing and go on needing something else to supplement it. Somebody said to me not long ago what you really need in St.

George's Tron what you lack is the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You've got the gospel all right but you haven't really got the fullness of the Spirit. Paul says do you know Christ crucified received by faith is everything.

If you have that you must have a full experience of the Holy Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit you must have a full experience of being justified being accepted with God being given repentance unto life.

[23 : 20] So friends if you are feeling discouraged wondering what's wrong with your Christian life having a struggle and seeking for something more don't listen to your heart and don't listen to anybody else who wants to offer you a Christian experience that is more or different or somehow other than Christ alone by faith.

You began with him. Think about what it meant when you began the Christian life. Think about your own personal experience since then. Who was doing all of that? You or God through his spirit at work in you?

Stop being silly. You go on with him. Beware of anybody who seems to be adding to Christ alone because inevitably inevitably that leads to detraction from Christ.

As Jim Packer once said Christ plus is really Christ minus. Christ. We see that don't we in the sub-Christian sects.

People will say yes well we believe in Jesus of course and we believe in the Bible. It's just that we add you see the Book of Mormon or the writings of Joseph Smith of the Jehovah's Witnesses or whoever it is.

[24 : 38] Yes yes yes we believe in Jesus and the Bible. We just add a little bit more. But of course what happens is the only thing that really matters is add a little bit more. You say to a Jehovah's Witness but I've got the Bible in Christ I'm alright oh but you need this.

It can be much more subtle than that though can't it? In our churches in our church culture we can emphasize things and we all have particular emphases in our different churches and denominations.

But things that we emphasize can very easily begin to become themselves the thing that really matters the orthodoxy. We've got to be very careful. You see it in church names don't you?

You're the Baptist church or the Presbyterian church or the Pentecostal church or the Reformed church. There's nothing wrong with these descriptive adjectives that they describe particularities about our congregations.

But we've got to be very very careful that the adjectives don't start to become more important than the noun. That our emphases, the things that we add, our particular interpretations of church policy

or the sacraments or whatever, that they begin to usurp the gospel as the really important thing. [26 : 03] But no, what we really need to go on is not our particular way of church government or our particular way of doing baptism or our particular teaching about the millennium or whatever it might happen to be.

No, a full authentic experience of Christianity begins by grace, it's ours in the Holy Spirit, and it goes on by grace through the Holy Spirit at work in us.

It's by faith alone from beginning to end. That is a complete Christian experience. There is nothing greater. And Paul emphasizes that to the Galatians.

And he would emphasize it to us today. It's so important. You can't get more than Christ crucified. Then he goes on, secondly, to tell the Galatians that they have a consistent experience of salvation. Verses 6 to 11. He backs up these indisputable facts, the things that have happened to them through Paul's gospel, with what the Old Testament scriptures promised would happen to Gentiles, in fulfillment of God's promise of salvation through Jesus Christ and his cross.

[27 : 16] And Paul's point here is to argue from the Old Testament scriptures to show that his gospel is not new in the sense of being novel or different. You see, the opponents were saying, oh yes, well, Paul's got the basics, but we can give you a whole world of authentic Israel heritage.

Paul neglects these, or he just doesn't grasp them. He hasn't given you the significance of the Old Testament history, and we can give that to you, we can offer it to you, we can show you how to become true inheritors of Abraham.

And Paul says it absolutely unequivocally, no, they have got it all wrong. They're the ones who've got the story wrong because they haven't seen that right from the beginning the story was heading to this climax.

They've been blinded to that. So I'm going to tell you, the scripture backs me up all the way along. And it backs up the facts of your experience all the way along.

You see which fits better. And in verses 6 to 11, Paul's basic message is simple. What he's saying is this, there is no discontinuity at all between your faith and the one true, authentic faith of Israel.

[28 : 31] He says it in two ways. In verses 6 to 9, he shows that it's there in the experience of Abraham, the great patriarch. In verses 10 and 11, he shows it to be true in the clear teaching of both the law and the prophets, the whole Old Testament.

Let's look first at Abraham. The Judaizers, you see, talked a lot about Abraham, no doubt. Chapter 5, it's clear what they wanted the people to do was to become circumcised. Abraham, you see, the great man of faith, but he was circumcised.

And Paul totally avoids talking about circumcision here with Abraham. Abraham, he doesn't talk about Genesis 17, he goes right back before that to Genesis 15 and even back to Genesis 12 when God first called Abraham.

How did the great patriarch Abraham get right with God? How was he justified? Answer, verse 6, by faith and nothing added.

He believed God and he was counted righteous. And, just like the Galatians, Abraham at that stage was an uncircumcised man.

[29 : 38] He was a Gentile. Paul is going to come to circumcision later on in the chapter, verse 19 following, but only after he's established this main point, the priority of faith.

In other words, what he's saying is faith was there right from the beginning all the way through and is still there now. Whereas circumcision and the rest of the Mosaic way of life, it came to him later, it was temporary, it's done its work, and it's now finished.

But first he's dealing with faith and Abraham. So, verse 7, who are the true sons of Abraham?

Answer, those who likewise believe the gospel of Christ.

Nothing else. And what he's saying here is, it's not just as though this was a happy coincidence.

Abraham's gospel, what he heard from God and believed, was the very same gospel that they believed.

But he's saying that's not just a coincidence. No. It had been about Gentiles being saved right from the very beginning. It's not that Gentiles being saved gets tagged onto the story of Abraham about the end.

[30 : 52] Rather, Paul says, it's the opposite. Abraham gets lit in early on the secret about Gentiles and the whole world being saved. Do you see verse 8? The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham.

And what was the gospel? In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Paul is clear, you see, Gentiles, the whole world, were always right at the very heart of God's plan for salvation. Not just Israel. Israel's purpose was to serve that plan. Abraham. So then, verse 9, you see, it's not just that you're saved by faith alone like Abraham, as verse 6 says. You're saved like Abraham. But you're saved by faith along with Abraham, the man of faith, because it was always about Abraham and his seed, his offspring. Verse 16 further down says the promise was given not just to Abraham, but to Abraham and his offspring. So what he's saying is, look, you Galatian Gentile Christians, you're not an afterthought. [32 : 01] You were right at the very heart of the mind of God way back then when he gave that very first promise to Abraham. He was thinking about you. And he was thinking about you tonight in this church.

Most of us are Gentiles. When God gave that promise to Abraham, he was giving Abraham advance notice of what he was going to do for us. Abraham was just a part of the process. And it's the same gospel, it's the same promise, and it's the same basis by faith. So it's those of faith, verse 9, who are blessed along with Abraham, the great believer. what Paul's saying is, it always was by faith and faith alone. So it was then, so it is now. Then in verses 10 and 11, he states the same thing negatively.

It never was by works, ever. My gospel's not just consistent with Abraham's experience, he's saying. It's the whole testimony of the law and the prophets, the Old Testament.

[33 : 10] It's the experience of all the Old Testament saints ever since Abraham. Abraham. What he's saying is, there's no discontinuity here with the whole of the Torah itself, the whole law, which the Judaizers love so much.

You see, the Jewish scripture says two things very clearly, says Paul in verse 10. First, it says that reliance on the works of the law, as if by doing them somehow you were earning salvation, well that would only lead to curse.

All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. That's what the law says. It's perfectly plain to any Old Testament believer. That earning salvation was impossible. They knew the law told them how to live.

They knew the law also condemned them. Every day they realized they couldn't live like that as they should. That's why the law was full of provision for sacrifices, for sin. The law told them they were sinners.

Then told them they needed to go humbly offering a sacrifice and trusting in the gracious promise of God to forgive them on the basis of the great sacrifice of the coming Messiah that every one of these sacrifices signified.

[34 : 17] Any true Old Testament believer knew that. They obeyed the law not as a law of works but by the obedience of faith, responding to God's grace and his forgiveness to them.

It was theirs by trust. Yes, it was a duty but it was a glad one because it came as a response to grace. That's why you can read the Psalms and Psalm 119 How I love your law.

It's my delight. It's sweeter than honey to my taste. It's more precious than gold. Of course, of course, there were many who did pervert the law and turned it into religion.

That's just what we've been seeing seeing Jesus condemning the scribes and the Pharisees for in his own day and many have done that since just as many turned the Christian faith into works religion.

It's part of the nature of our human hearts to do that, to want to justify ourselves in our own eyes.

Romans 9.32 says that the Jews pursued a law of righteousness but did not receive it.

[35 : 21] Why, Paul says? Because they did not pursue it by faith but as if it were by works. But the Old Testament itself was never ever given for that purpose.

The law was never given as a way of works salvation. In verse 11, Paul says that's perfectly evident. It's perfectly evident just by reading the law and the prophets, he says, because the whole thing is all about being justified not by works but by faith.

The righteous shall live by faith, quoting Habakkuk 2. Now in verse 11a where it says no one is justified by the law, if we take that translation then simply he's contrasting with faith.

In other words, the Old Testament clearly teaches it's all about faith not about law. But literally that says in the law. No one clearly was justified in the law.

And I think it's better to take that as meaning the era of law. It contrasts I think with verse 14 in Christ. You've got the era of the law and now the era of Christ.

[36 : 33] And that translation has a lot to commend it because the quote in the second half of the verse from Habakkuk 2.4 if we look at the context of Habakkuk the just, the righteous will live by faith it's all about the faithful waiting for the coming judgment of God in the form of the Babylonians on his land.

And the questions that were arising among the faithful people were how can the God of our people judge us with a pagan nation? What are the faithful to think?

What's God doing? What's happened to his promise with all this talk of judgment? And the answer to the prophet Habakkuk was a vision. God said it's for the future for a time still to come.

If it seems slow wait for it. It will surely come. The righteous will live by his faith. In other words faith in God's future act of deliverance that would come even though it was afar off.

And the book of Habakkuk ends with the prophet looking forward in hope faith in the promise of God that was still to come. And what Paul is saying you see is that this is evident all the way through the Old Testament that the day of salvation the day of final and ultimate judgment was still to come.

[37 : 46] God's public declaration on behalf of his people his public salvation his public declaration that they are accepted and right and forgiven was still in the future.

So no one in that sense was ever justified in the era of the law. Finally rather believers waited patiently by faith faith that one day by that same gospel promise God would at last intervene in history and publicly declare for his people.

In other words the same gospel promise which is now fulfilled in Christ. The same promise that the Galatians today are believing in. So what he's saying is there's no discontinuity at all with the Old Testament faith.

We see it in Abraham's experience. We see it in the teaching of the law and the prophets. It was a salvation that came by faith in God's promise. It's the same gospel.

You've got a consistent experience of salvation. It never was by works ever. It was always by faith. And one implication of that you know is that our faith, our faith as Christians today is not a New Testament faith.

[39 : 09] The Old Testament is also ours. It's a whole Bible faith. It's not that God somehow was different in the Old Testament, that somehow he was a vengeful, angry deity.

No, he's the same God. The way of salvation was the same. It was by his grace. It was through faith. There's total continuity. And that means, friends, that God's promises to his people right the way from the beginning of history are still his promises to us.

God's promises of grace, of his covenant for our children, for our families. These are gifts, promises that he gives to us to trust in, to build our lives on, to believe in.

When he gives his people the gift of faith to teach their children, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, these are promises also to us. It's what Peter says on the day of Pentecost, the same promise.

To you now, Gentiles and Jews, and to your children, it means that the character of God that is revealed in the Old Testament is also the character of our God.

[40 : 19] He's the God who helps to downtrodden. He's the God who hears the prayers of his afflicted. He's the God who answers the prayers of the help for his people. He's our God.

The Psalms are our songs, the prayers to be answered. The prophets speak to us when they tell God's people, you are the apple of his eye.

He's speaking to us. It's the same faith. I say that because some people become so obsessed with the discontinuity between the Old Testament and ours.

They constantly want to be saying when we read the Old Testament, oh well, we are not Old Testament Israel, so this somehow doesn't apply to us. And they steal away from us the great promises of God's grace.

of course it's true we're not in exactly the same situation as they are. But it most certainly is true that we have the same God, with the same character, the same purpose, the same promises.

[41 : 20] One gospel. And so we, verse 9, are blessed along with Abraham. We have the same status. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Israel is our God.

And salvation has always been about grace and not about works. And so the God who dealt with the twisters, the schemers, the failures, all the way through the history of his covenant people, and showed grace and mercy and restoration and love, is the same God who can deal with the twisters, the schemers, the falterers and the failures in this church this evening.

He's the God of Jacob. But Paul goes on, if we in our experiences know less than Abraham's and all the Old Testament saints, it is in fact much more.

Verses 12 to 14 speak about a climactic experience of salvation that is ours. What we have now in Christ is not less than the faith of Israel, is not different than the faith of Israel, but the fulfillment and the climax of all that has gone before is now upon us.

Christ has come, and therefore everything's changed, and there is a difference. But it's not one of change. Discontinuity is the wrong word. It's one of climax.

[42 : 53] Fulfillment is the right word. Now that the fullness of the time has come, now that Christ has come and he's died and he's risen, his spirit has come and the new creation has begun.

That's the mark of the latter days of the prophets. Remember, Joel, I'll pour out my spirit on all flesh. Or Jeremiah, I'll put the law in your heart, writing it by my spirit.

Or Ezekiel, I'll sprinkle you with clean water and baptize you in my spirit. So, says Paul, there is climax. The new covenant has begun, the new creation has begun, and therefore there are some things which are no longer.

And one of those things is the age of Moses. The Mosaic way of salvation. The Mosaic covenant. The Jewish way of life.

The law. So, verse 12, he says, the law is not of faith. Now, this is hard, isn't it?

[43 : 52] The NIV translation is particularly bad. The law is based on faith. He says, the law is not of faith. That seems to contradict what he's just said. Obviously, Paul cannot mean to contrast here the Old Testament and the New, the Torah and faith.

He's just argued exactly the opposite, haven't he? It's possible that he means the law, in the sense of the way the Judaizers now want to use it, is not of faith, because they've emptied it of the promises of Christ, and therefore it's just become legalism.

That's a possibility, but I think we must see law here as the Mosaic covenant, the Mosaic period. There's no sense throughout this argument in which it's meaning anything else.

But what does he mean when he says, the Mosaic way of being saved is not of faith? Seems to contradict, doesn't it? Well, the key here, I think, is to see how Paul uses faith in a very particular way all through this chapter.

Look at verse 23. Before faith came, he says. Now, clearly he cannot mean that there was no faith before that.

[45 : 03] He's just spent a whole lot of time arguing that Abraham was the great man of faith, that the people of God were saved by faith. So he's not talking about personal faith there. What is he talking about?

Well, look at verse 24. It's parallel, isn't it? Until Christ came. In other words, what he's meaning there by faith is the era of faith, the era of Christ, the new age.

Turn over to chapter 5, verse 6, and I think it makes it even clearer. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but only faith, working through love.

Look over to chapter 6, verse 15, for a parallel. Well, neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation.

And you see, all the way through chapter 3, that's the sense in which Paul is using this word faith. He's meaning new creation, the age of Christ, the era of the Spirit, the fullness of time.

[46 : 06] So what he means in verse 12 is this, the law, the Mosaic way, is not of the new creation. In other words, the Mosaic way, that period is no longer.

That's not for the new age. It belonged to something that's now passed away. Because you see, verse 13, Christ coming in his death fulfilled all that. He came and became a curse for us.

He was cursed, why? So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might actually come to the Gentiles. And so that the promise of the prophets, the age of the Spirit might come to us.

What Habakkuk was waiting for, what Abraham was waiting for, what all the Old Testament was waiting for has come at last, through the cross of Jesus Christ. He took the curse.

And ours was the blessing. And that's why, and only because of that, the Holy Spirit can be poured out on all flesh, on Jews and Gentiles. And that's why the law of Moses cannot be any longer.

[47 : 11] It just can't be a part of the picture anymore as a way of salvation. It can't even be a contributor to salvation or to ongoing sanctification, to living. Because no more sacrifices are needed because Christ has completed all sacrifice.

And no more separation of Israel as a nation from others is needed because the work is done. Christ has come. And Jew and Gentile are now united in Christ. And the whole purpose, the role of a distinctive ethnic nation has been completed.

They were there to incubate the promised seed until at last Jesus Christ himself was born. So verse 12, you see, the explanation is clear.

The law can have no part in the new creation. Because it was all about doing the way of Moses.

The one who does them will live by them. He's not saying that the law was against faith.

He's not saying here it's works against grace. That's the opposite of what he's been saying all the way through the chapter. Rather, what he is saying is that the law was all about separation.

Separating Israel from the Gentiles.

[48 : 19] And that was very necessary for a period. To keep a holy separate people. Nurtured by God until Jesus Christ came. If we look at the context of Leviticus 18, we won't turn to it.

But what Paul quotes here, the man who lives by them, will do them. It's very, very clear because the context there is not about trying to earn salvation. The context is all about keeping God's people separate from the practices and ways of the neighbouring nations.

Which was vital. In the days of Israel as a nation. In the era of Moses. But now that everything's fulfilled, it's not just not needed. It's impossible. Because the whole purpose from the very beginning was to unite Jew and Gentile.

through faith in Jesus Christ. And now we're all one. It's climax. It's fulfilment. You see, in the past, Paul says in Romans 3.23, God had only done half a job, as it were.

He'd passed over. Because he was waiting for the future. Because everything hinges on the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul preached Christ crucified because it was only when Christ actually came and became a curse for us, that everything could be fulfilled.

[49 : 40] So that, verse 14, the blessing of Abraham could come to the nations. And so that, notice the second so that, the promise of the Spirit to the Jews themselves could come. The promise of the new covenant for Israel, the age of the Spirit.

That could only come through God completing his plan for the whole world. And that public declaration of God on behalf of his people Israel, proclaiming them righteous, proclaiming them vindicated, all depended upon God's plan for the Gentiles.

And all of that depended upon Christ crucified and his resurrection. See, in the era of law, there was no true objective public justification of anybody yet.

They looked forward to it in faith and lived for it like Habakkuk. But it was still a far off. It was still a future hope. Romans 3.23, God says, Paul says, God passed over the sins of the past.

But now in Christ, he says, he shows himself publicly to be just, punishing sin and the justifier, the one who counts people righteous with him.

[51 : 00] Only because of Christ crucified in history. Only because of Christ actually bearing the curse for us. And therefore Paul says to the Galatians in the first century, and he would say to us, Glaswegians in the 21st century, he would say, your experience, what you have, by faith alone and by faith in Christ, is absolutely complete.

No one can add anything to it. It's consistent with the faith of all the great heroes of the faith, like Abraham. But it's climactic. You have more.

You have got acceptance with God. You have justification as a completed fact in history. And that is something that no Old Testament saint ever had.

Not Abraham, not Habakkuk, not anybody. They trusted in that day. All their hope was in that day. But only when that day actually came in history was it secured.

I think that's why Jesus says, Abraham saw my day and was glad. He rejoiced to see it. It was the day he'd been longing for. He had his hope in that day from the very beginning. But he saw it. And he was glad because at last what was his by promise was declared publicly to the world, to the cosmos, to the universe.

[52 : 26] In the resurrection of Jesus, he was raised for our justification, says Paul. And though all these Old Testament saints were commended for their faith, as Hebrews 11 tells us, yet they never received what was promised.

God had promised better things for us, he says, so that only along with us would they be made perfect. Only as we are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

So friends, what does this difficult argument of Paul's mean for us? What it means is this. There's nothing more wonderful in the history of the cosmos, in the history of eternity, than what you have received in the gospel of Christ crucified.

Nor is there anything greater possible in your Christian experience. The experience of justification, in fact, the experience of acceptance with God, is the climax of history.

It's the fulfillment of God's plan right from the beginning, and it's the climax of human experience.

Until the day when at last we see his face, and we hear that declaration in the heavens.

[53 : 48] And that experience began when his Holy Spirit brought faith to birth in you. And it goes on by the same spirit, by faith, as he nurtures faith within you.

You don't need anything else. But it's all because you received the message of Christ crucified. So if anybody erodes your confidence, if anybody tries to denigrate your Christian experience, look to the cross of Jesus Christ, and point them to the cross of Jesus Christ, and tell them that is the climax climax of God's plan of salvation.

That is the fullest blessing. That is the promise of the ages that the prophets looked for, that Abraham looked for, that everyone lived for. And we have received that blessing.

We've got it all. Don't let anyone tell you that you're lacking in anything. And if you yourself lack assurance, if sometimes you feel you're not all you should be, and every one of us feels like that most of the time, then look to the cross.

Christ is crucified and risen. Your curse is gone because he bore that curse. He's the Son of God who loved me, says Paul, and gave himself for me.

[55 : 23] And all the blessing of the promised ages because of that is yours. The moment you believed, the moment you received the message of Christ crucified, that the Holy Spirit applied it to your life.

you lack nothing because there's nothing greater in all the universe than Christ crucified.

And if you believed, that is yours. And if you struggle in the Christian life, that is all you need. So don't look anywhere else.

You have you have it all. And you have it by faith alone, in Christ alone.