

Serving the Promise of God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, do turn with me please to Galatians chapter 3. The title tonight is simple, Serving the Promise of God. Or, if you want another title, The Parenthesis of the Law.

As we've seen, these verses, these arguments of Paul are not easy. I will strive very hard tonight to give us clarity. I may not possibly be able to give us brevity.

We saw last time how Paul was insisting that his Galatian readers, and especially those who were enamoured with the teaching of the new Jewish missionaries, and lured by the traditions of Israel and its law, insisting that they see and understand God's big picture in salvation.

That's something that's just as important for us today. We were seeing it this morning, weren't we, in Matthew chapter 10. The Gospel is about God, primarily, not about us. God is at the centre of the universe, at the centre of time, and at the centre of eternity.

It's his plan that we're thinking about. And his plan is a cosmic one. He's doing nothing less than redeeming and remaking the whole universe, the whole cosmos for his glory, for the glory of his Son forever.

[1 : 2 6] And the wonder of the Christian Gospel is that he calls all who will believe in his Son to be taken up into that great plan and purpose, to share the glory. But it is God's glory, not ours.

And we must never forget that. Nor must we ever confuse God's goal, his end and purpose, with the means to that end, how he goes about achieving his goal in history.

Involving his people in that plan, taking them up in it and using them in their time. In other words, we mustn't confuse God's work and our work. What he calls his people to do in terms of participating in his plan.

That's one of the great confusions that has plagued God's people, his church, right from the beginning all the way through. It's so easy to forget, isn't it? In our mission, in our ministry, in our lives, that actually it's God's kingdom we're engaged in building, not ours.

It's God's church, the church of Jesus Christ, that we're serving, not ourselves. We're not the centre of attention. Yet so often we act as though we were.

[2 : 4 0] It's so easy to forget that and to put ourselves at the centre. And that's what leads to idolatry, to the worship, really, of ourselves, of our traditions, of our mission, of our particular way of doing things, of our privileged status.

We put that at the centre as though that was God's great focus. But no, God is at the centre. And that's what Paul's reminding the Galatians about.

The permanence of God's great promise. His big picture, he's doing something really big. He's doing something enormous. It's his one great gospel, the permanence of his promise from eternity to eternity to achieve everything through Christ and through Christ alone.

But we might ask, well, how does that promise come to fruition? How does God's eternal plan fit into the course of human history? The answer is in chapter 4, verse 4.

It's all in God's perfect time. The fullness of time had come. And it's all through God's perfect person, his perfect Messiah.

- [3 : 51] In the fullness of time he sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law. That's how God brings his promise to fruition. But his readers, you see, especially his opponents, they might say, well, that's all very well, Paul. It's fine to talk about God's promise to Abraham. We all agree with that. It's fine to talk about God's accomplishing salvation through Jesus Christ. We all agree with that too. But you're forgetting your history.
- Abraham didn't have a son called Jesus. It didn't all happen just like that. What about those hundreds of years? What about nearly 2,000 years?
- Of the glorious history of Israel, of God's people, of the kings, of the prophets, of all that, of the law? What about the glories of Moses? What about the glories of the Jewish faith?
- What about the law? That's a good question that Paul is answering in verse 19. And he now addresses that squarely in verses 19 to 25.
- [4 : 54] If the law is not a substitute for salvation, if it doesn't add to the promise, as we saw last time, verse 15, if it's not a supplement to the promise for a fuller experience of salvation, then what is it?
- If it adds nothing, as you say, Paul, then why was it added? Well, says Paul in verse 19, it was added. And that word there means it came in alongside in a rather subordinate way.
- It was added, says Paul, as a servant of the promise. That's all. It was a temporary necessity in history. It was part of God's plan and purpose so that all the promises spoken of to Abraham might in fact actually come to pass, actually be fulfilled in history as promised.
- It was part of a vehicle to bring about what chapter 4, verses 4 and 5 speaks of, the coming of the Christ in the fullness of time to accomplish the great salvation of God. So when the purpose of a servant is fulfilled, when he's achieved his purpose, well, his role is complete.
- Nothing for him to do. Gives away to the reality. It was always pointing forward to that, says Paul. And it's no longer needed. It's rather like a map. You need a map when you're going on a journey.
- [6 : 23] You need to have it to tell you where to go. You need it all the way through the journey, right to the very end. But when you've arrived, well, you put the map back in the glove box of the car. You don't need it anymore. You've got there.
- Just so with the law, says Paul. It was vital for the journey, but not forever. Not when you've arrived. It was never an end in itself. It was never the whole story.
- Never was. Always. It was a means to an end. And that end was the fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. So the period of the law, the period of Moses, was only ever part of the story that was always heading for a climax in Jesus Christ.
- Always. In Romans chapter 10, verse 4, Paul says this, quite literally, Christ for righteousness is the end, the goal of the law. For everyone who believes.
- That's where it was always going. The end in sight right from the beginning. So the promise of salvation in Christ is permanent. But the law, and the era of the law, is a parenthesis, a temporary chapter along the way.
- [7 : 36] And indeed, as it is in the argument here in Paul, verses 19 to 25, it's a parenthesis. Verse 18 could lead straight on to verse 26 otherwise. So says Paul, just as in my argument, so it is in history.
- Yes, it was a glorious thing. Yes, it was a gracious thing. Certainly wasn't opposed to the promise of God. He's quite clear on that. But it was a temporary thing. It was giving way to a greater glory, to the glory of Christ, than it was so always from the start.

But the law, and Israel under the law, was God's servant. Serving something greater. And unless you grasp that, Paul says, you will find yourselves in a state of idolatry.

Making the law itself into a God. Making the law something to be venerated, to be worshipped. That's exactly what the Jews ended up doing. But you know, we too can do that sort of thing.

With all manner of good servants of the gospel, all manner of help, traditions, all manner of good practices. Things that have been fruitful, perhaps, in the past. If they become our master, not a servant of the gospel, all too easily.

[8 : 49] It can end up leading to being in opposition to the gospel. Opposing grace, becoming idolatry. We've got to be so careful about all human institutions and things.

Because if they become the end, and not the means to the end, they can become against the gospel. And that's exactly the danger that Paul is trying to rescue the Galatians from here. They're in danger of being enslaved to a new master.

To a master that would deny them the glorious liberty of everything that they have in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the true gospel, it says you're accepted by God by grace alone, by his promise.

And you go on growing with God by grace alone, through his promise. It's not by becoming enslaved to a whole lot of other traditions. So they must see that the law was a servant of God and a temporary one at that.

Certainly not to be their master now that Christ had come. That's what he's going to do here, spelling out exactly what the function and the purpose of the law really was.

[9 : 51] We're going to look at that in a second, in some detail. But first, we've got to be very clear in a chapter like this about the terminology. The whole area of the place of the law and the place of the law now in the Christian life has been a very difficult area, one full of controversy.

It's an area which is complicated and part of the problem is just because of the complicated terminology. Paul uses this word law in lots of different ways.

We've got to be clear about exactly what it is he means here when he talks about the law of God. When he says verse 19, why then the law? What does he mean? Well, what he means is the Mosaic Covenant.

Or if you like, the way of faith that God gave through Moses at Sinai. Or the Mosaic Religion. Or if you like, perhaps best of all, the Israelite faith. The faith of Israel in the Old Testament.

He's not here when he refers to the law. He's not talking about just the Ten Commandments. He's not talking about God's moral laws, things about right and wrong. He's not talking about the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

[10 : 57] These are all things that law can mean. That's not what he means here. He's certainly not talking about law as opposed to grace. No. He's talking about the Israelite faith given by God.

God's way that the people were given to relate to him, the right way of relating to him for that time. It's quite clear, you see, the message here is not that the commands of God and obedience to God doesn't matter anymore now that Christ's come.

That couldn't be perfectly clear in chapter 5, verse 7. Just look at it. He tells them quite clearly they've got to be obedient to the truth. That's a command. Chapter 6, verse 2, he talks about them living so as to fulfil the law of Christ.

What Paul's on about here is not just law in the sense of commands, he's rather talking about the law as a whole package of faith and life from the era of Moses until the coming of Christ.

The Old Testament way of salvation, the Old Testament faith, the Mosaic covenant. And yes, the Jewish missionaries were right in one sense. It was a glorious thing, it was a gracious thing.

[12 : 08] Then, then it was because it was full of the promise of the Christ who was to come. But after its time, after Christ had come, oh, that's a very, very different thing.

Like food that's gone past its sell-by date. No use anymore. It's no longer appropriate to be used the same way. Before the date, yes, fine.

Afterwards, to be thrown out. So the law, then, in this argument is bound up with Israel's national identity as an entity, as a nation, as a people.

And remember that Israel was God's servant nation, called to be God's servants, to bring salvation and the knowledge of God to the ends of the earth. They kept forgetting that, of course.

They kept beginning to think that what being chosen really meant was being chosen to be the focus of all God's attention and then alone to be at the heart of God's plan. But no, right from the very beginning, Israel was called to be a light to the nations, a servant nation.

[13 : 15] And that's the focus, you see, throughout all of Paul's argument here. The crux of the whole issue is one of identity. In the old era of Moses, in the era of the law, the identity of God's people was marked out by the law of Moses.

The law of Moses defined Israel as a nation. The law of Moses defined Israelites as individuals, especially through circumcision. But now, you see, now in the age of fulfillment, God's promise has been fulfilled and the gospel has gone out to all nations.

So the question is, is the identity of God's people now, in the age of fulfillment, in Christ alone, being clothed with Christ, as verse 27 puts it?

Or, is the identity of the true people of God through faith in Christ and things of the flesh added unto it? As the law used to mark out Israel, according to the flesh.

In other words, do we have to be clothed with Moses as well as Christ? So you see, the law is the Israelite faith, the way of Moses.

[14 : 32] And when you ask the question, why then the law? You're really asking the question, what is the purpose of Israel? What was the purpose of Israel as an ethnic, as a national identity, as a people?

And so you see what a sensitive question it is. What an explosive question. Still today, it's an explosive question. Is Israel, says Paul, is Israel as an ethnic identity hedged in by the Mosaic law?

Is that the centre of God's story? The end? The be all and end all? Or, was Israel beloved and privileged as she was? Was Israel just a means to an end?

A greater end? A more glorious end? Serving the promise of God to bring salvation to all the earth? You see, that's what the question is here.

It boils down to this, really. Is Moses the servant of the Christ? Or is Christ really a servant of Moses? Is Moses a servant who points to Jesus?

[15 : 41] Or is Jesus the servant who says, yes, come along and I'll point you to Moses, to Abraham, to be your real master? That's what it comes down to and Paul shows very clearly that the new missionaries had their theology completely back to front like that.

They were saying that you must add the Mosaic way to faith and gospel of Jesus Christ. Actually, what they're saying is Christ serves Moses. Believe in Jesus and he'll lead you to Moses for the full experience of everything you can have from God.

That's what their gospel amounted to. But no, says Paul, no, it's the other way around. Moses and his law serve the promise to lead you to Christ, to find fulfillment of everything that there is to be found from God in Christ alone, nowhere else.

If you grasp the real purpose of the law, says Paul, you'll see that from the very beginning it's all about Jesus Christ. And that's really, to summarize, Paul's argument here.

It does help us to keep, I think, the melodic line, the main focus of his argument, in our heads as we look at the detail. Let's look at the detail now in these verses 19 to 25.

[16:56] What specifically was the role of Moses? What specifically was the role of the nation of Israel? Why then the law at all? That's Paul's question. First of all then, Paul says in verses 19 and 20, it very clearly was a parenthesis in history.

My dictionary defines parenthesis as this, an aside or digression or between brackets. And here in verses 19 to 25 we have brackets.

You could go directly from verse 18 to verse 26 and it would make a lot of sense. God gave it to Abraham by a promise. For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

But you see, we've got these brackets. Paul says, as it is here in my argument, so it was in history. He says here in these verses three things very clearly about the law. First of all, working back from verse 20, he says it was partial.

There's clearly something incomplete about the era of the law. Yes, it was glorious, it was given by angels. But it had to do with intermediaries, implying some kind of aberration, because God is one.

[18:08] Now, whatever that verse means, and it's a difficult verse, we looked at it last week, I think it's most helpful to think about it in terms of the separation of Jew and Gentile, but whatever that verse means, it clearly means that it could not be the final state in God's plan.

However glorious the law might have been with its angels and everything else, it was still only a partial state of affairs, pointing therefore to a time when there would be no intermediaries, no separation, because God is one.

So it's only a partial thing, he says. Secondly, he says it was only for a period. It began, it began, verse 17, very specifically, 430 years after Abraham.

It ended, says Paul, when the promised seed came, the one united people of God in Christ, verse 19, only until the seed.

And that is, of course, the same as what he says in verse 23, when faith came. Or verse 24, when Christ came. Or chapter 4, verse 4, as we've read, when the fullness of time came.

[19:17] So it's absolutely clear, it's a parenthesis, it began then, and it was until then. And yet in that period, of course, it was glorious, it was gracious, it was ordained by God, but after that, no, it passed its sell by date, quite different.

It's rather like a bank check. Somebody got on to us recently about a check that we'd given them from the church here, and they'd forgotten to bank it. And it was now passed its six months date. Before that, of course, it was full of value.

It was as good as cash. But after that date, well, it looked the same, you could try and use it in the same way, but in reality, it's actually worthless. Totally worthless as a vehicle for the transfer of capital.

And the law, as a vehicle for salvation through God's promise, was for a period only. It was only for that time from Moses to Jesus.

But Paul says it was, thirdly, for a purpose. It was to meet a need, verse 19 says, it came in because of transgressions, until the seed should come.

[20 : 29] And that purpose was twofold. It came in to lead us to Christ in history. In other words, the law had a preparatory role. But also to lead to Christ theologically.

It had a prophetic role. It came in because of transgressions, to prepare the way for God's redemption as an act in history. And to prepare the world also for their need of redemption.

By his revelation of the meaning of sin. And the sinfulness of man in the face of a holy God. And both of these two things, its redemptive function and its revelatory function, are bound up with the history of God's people Israel.

Let's take the first of those. The law then was preparatory. It was accomplishing redemption in the world. The era of the Mosaic law that bound together and kept Israel cohesive as a national identity, as the family of promise, that era was essential for the promise of God to come to fruition.

The law in that sense had a clear redemptive function. It was the incubator, if you like, for the line of God's promise. The physical line bearing the promise deliverer that had been promised right from the beginning, it simply must survive until the time that Christ should be born.

[21 : 52] And that line was preserved in the community of faith, in history, so that there would actually be in history, objectively, the realization of everything that God had promised.

So that at last, as verse 22 tells us, the promise might actually be given to those who believe. On what basis was that promise given to those who believe?

Well, it's there in verse 22a. By the faith of Jesus Christ, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, in other words, his actual work in history, his death and resurrection on the cross.

Only that actual accomplishment in history resulted at last in real, true justification being publicly declared in history. Look back to verse 11, just remember, Paul says no one was actually justified before God in the law, that is in the era of the law.

In the law, literally, not by the law. But in verse 24, we read that when Christ came and died and rose, only then justification was actually achieved in history.

[23 : 05] Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. Remember Paul in Romans 4, 25 says he was raised for our justification.

Before that, everything was in the future, everything was by promise. Yes, of course the saints in the Old Testament were saved. Of course they were justified by faith in Jesus Christ, but it was all in the promise of Jesus still to come.

It all hung on the promise of God actually coming good. That's why in that hymn that we sang, it was about those who were before us in the old times now rejoicing because Christ had actually accomplished what he promised he would.

So the law, you see, served the promise. It kept Israel as Israel until the Christ should come. Verse 21 says, it's very clear, it was never contrary to the promise.

It was never to give salvation any other way except by preparing for the fulfilment that would come in Jesus Christ. So that what was promised might actually be given.

[24 : 14] That's what verse 14 says, in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham actually came to the Gentiles. And we Jews actually received the promised spirit. We could say a lot more about that, about the preparatory role of the law because it explains the whole of Israel's history and God's preservation of the nation right through to the coming of Christ despite their sin, despite their rejection.

But this much is clear, the law was never an end in itself. It was rather a servant. It had a preparatory role in God's work of redemption. But further, the law was prophetic as well as preparatory.

In other words, the law proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Alongside its role in the unfolding plan of redemption, God's law through Moses had a revelatory function.

As a revelation of God's word through Israel to the world. And a special revelation to Israel themselves. Because of transgressions, the world needed to be led to Christ theologically, as well as historically.

And that prophetic function is both negative and positive as regards sin. In verse 22, Paul tells us about the negative function. It condemns the whole world. It imprisons everyone, everyone without distinction, under sin.

[25 : 43] Dr. Palmer Robertson says this, that the distinctive of the Mosaic covenant, given at Sinai, compared with what was before with Abraham and so on, is that it is, quote, a comprehensive external summation of the holiness of God.

And the will of God for human response and behaviour. And therefore, more than anything else previously, it highlighted sin. Not different to what God gave to Abraham as a way of salvation.

Genesis 22, God says, I've chosen Abraham so that he will teach and lead his family in the way of righteousness. But at Sinai, with Moses, we have a far more comprehensive and vast and clear revelation of the holiness of God.

And right from the beginning, that purpose was for the world. Read Deuteronomy chapter 4. God says, I'm giving you this law so the world will see. They'll see your laws. They'll see my holiness.

They'll see the demands that I make. And they'll say, who is a God like this? Where is a nation with such wonderful and true and righteous laws? And therefore, they'll look and they'll see and the law will do what the reformers used to call its killing work.

[26 : 57] Destroying all self-righteousness. Showing the need of salvation that can only come by faith in God, not by anything we do ourselves. And that, says Paul, is what Israel's law did to Israel and to all the world, without distinction.

It had a condemning function. Locked them up under the condemnation of sin. But also, you see, for Israel in particular, the law had a more positive prophetic function in the era before Christ.

Verse 23, he says that we Jews were held captive in custody by the law until that coming age of faith. In other words, as well as the condemning function for Israel, the law also had a very privileged supervisory function.

It's not just the imprisonment of condemnation for Israel. No, it was also a custodial, supervisory thing.

And he spelled that out in verse 24 and says exactly what he means by that kind of custody. He says the law was our, well, it's a difficult word, guardian. Schoolmaster, perhaps.

[28 : 08] The word is pedagogue. The law was our guardian until Christ. Christ. What does that mean? Well, a pedagogue was not quite a teacher, nor a nursery nurse.

It's somewhere in between. The pedagogue was a slave in major households. Usually a trusted person, a very respected person. Maybe one even held in affection. But he was put in charge of the young son or sons of the house to administer discipline, to train them, to supervise them.

So Richard Longenacker says, to administer the direction of the father of the house in a custodial manner. Not necessarily a brutal or an ugly sadist.

Some people have tried to apply that. That's not right. But certainly not a Mary Poppins. Somewhere in between. Maybe a strict governess. Perhaps the drill sergeant, an officer training school.

But all the disciplines are there for a privileged son, in order that he should learn the ways of his father, in order that his rebellion should be subdued, in order that he should be brought up to reach his maturity, the destiny of his birth.

[29 : 22] A tough thing, a necessary thing, but predominantly a temporary thing. Very appropriate for the young adolescent in the house, but always, always with that end in view.

The day of maturation, of graduation, the day of fulfilment. And that's what Paul's saying here about the Mosaic Law. It was the privilege of Israel, the tough privilege of Israel.

Israel alone, among all the nations. To have the weight of God's law, the weight of his revelation. But not just to suffer its condemnation, in common with all the world.

But to possess, in the whole gamut of the revelation of God through Moses, to possess the way of salvation. And that's why verse 24 says that the law was our guardian until Christ, in order that we, that is Jews, we Jews of all the people of the earth, the privileged people that we are, that we might have, by faith in God's coming Messiah, justification.

By faith in that promise. You see, the law in that sense is prophetic. It prepares the way for Christ. By showing to the world a divine standard of holiness, and therefore condemning sin in all people everywhere.

[30 : 46] But as well as that, for those within the chosen nation of promise within Israel, to light up the way of salvation, by faith in the promises that they also had.

That's why the NIV translation, if you have it, the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ. That's wrong grammatically. The point here is a temporal one. It should read as the ESV, until Christ.

But it does actually capture the thrust of the argument as a whole. For Israel, you see, who didn't just have God's commands for holiness, and therefore were condemned by their failure to live up to them, as the whole world is.

They also had the promises of salvation. They had the tabernacle, the temple, they had the Passover supper, they had the priests, the sacrifices. They had a way of forgiveness, and the law drove them to that.

Showing them their sin, but telling them the only hope was by faith and trust in God's promise, God's way of atonement. Through these sacrifices, all of which pointed forward to the one true and great sacrifice of the coming Christ himself.

[32 : 01] And that promise grew clearer and clearer and clearer through the ages, as the Christ drew nearer. So as a parenthesis in history, the law, the era of Israel, prepared for the coming of Christ in history as being a vehicle for God's redemption from sin.

But as it was doing that, as it was preparing the way for God's plan to unfold also, it prophesied the need for a coming Saviour. It was a vehicle of revelation about sin to all the world and about salvation to Israel, who had the way of escape through the sacrifices of the promises of God.

And as such, the law was, you see, necessarily also partitioning. I think we're obsessed with peas today, but there we are.

Separating God's people from the rest of the world. That was a necessity for God's plan, but only for a period. In order to serve the promise which was always right from the very beginning for the whole world, for all nations to be blessed through Abraham.

So the Lord did partition Jew and Gentile, but only, says Paul, for a period. But now, verse 25, now, faith has come.

[33 : 25] And there's a no longer. Preparation has led to accomplishment. Christ has actually come. He has accomplished redemption in history. Therefore, salvation is offered to all in Christ alone.

Prophecy has given way to fulfillment. Faith is now in an accomplished salvation. In the Christ, who is the full and final revelation of God's holiness and his way of salvation.

And partitioning has given way to unity. We're all one in Christ Jesus. There's now no longer any need for separation. That's why he says in verse 25, you're no longer under a guardian.

That whole era, it was necessary. It was burdensome. It was preparatory. But it's given way to the destiny, to the graduation, to adulthood, to the maturity that you were always waiting for.

You're in the same household, of course. God hasn't changed. He's got the same values. But you've grown up. Chapter 4, verse 7 says, you're no longer a slave, but a son.

[34 : 35] When you're no longer a guardian, but free, you're no longer a slave. You're a son. And moreover, he says, you're all sons, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

If you're Jews, you came to it by way of the guardianship of being part of the history of Israel. If you're Gentiles, you came in from far away, without any background. But now, you're all one.

So Moses, in that sense, your work has been done. You've served well in God's household. Remember Hebrews chapter 3? Moses was a faithful servant in God's household.

But now, Jesus is here. He's the son over the house. You're all his household. All who are baptized into Christ. All who have put on Christ.

You're all one in him. You're all one in Christ Jesus. No more partitioning. That's our identity now. And the past is just that. It's the past.

[35 : 36] So the law is a parenthesis. It was preparatory in history for the need of the coming of the person of Jesus Christ. And all the way along, it prophesied. Condemning the world under sin by showing the holiness of God.

And for the Jews in particular, driving them to the justifying faith that they had through God's promise and that alone. Just as we close, let me give three implications of this for us today.

Just in case we misunderstand. Firstly, for our proclamation of the gospel today. To recognize Paul's argument that the era of the Mosaic law is past is not to say, not to say, that there's no longer any place for God's revelation to condemn sin.

It's not to say, well, we don't need the law in that sense anymore. We just need to put the positive. We just preach Christ in that sense. We don't need to condemn sin. No.

The same principle applies all through the gospel era as well. Because just as Moses' law revealed God's holiness, so we have now the supreme revelation of God's holiness in the person of Jesus Christ.

[36 : 50] And the law, therefore, had condemning power, but the gospel, because of the fullness of the revelation in Christ, has far greater condemning power than ever the law of Moses had. That's why we read chapter 1 to 3 of Paul's letter to the Romans, which he says is his exposition of the gospel of God.

What does he begin with? The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all mankind. Three chapters of unrelenting, unrelenting accusation that ends up with the whole world being locked up, condemned under sin.

No, there's no place for evangelism light, remitting out the demands of God's holiness and mankind's lack of them in sin. No, we must see God's holiness.

We must see our own sinfulness. What was true in history, and Paul is arguing here about history, about the law coming before the gospel, that's also true in human personal experience, in individual experience.

We must see God's holiness and our falling short, our sin. Otherwise, we'll never flee to him for salvation. John Calvin, at the beginning of book 3 of his Institutes, in the way of redemption, says this, As long as Christ remains outside of us, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us.

[38 : 14] The fact that Christ has accomplished salvation in history is a fact, but nevertheless, it must become ours individually. It must affect us personally.

We must have faith in him. Whoever we are, Jew or Gentile or Muslim or Hare Krishna, we must have faith in Jesus Christ.

But conversely, if we have faith in Jesus Christ, if we have trusted him, we are not condemned. We need nothing more. We have it all.

We have it all in Christ alone, by promise. And let no one tell you that you need more. Christ is the master. He's never the servant.

Christ never leads us to Moses or to anybody else, to Joseph Smith or to the Book of Mormon or to anywhere else you like. It's Christ and in him alone that we find salvation.

[39 : 14] Secondly, for our Christian life today, the fact that we as Christians are no longer under the Mosaic law, the Mosaic way of salvation, does not mean Christian life light.

Does not mean we are antinomian. We have no regard for God's commands. Of course not. We'll see in chapters 5 and 6 in Galatians, nothing can be further from the truth.

Far from there being less demands, there are actually more demands and greater demands. Christ's revelation of holiness, as we said, is far greater. Than that in the law of Moses.

We're to be like him, Jesus says. We're to follow and fulfil the law of Christ. It's not to say God's commands don't matter anymore, but it is to say that the only yoke we bear is the yoke of Christ.

We obey him. We obey his word in scripture. We obey it as a response of love to him. Not as some extra burden that's put on us.

[40 : 19] To gain an extra experience. As if the grace of God in the gospel of Christ wasn't enough. No, never. Beware of any kind of piety, any kind of traditions, any expectations, the sort of accretions that are all around us in the Christian church.

Even the best things, even the things that God himself gives, like the law through Moses, even these can so easily lead to slavery. It can lead to idolatry.

And friends, brothers and sisters, that is especially true, I'm afraid, in evangelical churches. We have so many cherished sacred cows, so many traditions. Oh, we must do it this way.

We mustn't change that. We protect our thing. We're so worried, Lasonza might be upset. And so often, protecting these cherished things, which we think are the way of a higher experience, or the better way of doing things, so often, these are the things that lead to splits in the fellowship of God's people.

Break down in relationships. Wrecking of the fruitfulness in gospel mission. We must remember that any things of the flesh, which do not lead to Christ, and which do not lead to unity of the people of God in Christ, no longer serve the gospel, however good they may be of themselves.

[41 : 43] But they become anti-gospel, anti-grace. Things, all human things, serve Christ. Christ must never be made to serve things.

If we remember that, we'd have a lot less strife than the Christian church. Finally, an implication for grasping the very heart of our Christian faith.

Don't miss the climax, the heart of the Christian message that Paul unfolds here. It's not just about justification.

Not just about forgiveness. These things are vital, of course. But Paul says it's all about being in Christ. Verse 26.

In Christ Jesus, you're all sons of God. You've all been baptized into Christ. You've put on Christ. You're all one in Christ.

[42 : 41] It's all about Christ. It's all about Him. It's all about the wonder of our Savior. It's all about the wonder of an intimate relationship with Him. It's all about Jesus, and His love for us, and our love for Him.

And you know, it's possible. It's possible to lose sight of that in the midst of all the talk about justification, and doctrine, and all these other things. All of these are vital.

Don't misunderstand me. You'll never hear me downplaying these things. Justification by faith. Penal substitution. Propitiation. I'll go to the wall for these things.

But you know, it's possible to be theologically correct and deadly sound on every one of these doctrines. and absolutely miss the plot altogether. Absolutely empty of the reality that it's all ultimately about a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Savior Himself.

And that's tragic. I looked in my dictionary this week for the definition of marriage. Here's what the Oxford Dictionary says.

[43 : 54] Marriage. The state in which a man and woman are formally united for the purpose of living together and with certain legal rights and obligations towards each other. That's legally correct, isn't it?

That's romantically correct. Is that how marriage is? Your marriage? Never. Of course not. That totally misses the heart of it, doesn't it?

The heart of it is a wonderful, enriching, joyful, one flesh union full of the companionship and the love and the commitment and the joy. And unless and until you've grasped that about Christ, about what it means to be in Him, about what it means to be united to Him in joyous union, then, friends, your Christian walk is always going to be like struggling along in a burdensome and loveless marriage.

If it's all still just, only about doctrine and piety and religion and religious duty, you've missed it. You haven't yet grasped the joy and the wonder of the fact that it's all about Jesus.

It's all about being found in Him. He and He alone is the very heart of the Gospel that we proclaim. So never, ever forget that the climax is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

[45 : 24] He's our Saviour. He's what it's been pointing to He writes from the beginning of time. He's the be-all and end-all. He's the goal. He's the great end. He is the prize.

And Paul says, He's yours. For everyone who believes, by promise alone, by God's grace alone, nothing to pay, received by faith alone.

alone. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs, according to promise.

never forget, the heart of the Gospel is the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for everyone who believes. Well, let's sing about that as we close our service.

we suppress last time for God. We watch another life for God for for God who believes calf and every feeling of you and as we speak by God and all the disciples helping us certainly so God lives are may Heir one