

Happy Easter. It's good to see you. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them, Galatians chapter 3 is where we're going to be. If you're here today and don't have a Bible with you, don't own a Bible, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you, take that, if you don't own one, that's our gift to you.

I'd be remiss if I didn't start by saying it's good to see some of you again. It's been a while. Hope Christmas was great – I'm not hating – I'm just excited to see you. It's like a family reunion: we get together a couple of times a year. Glad that you're here.

We've been walking through the book of Galatians for the last ten weeks or so. I don't plan to deviate from that in our time together. Honestly, what we need to cover today is right in the text. The reason why we're here gathering, celebrating the resurrected Christ is actually all over this text. It's just sovereignty in a real perfect way. I'm looking forward to getting in that text with you.

Before we get going, I want to simply say, just so I can get my cards on the table for you, that I believe – regardless of how you got here, it's my understanding from the Scriptures, it's my understanding from what the Bible tells us about God – you're here today and you're in this room today not because a friend invited you or because of some cultural, "Oh, it's Easter, let's put on clothes we haven't worn since last year and go to church." You're here at a divine decree. You're here at a drawing of God to lay before you some things about Himself that you'll have to respond to. You being here today is actually objective evidence of God's grace, mercy and pursuit of you in the hopes that your heart may be made complete, that your joy may be made complete.

Regardless of what else we do today, the evidence I want to draw your attention to early on is that you're here – not because of a friend or a neighbor or a family member – but you're here at the drawing of God, who longs to reveal Himself to you in such a way that your life is transformed beyond the cultural boundaries of, "This is what we do on Easter weekend."

That's my hope going in. It actually frees me up to just preach the Word of God and trust that God will be God. I don't feel any extra pressure to hit a homerun with my sermon or anything like that. It's God who draws, it's God who saves, it's God who rescues – I just need to be faithful to the text.

Let me ask a question to make sure this opening illustration will even work – honestly, I'm going to do it whether it works or not: how many of you were not alive in 1965?

Okay, we'll just see what happens here (for the record, I wasn't either).

In late 1965, the number one song on the Billboard charts was by a band by the name of The Byrds. They wrote a song called "Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)." That was late 1965, it was number one on the Billboard charts.

Interesting facts about that song: when all is said and done, that song, "Turn! Turn! Turn!" by The Byrds – a rock band out of the UK – that song has the oldest lyrics of any song ever on a Billboard list. The lyrics of that song are word-for-word, outside of the very last line of the song, Ecclesiastes 3:1-12.

Most scholars agree that Song of Solomon was written in 900 B.C. Thousands of years before 1965, the teacher, the preacher, writing Song of Solomon, pens words that a few thousand years later become a number one song on the Billboard charts by a rock band called The Byrds, spelled with 'y.'

This is off topic for a sermon, but I think it's important to note. Not that whole thing, but what I'm about to say: for all the arguments in our culture that there's no such thing as transcendent truth – what I mean by that is there's no such thing as a truth that fits into all contexts, everywhere, always – this has to clash with that idea in some way. Because three thousand year old Hebrew culture is nothing like 1965 Western culture, and yet those lyrics so resonated with the souls of Europeans and Americans that it shot to number one on the charts.

And the lyrics were simple: To everything there is a season / There is a time to be born, there's a time to die / There's a time to mourn, there's a time to laugh / There's a time to dance / There's a time to gather, there's a time to scatter / There's a time to build up, there's a time to tear down / There's a time to plant, there's a time to uproot what is planted / There's a time for everything under the sun.

He's establishing this rhythm that there are seasons in which this is okay and a season in which this is not okay. And that's a transcendent truth, we all feel that, we all know that. Honestly, if we'd open our eyes, we could see it almost anywhere.

Several weeks ago, before our 7:15 Saturday night service, I was walking up and down the preschool hallways just trying to encourage the men and women who serve there and meet some of our parents, and I ran into a little boy probably about three or four in Batman pajamas, carrying his blankie.

So I started a conversation with him – his folks had already gone – I asked him if he was excited about *The Dark Knight Rises* coming out in July. He looked a bit lost; didn't know what I was talking about.

So then I down-shifted – I've always found this can draw out from a little boy who's wearing Batman pajamas – that's actually happened multiple times now – this can always draw out conversation: In a fight, who wins between Batman and Superman?

This kid, obviously ignorant, said that Batman would. So I disciplined a little bit: "Hey bro, I love you. I get it, he's your hero, you're dressed like him. But I just want you to know that trinkets and gadgets aren't going to work against the man of steel. Batman's going to get worked."

He persisted, argued about some kind of utility belt or something like that. I couldn't spank him, not my kid. I just said, "Okay buddy, let's just hope that never happens," and I walked away and came into church.

Here's what struck me about our conversation: it's nowhere on his radar that he's wearing his pajamas in public. It's not even registering. He's not self-conscious about it; he's not wondering about what other kids think. There's no nervousness in him. There's no, "I should be wearing pants." None of that is on his radar. He's completely content in a cape with a blankie, dressed as Batman in the church hallway. It's possible because of the season of life he's in.

For those of us in here, we don't want to wear our PJs in public. We'd be self-conscious about that. We'd be nervous about that. And to be straight with you, if you're here in your pajamas, you'll probably meet our security team. You're probably being put in the back of a car right about now.

The reason that's not showing up on his radar is because that's the season of life he's in. Now as he grows older, that's going to change. He's going to hit an age where he says, "I'm not wearing that, Mom. I'm not putting that on, Dad. I'm wearing my normal gear. I'm not dressing up as Batman. I'm not wearing the cape." But until he gets to that season, there's no reaction whatsoever in his heart about the fact that he's not dressed like everyone else.

Here's what I want us to do, here's what we've got to do today for the good of our own souls: we need to get to the bottom of – when it comes to our relationship with God and when it comes to where we are in regards to the gospel – whether or not we're believers.

Because it's my earnest belief that some of you here today think you're believers, and when all is said and done you're actually not believers. You're good people, you're moral people. You're conservatives by nature. But when it comes to having a relationship with Jesus Christ, you simply know about Him like I know about some sort of celebrity or sports figure.

We need to see what season of life you're in when it comes to the things of God. And what God gave us as a diagnostic to see what season we're in is the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments. And I'll explain that as we dive into the text.

My goal, by the end of our time together, which won't be very long in comparison to what it usually is, – just want to make sure I set your expectations well – is to figure out really where you are, what season you're in when it comes to the things of God.

Let's look at this, Galatians 3, we're going to pick it up in verse 15. Some of this is going to sound complex and muddy. I'm going to try to make it as clean and clear as possible. Galatians 3, starting in verse 15: "To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. 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,' who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise."

Let me try to clear that up, and I think it's pretty easy to clear, so let me try to explain it to you this way: God comes to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and says, "Through your offspring" – not through your offsprings, as in the nation of Israel – but "through your offspring" – and what we find out in this text and many other texts is: "Jesus Christ, through your offspring, you will be justified. You will be saved. You will have right standing before God. Your sins will be washed away. God's favor and blessing will be upon your life." And He gave all of that to Abraham by faith alone – by faith alone.

Which means Abraham, and we found this out in our study of Galatians, Abraham simply believed that promise and it was accounted to him, it was given to him as righteousness. Paul's point in this text is that 430 years before the Law even showed up on the scene, God had granted salvation to Abraham.

His point in the text is: the law can't save you. God does not save via behavioral modification. You doing better, you living a cleaner life, does not save you. You being more and more obedient to the Ten Commandments cannot save you

because God granted salvation through faith alone, grace alone, before the law even existed. Paul's argument is, "If you can be saved by cleaning up your act, then God's a liar."

He's using legal jargon; let's put it in a legal illustration. Let's say you wrote out a Last Will and Testament. And you wrote, "If something were to happen to me and my spouse, we're leaving our house, our cars and our money to our oldest son." A terrible accident happens. The judge opens up your Last Will and Testament, your oldest is there, and the judge begins to read the Last Will and Testament.

He reads, "You get the car. You get the house. You get the money. All of it is coming to you." Then he folds it up, puts it in an envelope and says, "But the only way you get those things is if you go to this college, you major in this degree plan and you have this GPA."

Does the judge have the right to do that? – No, he can't add to a ratified document. He simply has to let the document speak for itself. Paul's argument is, "God already gave the promise. You can't be saved by something that comes 430 years after he granted salvation."

If you're a thinker, this is what we've got to deal with: if this is true, and the Bible says it's true, if we're saved by grace alone, faith alone, 430 years before the Law was even given, what's the obvious question? – Why do we get the Law? Why does He give the Law at all? What's Mount Sinai all about? What's Moses all about? Why does He extend the Law to begin with? If salvation is going to be by grace alone, by faith alone, why does He ever give the Law at all? Why do we need the Law?

There are a couple of reasons. I'm not going to be able to cover all of the reason for the Law. Let me just cover a couple of reasons.

The first thing that the law does to serve all of mankind is it restrains evil. It doesn't make you righteous, but it restrains evil.

Let me use a common illustration here, one that I think everyone in the room, if they're honest, can resonate with: There's a reason you don't speed badly. Notice that I didn't say "you don't speed." I said that there's a reason that you don't speed badly. There's a reason you only creep a little bit above the limit. And what's that reason? Because you're righteous? – No. The reason is that you don't want a ticket. This is what the law does: the law is like a cage that restrains a lion. It doesn't change the nature of the lion, it just cages in the lion.

So when we're afraid of the repercussions of breaking the law, that doesn't make us righteous, it makes us fearful of the repercussions of the law. It doesn't make us holy, it just restrains us. So if you don't murder someone because you're afraid of lethal injection, are you righteous? If you're like, "I'd really like to just choke the life, physically choke the life out of you, but I saw this special on the Discovery Channel on how lethal injection is just really painful before you die, so I'm just not going to do that. I've gone on-line, and I've watched several episodes of CSI; I just don't think I could do it and not get caught. So I'm not going to murder you." – Right? You're not free.

The law doesn't make you free, the law just restrains evil. That's one of the first uses of the law. Here's another use of the law, and we've talked about this one quite a bit over the last few weeks, couple of months: The law is a spectacular diagnostic.

If we had a chance, any of us, individually to sit down and kind of talk, here would be my bet: My bet would be that almost everybody in this room considers themselves to be good people. Like everyone in this room would consider themselves – maybe there are like one or two of you that are like, “Woe is me,” you’ve kind of got the Eeyore complex – but for the most part, everyone in this room believes that they are good people.

Now, let me tell you why you believe that. You don’t believe that because you’re comparing yourself up and against God’s standard. You believe that because you’re comparing your strengths to other people’s weaknesses. That’s why you think you’re a good person. Because you say, “Well, I know I’m not perfect, but I don’t gossip like she does, except right now where I’m telling you how she gossips.”

“Well, I’m not perfect, but I don’t live my life like he lives his life.”

The standard of our goodness becomes other people’s weaknesses and not the holiness of God and not the standard God laid out at Sinai. So let’s talk here: The law of God, those Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai, are like a hammer on glass to the myth of self-righteousness that so many people walk in.

So let’s talk about self-righteousness, because here’s what I feel like happens: I feel like self-righteousness is a term we put on religious people. But that doesn’t always work because self-righteousness can be applied to the religious or the irreligious. Self-righteousness is simply a belief that works itself out by saying “I need no other savior but myself.”

For some of you, that works out in a religious way. “I don’t need Jesus, I can do all these things that Jesus wants me to do and I can be saved.” Some of you go, “I don’t need Jesus. I’m my own god. I’ll serve my own will. I’ll go after my desires.” And both of those are self-righteousness.

So the guy that comes to church every weekend, the guy that wakes up early and reads his Bible, the guy that memorizes the Scripture but doesn’t love and know Jesus in doing those things is self-righteousness. But the one who does whatever he wants, goes wherever he wants, has no fear of the law of God is also just as self-righteous. That’s not a term that can simply be applied to religious people. It’s a term placed on anyone who believes they don’t need a righteousness other than what they can earn themselves.

So the law just isn’t going to put up with that. The law is going to crush that idea, because He lays out very simply things that none of us do very well and it exposes us. So what the law does: the law reads everyone the same: Sinner in need of grace; fallen short of the glory of God. This is what the law does to all of us and this is where – really, look at the text, the text will do it for me.

So let’s look at this, look at verse 19: “Why then the law?” – look at this next line – “It was added because of transgressions.”

Now, I know you probably don’t care about Greek words but let me explain what’s happening in that little sentence. That little sentence is profound because here’s what he just said: that the law was given so that transgressions might increase, that God gave the law so that sin would increase. Let me explain why that is and how that looks.

Everybody loves God until God says something. Nobody has a problem with God until God speaks, and then when God speaks, that’s when you see the wickedness of our hearts revealed. That’s what the law does.

So it works something like this: Nobody has a problem with God until God says, "Thou shalt not..." And now all of the sudden we're like, "Who is He to tell me I can't?" That's how sin begets sin.

To use an example you'd see almost any day of your life if you have children: If you bust your child in a lie, what's their first response? – Just go, "Ah, you got me"? – No, what do they do? – They lie again, don't they?

"Did you do this?"

"No."

"You didn't write your name on that?"

"No."

"So who do you think did?"

"I don't know, maybe my sister."

"Your sister's at camp."

"I don't know."

"Well, actually, I have video of you doing it."

"It's not me."

We talk kids or we can talk you, but for all of us, sin begets sin. The law reveals wickedness as God commands: "Line yourself up with how I created things to work and be." We will rebel against God and wickedness will beget wickedness and it churns up in us for our own eyes and hearts to see that we are rebellious toward God.

You see this happening in a pretty spectacular way with the nation of Israel that's led out of slavery in Egypt towards the Promised Land. They have cleansed their garments, washed their skin. They are God's chosen people that He has delivered by the power of His might, out of slavery, towards this land flowing with milk and honey. And then Sinai happens; Mount Sinai happens.

There's thunder and lightning, and God's voice is shaking the mountain and He begins to read the law. Do you remember what they say? "You go up there Moses, we don't want, no, no, no. You just tell us what He said. We're not going up with you. You go on and up, come back down and tell us what He said."

They were laid low by what? – The law. God was simply not going to put up with their swagger. He very quickly said that "It's not because you're amazing that I'm saving you. It's because I'm amazing that I'm saving you. I've not rescued you because you are the biggest, strongest and brightest. I'm not so weak as to need you to execute My plan. I am the God of heavens and the heavens of heavens and I have called you unto Myself. I have rescued you unto Myself so that you might play a part in My glory, not because I need you for My glory." And the law smashing to glass self-righteousness is seen most clearly at Mount Sinai.

Look at where he goes next because I think this is spectacular. The law then terrifies, it haunts, it's a weight on, it's too heavy to bear on those who are not in Jesus Christ. Because it just condemns, it steadily condemns. It steadily reminds you that you are sick. It steadily reminds that you don't measure up, steadily reminds that you fall short. The law persistently reveals your failures to live up to God's standard of holiness. But it's not free to terrorize us forever. Let's look at this next line.

Verse 19: "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions," – or, so that transgressions might increase – comma, what's that word? – "until."

So if you write in your Bible, it might be a good idea to kind of circle that, or highlight that or whatever. Because what he just said is that the law, although it does terrify, although it is weighty, although it can be crushing, has not been given free reign forever. It will not be allowed to crush forever. It is given a season in which it exposes, it is given a season in which it lays bare, it terrorizes, it reveals our wickedness, until the offspring should come to whom the promise has been made.

So who's the offspring? If there's every a weekend you should be able to say this, – okay – who's the offspring? – okay – Jesus.

I felt a little lonely up here, it's cruel on Easter. Who's the offspring? – Jesus.

Where's the law have free reign? – The law has free reign to terrorize and to reveal wickedness unless you put your hope and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in His righteousness.

At the point, the law is no longer free to terrorize, haunt and crush. Why? – Because our righteousness has been granted to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, because we are holy and blameless in the sight of God.

So this should really kind of reverberate in two different places. For those of you who know Jesus and love Jesus but you're always just kind of weighed down by your failures and your short comings, look, the text is saying the time for the law terrorizing you is over. Rest in Jesus Christ.

For those of you who are saying, "Man, I don't believe in any of this nonsense. I think this is ridiculous, even the fact that you are saying that the law would weigh down or press on us." Go ahead and rail, but I want to point out to you that you are doing exactly what the text said you would do upon hearing the law: it would increase transgressions. It would reveal the hardness of your heart. It would reveal the pride in which you walk. It would reveal the wickedness in your heart as you would shake your fist at the heavens and say, "Who is God to tell me what I should and shouldn't do?"

If this is your fundamental position over here, then you are simply walking in line with scriptures. This is the thing I try to constantly reveal to people. I know it's not a pleasant thought, but it is a real thought. You don't have a choice whether or not you are going to glorify God with your life. Everyone does. You do it by being an object of mercy and grace, or you do it by being an object of God's just and right judgment and wrath. But even the most hardened heart in this room is being glory to God right now.

But the offer on the table for you and me is to humbly submit ourselves to what Christ has brought about in His life, death and resurrection and find ourselves freed up from the law and living in His righteousness and resting in His arms and in His finished work. That's the offer on the table.

And Paul's not going to let up. He's going to keep chiseling away at the law.

Let's look at these next couple of lines: "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one."

Let me very quickly clear that up, here's all he's saying, he's saying a couple of things: first of all, that the law was given by angels, not God Himself. It was given via God through angels. But the gospel message came as God in the flesh. One has more power than the other.

The second thing is that Moses is a miserable mediator. Do you know the job of a mediator? A mediator is to come in and reconcile two parties that are having issues with each other. Really, Moses shows up and makes it worse. We already talked about transgressions increase at the giving of the law. Moses shows up as mediator and goes "This is really, really, jacked up. Good luck." Moses doesn't give us any way to be saved. He just simply points out, "This is actually a bigger mess than you guys think."

Let me show you how big of a mess it is: It's like if you were having trouble with your spouse and someone gave you the advice, "You know what? You should just tell her to do what you say. That's what I would do."

"Yeah, but you're single."

"Yeah, but that's what I would do."

You calling that guy again for advice? – No, you're not. You might be calling him to see if you can stay with him for a while. This is what Moses does: he shows up and says "Yeah, this is a mess," but he doesn't give anyway to get out of it. He simply lays out that it is the mess.

That's his point here. That one, God brings the gospel personally versus angels delivering the law. And that Moses, although he could point out the problem, most definitely could not solve the problem.

All right, let's finish this up, verse 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."

Verse 22: "But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."

So there is a type of weariness, there is a type of weight that can bring about life. There's a way that life can press on you, the law can press on you, the weight of sinful worlds can press on you that leads you and brings you into life.

He says here that all things have been imprisoned under sin. That includes religious activity that does not proceed from faith. The Bible says that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Which means, if you are actively involved in religion, but that's not necessarily out of a heart that knows and loves Jesus Christ, than that activity is sinful. So all things imprisoned under the law so that we might find safety and salvation in the arms of Jesus Christ, so that we might be delivered by our Savior.

I want to just end our time together by pulling this towards an invitation that Jesus hands out in Matthew 11 in verses 28 and 29, where he says, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I'll give you rest for your souls."

Regardless of what your background is at least think of the invitation. Like, where else does that invitation come out? Are you really a mess? Are you lonely? Are you angry? Do you struggle with unforgiveness? Are you bitter? Are you frustrated? Have you been betrayed? "Come to me all who are weary." Are you addicted? Are you lonely? Is a relationship you are in falling apart? "Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest. I'll hand to you rest."

So it has been my earnest prayer all week that some of you are in a season of life where you need to see that you really are wicked. You've been judging your goodness on other people's weaknesses and not judging your wickedness based on the thing that God lays out to say, "Are you holy or are you not holy?" In light of the Ten Commandments, your response would have to be that you're not holy.

Now some of you will get worried about what I'm saying and go, "Chandler, if you preach this way, people are just going to do whatever they want. Because they'll go, 'Well Jesus saves me, and I don't need to change my life.'"

That's simply not true. When a heart has been made new in Jesus Christ, the law no longer terrifies. It tastes sweet. This is why David – who Hebrews told us was another of those Old Testament men who had put his faith in the grace that was coming in the offspring – called the law honey on his lips. So when you submit your life to Jesus Christ and begin to seek to follow Him, when the Law says, "Don't have gods that aren't Me," our heart response would be, "Why would I want another god? Other gods have to be appeased. You're the only God who actually appeased Yourself in a sacrifice of Yourself to purchase me for Yourself. Why would I want a god who has to have offerings made to him? I would rather have a God who made the offering for me to save me and rescue me to Himself."

When the Law says, "Don't use the Lord your God's name in vain." That's not a reference to cussing. It's saying more, "Don't be trite about Me?" How could you be trite about the One who has rescued us if you know you've been rescued? When the Law says "don't and do," our heart says, "Help me don't and do so that I might make You known and make You visible."

Where we stumble and where we fall, which we will, is where the community of faith comes in. That's where the importance of church comes in. That's where the importance of being really sewn into a place with a group of people doing life deeply comes in. It's so we can encourage one another, confront one another and walk with one another as we seek to live out the holy lives that God has called us to.

So I wonder what season you're in. For some, I know that you're religious but not rested and the law is still haunting you. I'm telling you today that, if you're in Jesus, the law can't terrorize you anymore. You need to rest in Jesus and not in your ability to do all that you know to be right or wrong.

For others of you, unfortunately you're allowing the transgressions to increase with your stubbornness and hardness of heart. I want to tell you that the invitation is there for you to come, to be given forgiveness, to be granted holiness, blamelessness and freedom in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray: Jesus, I thank You for these men and women. I thank You for an opportunity to let You bring, from Your Word, clarity on what season of life we might be in. So for my brothers and sisters who are terrified of the law, who sit under a fear of the law, I pray that they would learn to just rest in You, knowing that salvation comes by grace alone, by faith alone

and by Christ alone. So I pray that we would put our hope in that, rest in that and just settle in to Your delight in us made manifest in Jesus Christ. For those who are in a season where the law should terrify, where the law should expose, where the law should reveal wickedness, I pray that You would do that. I pray that You would lovingly reveal need in hearts and minds. I pray for salvation to be granted. I pray for a drawing and quickening of the Spirit to take place in the hearts of many. I'm asking You to do these things because You can and sermons can't. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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