

# STUDIES IN GALATIANS

## Study #6: Galatians 3:15-29

### “You Were Running Well”

(Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free)

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions – Galatians 3:15-29

Key verse 5:7 —“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

You were running well until you failed to read the instructions: Galatians chapter 3 verses 15 to 29.

Now if you’ll take your pen and just star verse 19, that’s going to be the key verse for today’s study.

I enjoyed a lot, as you know, Robert Fulghum. And this story gave me a little bit of a hope that the man might’ve had some kind of a relationship with the Lord. When you read the book *Everything I Needed to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten*, you don’t hear much about that, or in most of his other books. This one was kind of fun.

(*What On Earth Have I Done?: Stories, Observations, and Affirmations* by Robert Fulghum)

I speak as an insider. Once upon a time, I was baptized. According to the rules of the church of my childhood. Not sprinkled like the Methodists, as if you were going to be ironed. Not just dipped in an indoor pool for the sake of convenience. Baptized according to Scripture - outdoors in a river, following the example of John the Baptist and Jesus.

My mother was a serious Southern Baptist. And her cousin from Muscle Shoals, Alabama, urged her to take no chances and do it right. The cousin, it seems, was a “Two-seed-in-the-spirit, Foot Washing, Flowing Water Baptist.” When she sang the old hymn, “Shall we Gather at the River”, it wasn’t about a picnic. (p. 183)

In other words, she was serious about going to church for the baptismal service.

Well, we’re in the middle of football season and we’re in the middle of the World Series. I am just amazed that you chose to come tonight in the midst of this second game. Maybe you were so shocked by last night’s score that you’re recording it and everything is going to be fine when you get home to see how they do. I’m just amazed that they made it to the World Series and I know you are too.

Drew Brees is the author of *Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity*. Drew was the quarterback of the Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints, if you will remember. The classic picture was the confetti flying in his little son rolled way up high on his hand. Well, he came back from a horrible accident with a dislocated shoulder,

throwing shoulder, as the quarterback. And he tells the story of that but he mixes in his personal testimony. I want to just pick two statements from there to kinda get us inspired to study the Word tonight.

*(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity* by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry)

In many cases, disappointment is what prepares you to achieve greatness in the future. (p. 270)

[I love that.]

The tougher the journey, the sweeter the celebration at the end. (p. 300)

You can just hear him, and sense that the guy has a real heartbeat of discipline and perseverance, and he really longs to achieve.

Eugene Peterson said:

*(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations* by Eugene H. Peterson)

*Thank you, Lord, for this gloriously intricate, put-together, held-together universe. Everywhere I look I find evidence of what you have done. Everything I see gives me another reason to marvel and praise. Amen.* (p. 217)

Well, another title for the study today would be a very familiar phrase to you: When all else fails, Read the instructions.

And in essence, a lot of the problems we've got in understanding our Christian life after we become believers, is failing to read the instructions.

There is no more clearer passage than what you're getting ready to look at, at the end of chapter 3 tonight. If you walk out of here confused about it, may I say I have failed in my mission to make it clear because the verses are just so very awesome.

Galatians 5:7 is our key verse in the whole book. You are running well, who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?

Pursuing that theme, I said in study number one:

1. You were running well until: no runs, no hits and a big error.

These four churches in southern Galatia (Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lyrstra, and Derbe) all were infiltrated by people who said that Paul actually was not qualified to be an apostle, that he is confusing them with the gospel, that you must add the law to faith in Christ.

The apostle, having received that message, writes this letter

back to bring clarity to the situation.

1. You're running well until: no runs, no hits, and a big error.

Remember they had troubled minds and a twisted gospel in that first study.

2. You were running well until: you forgot what God was doing in your life.

That was the end of chapter 1. That was his testimony.

He started from the road to Damascus. Went into Arabia for that three year period after he met the Lord. And then he went down to Jerusalem, had that two week retreat with Peter and also met James, a brother of our Lord. And then he went from there to Tarsus. And so as the end of chapter 1 comes, he's in his hometown, and it's there that Barnabas comes and invites him to come to Antioch to help him in the ministry to the Gentiles.

I shared with you that the greatest thing you can do is to record and to journal your testimony because that is part and parcel of your witness for Christ.

When the world wants to know evidence of the authenticity of Christ and a relationship to Him, it's going to come by your own changed life and witness for Him. So that's what we learn from our one.

In study number three:

3. You were running well until: divine direction was not discerned.

Here we have the picture of Paul coming back from that first missionary journey along with Barnabas and they go back to Antioch, the church there in the north, that had sent them out on that first missionary journey. That was a 14 year journey. And Paul and Barnabas established the churches in Galatia and several other locations before they came back to Antioch. When they got there, there were the same Judaizing teachers saying the same thing about adding the Law.

Barnabas and Paul were really upset about that so the elders from the church in Antioch sent them to the Jerusalem Council. You remember? There were three people that went down there as delegates: Paul and Barnabas and Titus was the test case.

The beautiful thing about that is, we all left and went home singing “Blessed be the Tie that Binds” because all five of the guys recognized that it was the same message but Peter was going to the Jews and Paul was going to go to the Gentiles.

And we’re just saying “Great!” The impact of the message is now clear. Everybody has the same message and they’re going to different audiences. And so the five of them (Peter, James and John along with Paul and Barnabas) blessed us with this

oneness when the study ended.

But then we came to study number four:

4. You were running well until: peer pressure postpone progress.

It's one thing to give your testimony, it's another thing to stand for it when you might be in an unsympathetic audience. And that's what happened to Peter again. That was the second time for him. He blew it on the night before the cross by denying the Lord three times.

Here he comes into this gigantic dining room of 500-600 people, all fellowshiping together, both Jews and Gentiles from the church in Antioch. And here's Peter, he's just enjoying himself, eating with the Gentiles and all of a sudden some guys from James comes into town from Jerusalem and he withdraws from them and goes over and eats with the Jews. And on top of that, Barnabas was also influenced by that and that had to be a horrible, horrible experience for Paul after spending 14 years leading Gentile people to Jesus Christ to have Barnabas get swept away by the hypocrisy.

That was a sad, sad part of recognizing the fact that one of the greatest things you can do is stand if you have to stand alone.

Martin Luther authored the Reformation by "Here I stand. God help me." A willingness to stand by the truth, even though you know you're going to stir up opposition and you're

going to stir up trouble, stay with it.

Last week:

5. You were running well until: you said I'd do it myself (chapter 3:1-14)

Here I shared with you that grandparents and great-grandparents hear from their little nippers "No, I do it myself" a jillion times.

I think the Lord feels that about us sometimes. After we come to Christ and all that He has done for us, we turn around and say "I'll do it myself! I'll set up legalistic standards. I will do this and do that and that's going to equate my spirituality and make me more like Christ." We get involved in it. And I shared with you last week that that's devastating. And the Scripture nowhere recognizes that joint effort of being made spiritual. We become more Christlike as the Spirit of God produces within us the fruit that we are to be studying in chapter 5 when we get over there.

Max Lucado said it this way:

Wouldn't you love to have a video record of Jesus' meeting with Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10)? The law-obsessed religious leaders looking on in shock as Jesus befriends a notorious crook. Bent on earning God's approval through their religious efforts, these Pharisees and scribes are harsh and judgmental. They frown a lot. They think they see, but in truth they are



blind. They live in bondage to their own foolish pride. A few feet away stands Jesus, smiling, inviting himself to dinner. He is disarming and gracious. He offers unconditional freedom from the failures of the past, and a fresh start. Is there a better picture of life-giving grace? A grimmer illustration of the death that comes through trying to earn God's favor? (p. 49)

Just stop and think about it. As we have this study today, the biggest problem that we have when we're trying to do what God wants to do Himself is the problem of guilt, the problem of failure, the problem of frustration because we're not successful and so many times we feel like we're dominated by desires that are not pleasing to the Lord and therefore we just really, really get suspicious and concerned and Satan loves that. There is a better way and that better way is understanding this passage today and letting its truth filter in your life.

6. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions.

Now, are you ready? Let's get after it.

**v. 15 Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified no one is (broken vows) nullifying or adding to it.**

"Brethren"—Don't you love that word? He's said some pretty

strong things to this church in the earlier chapters. Now that he's getting into theological part of it and explaining it, he uses a term of endearment. You could say it is brethren and sisteren, okay you ladies so that you're a part of the crew.

“Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified no one is (by broken vows) nullifying or adding to it.”

He said I'm going to use a human illustration. Now you remember how he ended last week's study? It was Abraham, Abraham, Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant. He kept talking about how he came to know the Lord by the single condition of faith. He's just picking up where he left off and what is going to do is show us that the promises that were made to Abraham are different from the statements that were made to the Law and that's going to be the main function for us to understand it.

And when we get to verse 16, there it is.

**v. 16 Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed. He is not saying and to the seeds as in respect to many but as in respect to one and to your seed who is Christ.**

“Now to Abraham were spoken the promises”—I want you to circle some words because we're going to come back to them.

“Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed.

[circle that, singular] He is not saying and to the seeds [plural, circle that one] as in respect to many but as in respect to one and to your seed who is Christ.”

Why does he take us on a journey with singular and plural when he is talking about the Abraham covenant?

It's vitally important for us to understand that that covenant was instituted for the purpose of bringing Jesus Christ into the world. And so there's only one seed that the covenant is involved in. It's the seed of Abraham going through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and on down to Jesus Christ. That's all he is saying in this verse.

Now, what if we just said “and to your seeds”? What would that do? Well that brings Ishmael into play, and it brings a lot of other people who feel that they've got a place with regard to Abraham.

One of the biggest arguments that you will hear from people who are not regenerate, who have not come to know Christ is you are so narrow. You're so dogmatic.

We have a right to be by what Scripture says. Jesus said “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.

Paul's argument is that there's just one seed and that seed is the seed that comes from Abraham, through Isaac, through Jacob, through Judah and down to Jesus Christ.

An awesome thing to begin with. Because it's going to clear the way and the decks for a lot of good understanding if indeed we are paying attention just to that one truth.

In Genesis 13:15 we have these words from the Lord as well.

### Genesis 13:15

All the land that you see. I will give to you and to your offspring [singular] forever.

There's no choice. The covenant is still in vogue. It involves one seed and it involves a land and the geographical location of that land are ultimately given. So see you today, from the way he does it and he makes an emphasis upon the seed.

### Isaiah 43:11

I, even I am the Lord, and beside me there is no savior.

So there's one source for eternal salvation, and that source is in a person—the Lord Jesus Christ.

The promises, therefore, come through Christ and not through the works of the Law. And that's where he's going to go in this.

Peterson just burst out in this particular prayer:

(*A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations* by Eugene H. Peterson)

*How faithfully you keep your promises, God! Your presence drives out loneliness, your love banishes emptiness, your commands cure my aimlessness. Thank you for continuing to be with me in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. Amen. (p. 335)*

Now, verse 17.

**v. 17** Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.

“Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.”

Does it? You could say afterwards, “No, it doesn’t.

What he’s going to do now is give you a timeline. The promises came way back here in the time of Abraham, and down here longer than 430 years. By the way, if you start with the time that the Abrahamic covenant was given, 430 years was actually the period of time that they were in a land that was not theirs and that was part of the covenant.

You see, what happened, I think, in the way he explained the 430 years here is that you start with Genesis 46. Do you

remember in Genesis 46 what happened? In 45 the 11 boys come back and they say to Jacob, “you aren’t going to believe it, but you got the whole dozen yet. Joseph is alive and in Egypt.” And so Jacob says, just so emotionally involved: “I will go and see my son before I die.”

And so, as they made that trip—maybe you’ve done this as well—you want the assurance as you start to make the trip that you’re in God’s will and you’re going where He want you to go. Have you grown that much in your faith that you do that when you contemplate things? You sit down together and you pray about it and you really come to peace together before you go and do something. You bring the Lord into it.

Jacob did that. That beautiful picture in Genesis 46, he’s leaning on the top of his staff and he is worshiping the Lord in Beersheba. That’s the closest, that’s the final boundary in the south. Once he passes that place he’s going on into Egypt and he wants the assurance from the Lord. And the Lord just said “Sic ‘em man! You’re going to go down there for 17 years and then you’re going to die. Joseph’s going to close your eyes. But the seed is going to come back from that land and settle in Israel.

So all of those things fit this geographically. You say, well yes, Stephen said 400 years and the covenant said 400 years. Well give or take a few—430 and 400 isn’t all that bad when you’re coming to time and depending exactly where you started, the rounded number from the Lord’s point of view is 400 years. I’ll show it to you in the covenant in just a minute.

Now, therefore the Law came 430 years after Jacob was told by the Lord to go into the land of Egypt and that's how long it took.

Now let's go to Genesis 15. Let me just read because I'm going to pick up just a few phrases from the original Abrahamic covenant to see how all this fits together. This will make it come alive for you.

Genesis 15:1-18 (select)

But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"

"Lord, You said I was going to be a father of many nations and I don't have a child yet. Eliezer of Damascus is going to be the man who is going to receive everything.

Now the Lord, in response to that, down a few verses later says:

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

And then, Genesis 15:6:

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

That's the very verse he's using in the book of Galatians. It's used in the book of Habakkuk. And it's used in the book of Hebrews. The single condition of salvation.

But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" So the Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting,

That's the way they made a covenant. Cut the animals in two, put a corridor down the middle and both guys that are involved in the covenant are going to walk between the pieces and say "Nay what happened to these animals happen to me if I fail to keep my promise to you."

Now, the sun starts to set and this is what we learn.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, [listen, here it is] and they will be enslaved and mistreated four



hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.” When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

What’s the significance of that? God puts Abram out of the way and he alone, as the smoking firepot, goes between the pieces.

All that is, is an unconditional covenant saying God is in the business of promising and blessing.

Here you just have the direct direction with regard to the matter of the relationship to the Law. One of the beautiful things is the only other unconditional covenant in the Scripture is the covenant of your salvation when Jesus Christ, while all alone, went up Calvary’s mount and gave His life.

When God sets out to do something He does not need human assistance. He is going to do it on His own now.

Now, He’s done that with our salvation. Can you go a step further and say that He’s going to do that in making you more

Christlike every day as you cooperate with what He is teaching you will and asking you to do through the study of the word together with Him in the Spirit of God impressing upon you the things that He wants to do to make you more Christlike?

“the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.”

In other words, the Law that's later did not go back and change or revoke the promise that was made to Abram. That's his argument.

Look at it. There it is. Verse 18:

**v. 18 For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.**

“For if the inheritance [now we've got a new word here] is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.

Therefore, if the Law is to be the basis for our inheritance, then it cannot be the promise. But then he turns around and says God is the one who gave the promise to Abram in the first place. So the apostle means, by the word “inheritance” that which you have to look forward to because of the unconditional promises.

We know, according to Ephesians chapter 1, that the Spirit of God when He comes into our lives at the moment of our salvation is the down payment of our inheritance. That's the engagement ring. That's the Lord saying "This is just a little bit of what you're going to get when we get home to glory and what you're going to have."

Peter speaks of it when he says in:

### 1 Peter 1:4

an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled and that will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

It's got your name on it waiting for that day of realization.

I put 1 Corinthians 2:9 there because it helps me the most.

### 1 Corinthians 2:9

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man the things which the Lord hath prepared for them that love Him.

We've got a fantastic inheritance that is ours!

Romans 8:16 and 17 would go there.

### Romans 8:16-17 (DAV)

The Spirit Himself is bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs; on the one hand heirs of God, on the other fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed, we are suffering with Him in order that we may also be glorified together.

So with the promise comes an inheritance, Paul says. And that inheritance has nothing to do with the Law. The Law can never give a gift. The Law cannot take away sin.

So your big question right now is the question of the Galatians. And its two questions, really. There's one question in verse 19, our key verse. We're getting there right now. And then in verse 21 is the second key verse. Let's look at our key verse first of all.

**v. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.**

“Why then the law?” If in fact, everything comes from the promise of the Law has nothing to do with it, “Why then the law?”

Now you're going to circle some words.

“It was added [there's a word] because of transgressions until [circle it] the seed [singular] should come to whom the promise

had been made, having been [speaking of the law] arranged [beforehand] through angels, by the hand of a mediator.”

He's given you the difference between the two. “Why then the law?” Well, it was added because of transgressions, so people would be totally convinced that they're sinful and they need a sacrifice that will be accepted in God's presence that will cleanse our filthy hearts and make them pure and declare us righteous.

There has to be statements from the holiness of God that will make us and get our attention with regard to our dire condition and state. So “why than the law?”

“It was added because of transgressions.”

When all else fails, read the instructions.

The law reveals sin. It does not remove it. The law proves men sinners. It does not make them holy. No way. And yet we bought into it so often.

### James 2:10

For whosoever shall keep the whole law and offend in one point, he's guilty of all.

Now I asked you to circle the word “until” didn't I?

“It was added because of transgressions, until” [the law is a

temporary thing and a temporary manor] “until the seed should come.”

Here is the answer:

“By his sacrifice on the cross for any broken law to whom the promise had been made.”

Now, if you could take that final phrase and just kind of realize that he’s talking about the law here. Right after he makes that statement about to whom the promise is been made, the next statement he says “is having been arranged.” He’s talking about the law there.

“[The law] having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.”

When the law came, ordained by angels and by the hand of a mediator, who is Moses. He’s the one who’s involved here and this is how the law got here.

The great significance of this verse that’s before us, a Christian has to understand that real progress in this spiritual life is going to realize that he has a relationship with Jesus, the Spirit of God indwells him, and that God is famous for making Christians like himself so that they can be a witness and bear fruit.

That’s John 15:5 my friends. On the way down to the Garden of Gethsemane: “without me you can do nothing. Abide in me

and I in you.”

It is not complicating all this by trying to live by these other methods of so-called spirituality. There’s one little sentence that really kind of encapsulated it all for me. The law cannot justify, it cannot sanctify, and it cannot satisfy.

And that is bringing the death nail to these Judaizing teachers who want to add the law to the whole thing. Added and until all the things that you want to look at when you get to verse 19 because that is a critical verse to understand at this point.

Now we get to a famous verse in the Bible. This verse, verse 20, has 400 interpretations. Have you ever heard teacher say, “Well, there’s 400 and some interpretations of this and I now want to give you the right one.” Have you had anybody say that to you? It’s pretty obvious if you’re just looking at the argument, and there’s not very much edification on looking at the other 400 interpretations frankly.

What we’re looking at here is if you got the message of the earlier part of my message, then this will just fall off the page for you.

### **v. 20 Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one.**

“Now the mediator”—where’s the mediator? With the law.—“is not of one.”

When you've got a mediator, you've got two.

“but God is one.”

You know it! You've got the law in the first part of the verse. You've got the promise of God walking alone between the pieces. He's the one that made the promises. Listen friend, stick with God's promises and not with your human performance on basis of the law. That's the whole power of the argument.

And then it brings us to verse 21 which of course is going to be the next verse that talks about this whole business by asking a second question with regard to the law. And I will be there in just a minute.

How can God say no to something He has promised? is the question I'm asking at this point. He doesn't. He's always faithful to keep His promises. So for us, the safest place in the world to be is to consider His promises.

Frank Buchanan said:

*(The Beautiful Fight: Surrendering to the Transforming Presence of God Every Day of Your Life by Gary Thomas)*

*When man listens, God speaks ... We are not out to tell God. We are out to let God tell us ... The lesson the world most needs is the art of listening to God. (p. 87)*



**v. 21 Is therefore the law against the promises of God. God forbid! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.**

“Is therefore the law against the promises of God. God forbid! [Reason] For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.”

There is no law that you could prescribe that would perform the very thing that the promises to Abraham could do. And the choice is between the two, he’s saying. You can’t have a both/and here, like so many people want to do.

Realize it. We all stand condemned under the law and its verdict because we’ve all sinned and we’ve broken the law.

### James 4:17

Therefore the one who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.

Over and over again you have that same, same picture.

Erwin Lutzer was doing a message on Easter on the cries of the cross. And he’s talking about this whole business of brokenness and willingness to accept what God provides.

This note I jotted down:

(Cries from the Cross: A Journey Into the Heart of Jesus by  
Erwin W. Lutzer)

The computer I'm using does not recognize the word *brokenness*. Unfortunately, many of us don't recognize the word either. We know what it is like to be broke; but we haven't experienced brokenness, a word that reminds us that at the cross all self-aggrandizement ends. Here we are introduced to the mystery of God's providential will for us. Here we come to the end of self-seeking and forever reject the notion that we are worthy to cooperate with God in His salvation. (p. 30)

Brokenness, he says, is a word that's not there.

Lesson to Philip Yancey from *Our Daily Bread*:

### Declaration of Dependence

Adults celebrate when children learn to do something on their own: get dressed, brush their teeth, tie shoelaces, ride a bike, walk to school.

As adults, we like to pay our own way, live in our own houses, make our own decisions, rely on no outside help. Faced with an unexpected challenge, we seek out "self-help" books. All the while we are systematically sealing off the heart attitude most desirable to God and most descriptive of our true state in the universe. It's what Jesus told His disciples: "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The truth is that we live in a web of dependence, at the center of which is God, in whom all things hold together. Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby settled on the single word *helplessness* as the best summary of the heart attitude that God accepts as prayer. He said, “Only he who is helpless can truly pray.” (October 26, 2010)

Helplessness. You see, there's the difference. If we come out of our salvation experience determined to declare righteousness and godliness and be able to brag about it and tell everybody we're praying and fasting and doing this. That's totally different. And coming and saying “Man, I'm broken. God has done a marvelous work in saving my soul. And if I'm ever going to be made like Christ, I'm totally helpless. I'm going to have to be completely dependent upon His Spirit.”

And that's John 15: “Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can ye as you abide in him. Without him you could do nothing.”

And that's the big struggle that Paul's talking [about] here.

And verse 22 just verifies that.

**v. 22 But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.**

“But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given

to those who believe.”

“Shut up.” It’s like a net coming up and trapping all the fish inside. It’s like a prison. The doors are locked and we’re shut up into the prison house of sin, so that the promise on the ground of faith (single condition) in Christ, might be given to those who work like crazy.

Is that what it says? No. Again, single condition: “those who believe.” They are “shut up” in this way until that promise of Christ comes for us:

“in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”

I love Rebecca Manley Pippert’s little article. She says:

*(Hope Has Its Reasons: From the Search for Self to the Surprise of Faith by Rebecca Manley Pippert)*

The tragedy of sin is that it has ruined something that was created to be wonderful. God’s image within us is a reminder that we have been created for something better than we are experiencing. Joe Cooke writes, “I am like a beast in the trap. I was created to roam free, but sin has snapped its jaw around me and imprisoned me. I am like an eagle with a broken wing. God intended that I should fly high up in His blue heaven. But sin has broken me, and I cannot even get off the ground. I’m like a priceless violin created by a master. But the strings are broken and the pegs slip, and the wood is

cracked. When the master tries to play me, he gets nothing out of me but a cacophonous wail.” (pp. 145-46)

What a graphic description of what we’re trying to do in human performance.

(*A Treasury of Mark Twain* edited by Edward Lewis and Robert Myers)

There are many scapegoats for our sins, but the most popular is Providence. (p. 18)

To turn around and blame God for all of that.

John Ortberg really a lot of times just hits the nail right on the head.

(*The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You* by John Ortberg)

Nowhere does this inability to have an objective, accurate, reality-based view of our performance show itself more than in the spiritual realm. When it comes to moral character, the purity of heart, the duplicity in our actions, how many of us have given serious thought to how our lives would grade out—not by the standard of the neighborhood sandlot where we can always find a first-grader to outperform—but in the eyes of a holy, just, righteous, and truth-telling God? That is why the most dangerous force in the world is not sickness or injury or bankruptcy.

It is sin. (p. 145)

And what he saying to us is that it's always easy to tip the scales in our favor.

Erwin McManus said:

*(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings* by Erwin Raphael McManus)

Most of us want God to fix every wrong choice we make without taking from us our right to choose wrongly. We want to make God into our own personal pooper-scooper following right behind us, cleaning up our mess. God lets us make our bed and makes us lie in it. (Entry #13)

Facing the consequences of our deliberate disobedience and disregard to what he said.

Verse 23. Now these last verses are just awesome so bear with me.

**v. 23 But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.**

“But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.”

That law came 430 years later and the purpose of it was to

“shut [us] up” into the futility of the law trying to declare us righteous.

I’ve met so many folks who start at the first of the year in reading through the Bible and when they get to Leviticus they throw in the towel.

Every time you read Leviticus just realize how complicated the Law was in every action in order to keep the Law to be declared righteous. It’s impossible when you see the sacrifices and the laws that are related to relationships and try to think for a minute. Could you know that? Could you keep all of that and then go confidently to heaven? Nobody’s ever done it and nobody ever will accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

**v. 24 So the law became our guardian unto Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.**

“So the law” [verse 24]—Oh this is a beautiful picture!—“became our guardian until Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.”

He’s speaking the gospel over and over and over again. You understand that word “guardian”? In the Greek culture you had, when a child reached the age of six, it was my graduation from a kindergarten but he was put under the supervision of one of the trusted slaves in the household. He was called the tutor or the guardian. He took the child to school, brought him home, make sure of his meals, all of his activities were

supervised.

And then there came the Toga Virilis. That's when you get the coat that you now are and inheritor. You are an adult son in the family.

And what he's using here is a picture of that's the way the Law is. The Law takes you by the hand, supervises your life and then brings you to the answer as a guardian and that answer is in Jesus Christ and the salvation which comes by faith through Him.

Now, you could put Genesis 15:6 right there because that is exactly how Abraham by faith was made righteous in God's sight.

In Gary Thomas's book *Pure Pleasure* he gives one of the clearest statements and I think this summarizes pretty well what we've had to say today.

*(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good?* by Gary Thomas)

Chalmers would argue that an "old affection"—a sinful desire—is "almost never" overcome by the sheer force of "mental determination." (p. 16)

Now, does that say something to you?

If you have been living in a performance-oriented kind of



Christian experience, like certainly I have and I know many of you have as well. What are the things that you feel are your greatest weaknesses and that you determine you're going to have victory over those things in your life?

It would be interesting today to take those things if we could transparently with each other and see how successful you've been in the battle with your weaknesses. And we would have a 100% unanimity when we were trustful that we failed every time. We might have had little snippets of victory when we threw a faggot in a fire or we made a commitment in front of the church or we did something else at a very high point in our lives. And yet we come right back to it and we fall in the ditch quicker than we can shake a stick and Satan is clapping his hands with glee.

Now, listen to what he says. This is so powerful for young people.

*(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good?* by Gary Thomas)

“—a sinful desire—is “almost never” overcome by the sheer force of “mental determination.” That is, sin almost always eventually gets a young man or woman who is merely “determined” not to fall. The nineteenth-century preacher would say that mental reasoning (“I know I shouldn’t”; “This could end badly”; “My parents would get so angry”; “This might affect my future”) cannot possibly compete with the

force of our passions. “But what cannot be thus *destroyed* may be dispossessed— (p. 16)

Listen to:

### 2 Corinthians 10:5

I’m bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

When I think these things, I know these things are going to come into my conduct unless there is some shortage in the connection. And the shortage comes when I before God bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

I want obedience more than any of these things that are passing through my thought life. I want the Spirit of God to produce that victory that only He can produce and the power to do so.

**v. 25 But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.**

Would you look at verse 25 and get so excited that somebody would say “Amen!”

Look at it! There it is in one sentence. Can you believe it?

“But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.”

We're no longer under the Law and its demands once we have come to Jesus Christ

Now it's:

John 3:30

He must continually increase and I must decrease.

**v. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.**

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

You bought into the family, your sons and daughters in his family.

“... having come, we are no longer under the guardian. ... you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

It is a relationship that is family.

John 1:12

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority by the power of God to be called sons of God.

Peterson says:

*(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)*

*Father, I put all my wealth, my investments, my possessions in trust: you are my future and my confidence. Cure me of the possessiveness that holds tightly and will not let go. Amen. (p. 71)*

Just give Him your-self.

Oswald Chambers said:

*(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)*

Discouragement is disillusioned self-love, and self-love may be love for my devotion to Jesus-not love for Jesus Himself.  
(August 18)

**v. 27 For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.**

“For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.”

This is not the ordinance of baptism. This is what happens when you’re taken out of Adam and you’re put into Christ.

This is the picture of eternal salvation. Baptism means changed identification.

Now the ordinance is beautiful and it illustrates and it points out what has taken place when we have come to know Christ by faith. But notice the last phrase, “put on Christ.” It’s like we’re putting on a new garment. That’s the Toga Virilis that’s behind it. We are clothed with the uniform, the badge of service, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we put Him on then the beauty of Colossians chapter 3, so chosen by God for this new life of love dressed in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline, the even-tempered, content was second-place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive us quickly and completely as the master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on wear love. It’s your basic all-purpose garment. Never be without it. That’s Colossians 3:12-14.

A. W. Tozer says:

*(The Best of A. W. Tozer by A. W. Tozer, compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe)*

If on the other hand the new experience tends to make Christ indispensable, if it takes our interest off our feeling and places it in Christ, we are on the right track. Whatever makes Christ dear to us is pretty sure to be from God [the Father]. (p. 189)

*(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)*

Do I have a personal history with Jesus Christ? The one true sign of discipleship is intimate oneness with Him—a knowledge of Jesus that nothing can shake. (August 16)

And then he said this: “There is only one thing God wants of us and that is our unconditional total surrender.”—A willingness to let Jesus Christ have total and complete control. That’s the beauty of when people see Jesus in us, they see Him because He is living out in us.

Then verse 28 is beautiful, isn’t it?

**v. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

There’s not this constant struggle of who’s right and who’s wrong. But in His family, all these differences are obliterated and we are one in Jesus Christ.

And our last verse:

**v. 29 Now if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.**

“Now if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.”

We started back there with a single word “seed” and we end it

with the word “seed” down here in verse 29

There's only one place. We are heirs of the promise and we are Abraham's seed. And because of that we have all this to look forward to.

The bottom line is just listening to these wonderful glorious promises and then implementing them, believing them, trusting Him.

There are 12 lessons that come out of this study. And I hope you will take time to read those.

Now, I want to tell you little story, that came from John Ortberg, and then I'll close.

*(The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You by John Ortberg)*

When our daughters were three and five years old, we took them to a hotel with a swimming pool. We had a long, stern talk about the importance of water safety and the risk of drowning.

My talk may have been a little too effective.

As Laura was jumping into my arms while I was in the water, three-year-old Mallory slipped from a sitting position on the edge of the pool. She was underwater for less than a second, but when I pulled her up, she was sobbing.

“I drowned!” she cried. “I drowned! I drowned!”

From her perspective, it was terrifying. From my perspective, however, it was actually kind of funny.

“No, honey,” I replied sympathetically. “You didn’t drown. You were only underwater for a second. You’re fine ... So let’s not tell Mommy about this.”

Mallory was never in danger. I knew that even though she didn’t. Her father was always watching her, able to scoop her out of trouble at a moment’s notice. I was what you might call “a non-anxious presence.”

Jesus knew that no earthly situation has the power to put you outside God’s care. You are always in the hand of your Father. So when death itself comes for us, it will be like Mallory dipping in the pool, and we will come up saying, “I drowned! I drowned! I drowned!” and the Father will say, “I had you the whole time.” (pp. 114-115)

Josh Hamilton has been transparent and honest about the struggles that he’s had in his Christian life.

There is one statement that stood out:

Alone I couldn’t win this battle. With Jesus I couldn’t lose.

And what he’s saying in essence is what we have studied today.



**STUDY NUMBER SIX – UNTIL: YOU FAILED TO READ THE INSTRUCTIONS**  
**– GALATIANS 3:15-29**

**KEY VERSE 3:19**

v. 15 Brethren, I am speaking after the manner of men. Yet a man's covenant when it has been ratified no one is (broken vows) nullifying or adding to it.

v. 16 Now to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed. He is not saying and to the seeds as in respect to many but as in respect to one and to your seed who is Christ.

v. 17 Now this I am saying, a covenant has been ratified beforehand by God, the Law which came after 430 years does not revoke with the result to render inoperative the promise.

v. 18 For if the inheritance is from law it is no longer of promise. But to Abraham through promise God has bestowed it.

v. 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made, having been arranged (ordained) through angels, by the hand of a mediator.

v. 20 Now the mediator is not of one, but God is one.

v. 21 Is therefore the law against the promises of God. God forbid! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, actually righteousness would have been from the law.

v. 22 But the scripture shut up all under sin in order that the promise on the ground of faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

v. 23 But before faith came, under law we were being guarded, being shut up unto the faith about to be revealed.

v. 24 So the law became our guardian unto Christ, in order that on the grounds of faith we might be made righteous.

v. 25 But faith having come, we are no longer under the guardian.

v. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

v. 27 For as many as were baptized with Christ, put on Christ.

v. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

v. 29 Now if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

**NOTES**

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**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Galatians 3:15-29 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What promises were made to Abraham by God? (Consult Genesis 13 & 15)

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3. Who is the “seed” of Abraham, according to verse 16?

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4. Why was the Law given, according to verse 19?

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5. What does the Law do for all of humanity, according to verse 22?

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6. After coming to faith in Christ, what is our relationship to the Law, according to verse 25?

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7. What is our relationship to God, according to verse 26?

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8. What conclusions does Paul draw in verse 29?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The covenant of Abraham is an unconditional covenant because God alone walks between the pieces.

LESSON #2: The Law was given to reveal sin, not to remove it.

LESSON #3: The giving of the Law did not affect the unconditional promises of God.

LESSON #4: Salvation is based on the unconditional promises of God.

LESSON #5: The Law cannot give life, nor declare us righteous in God's sight.

LESSON #6: "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:19-20 NASB).

LESSON #7: We are made righteous on the grounds of faith and not by the works of the Law.

LESSON #8: "Faith having come, we are no longer under the Law."

LESSON #9: We become sons and daughters in God's family when we receive Christ.

LESSON #10: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:14-17 NASB).

LESSON #11: We are clothed with Christ when we receive Him as Savior. “And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Col. 3:12 NASB).

LESSON #12: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:3-4 NASB). Our inheritance is secure and that’s a promise.

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