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RADICAL: reorg
Galatians 3:19-4:7

I find that in my worst moments, I measure success by whether or not I am following the rules. I loved getting recognized for following the rules so much that I remember in kindergarten, the first time I got in trouble in school was because I drew my own red smiley face, covering my entire paper. I wanted to be recognized for my work! But what we are going to read today is about how we receive the big red smiley face from God himself. How do we find life, real life, and true acceptance with God?

Pastor Mark has been bringing out for us in Galatians that rule-following does not give us access to life with God. But we like rules that give us check boxes and let us know exactly how we measure up. The people coming into Galatia liked the rules, too.

Let's remember the situation in Galatians. After Jesus died and was raised from the dead, people were still looking to find real life with God. His Holy Spirit had come into the world and was drawing people to God, revealing truth to them, healing people, proclaiming the Gospel in every language. But other people were used to deciding who was and wasn't following God based on a list of rules. They liked giving themselves the big red smiley face by eating the kosher diet, maintaining the cleanliness laws, and through circumcision. They were going to all those Holy Spirit, freedom-loving, healed communities and saying—now you must follow our rules to worship God correctly. And Paul wasn't having it. He condemned them for taking away the freedom of the Gospel by imposing rules.

But then how were all these rule-followers supposed to understand the law? After all, they didn't make it up. How could they reconcile that the diet, the festivals, and the lengthy book of Leviticus weren't requirements for salvation? The law was God's idea. So what do we do with it now? The Bible has that answer for us. And for those of us who tend to rule-keeping, the question is still for us— What is the purpose of the law? Pray.

Read Galatians 3:19-22.

There is a distinction here between the law and the promise. The promise came first. Paul reminds us that a promise was made to Abraham, the promise that through the Seed of Abraham (meaning, through a Son of Abraham), all the

nations of the earth would be blessed. That promise Abraham didn't see come to pass. The promise of the Seed through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed lingered long after Abraham died and was passed through David's kingly line, and on into the New Testament.

The promise says that Abraham was given the smiley face of salvation from God because he believed that God would bring this about. The promise promised real life with God and Abraham and his descendants received the benefits of that promise by faith. We talked about this last week—Abraham lived out his belief, his faith by trusting God and following where he led.

So then we and Paul ask, why did God add the law after already saying that Abraham was right with God because of his faith? That sounded like a good system! Trust and follow. Done. But what we see in Abraham's life is though he had the faith to trust God and follow him, he was still plagued by his sin. He told half-truths to make sure his wife Sarai was safe when they traveled through enemy territory. He got impatient with God's timeline and had a son with another woman when every indication was that Sarai would give him a son. Sin still imprisoned Abraham, and he needed a deliverer from his sin.

We experience this, too. We who believe in Jesus have experienced the promise of real life with God simply by faith— this is that moment of justification when God's life becomes ours. Pastor Mark talked about this last week with the timeline. What is the process by which our lives come to look more like God's? that linear outlook? (Sanctification) How long is this process? Our whole lives! While we know God, we also know that we still know sin!

Take my life as an example. I know Jesus. And I know he loves me and has washed me clean. Sometimes I feel like that like when I was in the Chicago O'Hare airport last week. I have dealt with serious airport anger issues my whole life. It makes no sense. I have 2 pilots in my family, so I should be super understanding about the need for new crews, technical difficulties, and weather delays. But instead, I want inside information and a change of flight. Now. I'm not pleasant to travel with. But this past week, it was evident that God is sanctifying my anger issues because as I got to know people on my flight as they rolled cots into another part of the terminal, one woman said, "Your hope is contagious." Sure enough, I really felt deeply in my core that I was getting prayed home that night, and I would not get stuck in Chicago! So as it regards anger, I'm done and sanctified, right?

Ha, no! I know God, I have experienced his real life in me, and I still know sin. Two weeks ago on a Tuesday (which are particularly busy around here), I walked in the door at home to find Larry just sitting around. Uh oh, a little envy just struck. I walk up the steps into the kitchen, oh-so-proud (a little too proud) of myself for getting dinner in the crockpot between the gym and the office that morning so that dinner would already be ready. But wait, Larry didn't eat the

dinner I made him? Larry didn't eat the dinner I made him?! He went for a frozen burrito instead? All of a sudden, like, sudden, mad blow out! I was blowing up at him for not eating my crockpot dinner? What?

Let's admit it! This is our experience as people indwelt with the Holy Spirit. We are still plagued by our sin. It was our sin that brought on the law. Look back at verse 19. "What was the purpose of the law? The law was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." (Who is that Seed? Jesus!) Now hear this: the promise came first. So does that law that came later contradict or do away with the promise? Verse 21 says Absolutely not! What the law could do was keep us in the way of life until **the promise** came. "If a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law." The law never gave anyone life with God. It only kept them on the way.

The promise is still the track for real life. The law is not the track to life... Paul has made that clear. But the law is still useful. Let's look at 2 images Paul provides to help us understand the useful purpose of the law.

Read Galatians 3:23.

Verse 23 calls us "prisoners by the law." Sin was the death sentence that put us in prison. The law is what guards us. So the law is first our **guard**. Why do we have bars on babies' cribs? To be mean? No! We put bars on cribs to protect infants so they don't fall out before they have control of their bodies enough to get in and out. The law is like the bars around our crib. We cannot control our sin! So God put boundaries up—we call these moral laws—and they say, lying, adultery, envy, idolatry, stealing... those are all death traps! Don't fall out! Here's the law to be a protection for you while sin still has a hold in your life. And we can see that moral law still plays this role in our lives.

Then Paul gives us a second image to understand why God gave us the law. Verse 24 says that the law was "put in charge to lead us to Christ." Literally, that "put in charge" means the law acts like someone you hire to get your kids safely to school and back. The closest thing we have is a bus driver. The law is like a bus driver that ensures that we stay in the way of life until we rendezvous with the Promise. So the law is secondly our guide. These are the ceremonial laws- the festivals and sacrifices all **guide** us to see who Jesus, the Promise is. The law is both our guard and our guide.

Remember, God set aside Abraham and his entire future family to be his witness to the whole world of who he is. The whole world was to know how God loved his people, what he was like, and how to worship Him, through this one family lineage.

And so God **guarded** them from their sin by putting the moral law in as a protection to show them the danger of their sin and their need for a Savior. And

God gave them the ceremonial law to be like a **guide** to direct them to the Savior! The law made sure the whole world was guarded and guided until the promised Christ would come. Somebody had to keep telling the message!

So the law in itself is good! The law is a good guard and a good guide. Paul says in Romans 7:12: "the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good." But focusing on the law meant that people became identified not by that earlier promise but by whether or not they measured up to the law. Jesus fulfilled and completed all the ceremonial requirements! So we don't have to fulfill the law to be saved. The law becomes a tyrant at the point your salvation is dependent upon following these laws. But being a child of God is not about what you do but about who you are.

So now we're back to Paul's question, why the law? Because in the law we recognize that we are sinners who need the promise. And the law defines exactly what the Promise looks like. Through the law, looking at those ten commandments and the laws for sacrifices and how much we have to repent, how unclean we are, we know that we need a savior. We see the safety bars, showing us our anger and our envy and we know that we are not good. We know that we are prone to fall out and fail because of our sin. We see the need for perfect cleanliness and perfect sacrifice, and we are guided by these laws to see and recognize the One person who offered his own life as the perfect sacrifice! The law shows us what we cannot do. But it is the promise that tells us whose we are. The law produces healthy conviction and repentance within us and shows us the power of Christ himself!

That's why I shared at Ash Wednesday that one of the practices I'm particularly paying attention to in Lent is that of confession. I'm confessing to God when I recognize that something in my belief, behavior, or attitude does not look like someone following Jesus. One of those times was that anger spat. I encourage you also to consider confession as a way to admit to God where you don't measure up to the law but also to confess the truth that according to the Promise you are a child of God by faith alone.

The second part of this confession—the confession of the truth of whose I am—that is what led me quickly—very quickly—to confess my anger to Larry that Tuesday night. I immediately recognized in myself that there was nothing righteous about being angry that Larry didn't eat my dinner! That was a manifestation of the sin that wars within me, and it was freeing to immediately tell Larry and God, whoa! I'm sorry—that was total sin! Please forgive me. And I knew I was received back by both Larry and God.

Our confession of sin is not another thing to do to be called a child of God. It's not about drawing my own red smiley face. But confession lets the law of God guide me to the Promise. As Galatians 3:24 says, the law "leads us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." And so here we go into the joy and freedom of

justification! Listen to the description of the new relational order that we have in Christ.

Galatians 3:25-3:28

“Now that faith has come (that is Christ), we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (we are sons and daughters!), for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (this is the hiding under Christ’s bathrobe picture!). We have clothed ourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The death sentence of sin has been overturned because Jesus died that death in our place! Jesus has proclaimed that he not the law is the guardian of our soul. This prison of sin has undergone a radical reorg. Jesus has defeated sin and death! The law is no longer our prison warden. Nor are we prisoners! From imprisonment to family! The law said that we did not measure up; the promise says that we are sons and daughters who get to wear the smiley face that Christ earned. That’s the Radical Reorg of the Gospel. Now we get to live the full promise of real life with God.

The ceremonial law delineated between Jew and Greek based especially upon the need for cleanliness laws. That’s not a barrier anymore! That need for cleanliness was meant to be a guide that preserved the witness of Christ in the world. We don’t need that kind of guarding anymore! Christ Jesus preserves the witness of who he is in the world not by the law now but by His Spirit!

The law delineated between male and female again because of cleanliness laws and also because the ceremonial law designated that only men could be priests and because the Priest, the promised one, would be a Son. But the Priest has come! And in Christ, Hebrews says, we have all been washed with pure water. And so now, gender does not mean you do or do not have direct access to God! We are all one in Christ Jesus.

And whereas the civil law distinguished between slave and free—where the law had social categories that informed relationship with God—there are no categories in God’s Kingdom! You are not of a greater or lesser race or greater or lesser social strata. For we are all one in Christ Jesus! The ground is level at the foot of the cross—we have pure equality in God’s sight. Pastor and congregant; manager and employee; parent and child; addict and counselor; Karin, Burmese and American—we all share a new identity. That is the Radical Reorg.

I think our western lives prevent us from understanding the radical nature of this reorg. Karen Eubank sent an email out yesterday about what it was like for her to flee the Burmese army. They made their home for several days in a ransacked home someone had very recently fled. She described it as a home she herself could have lived in—a few knickknacks, a gold ring inscribed with “Mary,” clothes

and a robe. She reflected from that experience on how important heaven is for the Kachin people. I think we westerners so often think like Karen about heaven—that “heaven is a plus to my already good life.” But for the internally displaced people, the hope of Christ of a real home and a unified family is a much-needed reality. And whereas we struggle to define “real life” in Christ because we have plenty of good things going for us as educated, wealthy Americans, the Kachin people who are constantly on the run know how to separate what is real and lasting from what is temporal and fleeting. Karen’s words were a simple proclamation of the Gospel. “[Jesus] invited us to a ‘home’ greater than we could ever fashion and an identity that could not be threatened by culture or power, wealth or background.” Jesus gives us the identity of one in Christ.

Paul invites us to challenge where our source of life and hope comes from. Paul invites us to see that our life and our hope come not in what we do but in who we are. Law-following never made us sons and daughters of God. God’s people were always his people by faith. The law was there just to keep us in the way of life until the Promise came. Now Christ has come. And your life and hope is in Christ because you are his son and daughter. Do you know that your life comes from God’s promise to give it to you?

Sermon Questions

- REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER: Share your thoughts. Don’t teach! Listen and reflect on God’s word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- PRAY TOGETHER: Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- DIG DEEPER
 1. We know Galatians 3:28 as its own singular verse, outside of the context of Galatians. How does your study of Galatians 1-3 add to your understanding of Galatians 3:28?
 2. Why is “for you are all one in Christ Jesus” such a radical statement for the Galatians to hear?
 3. What do you understand about being an heir? What does it mean for you to have an inheritance from God?
 4. How does being called God’s son/daughter and heir change the way you view what is on your calendar for tomorrow?