

Blessed Through Faith Galatians 3

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in Christ for true redemption and blessing, contrasting it with the futility of relying on the law.

Scripture: Galatians 3:2

Topics: "Redemption through Christ", "Faith vs. Law"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the distinction between the law and the promise in his sermon on Galatians 3, explaining that while the Galatians were Christians, they mistakenly mixed the law with the gospel. He highlights that true peace comes from faith in Christ's completed work rather than from adherence to the law or ordinances. Darby asserts that believers are not under the law but are blessed through faith, as exemplified by Abraham, and that the law serves to reveal sin rather than provide salvation. He concludes that redemption is accomplished through Christ, who bore the curse of the law, allowing believers to receive the Spirit and the blessings of faith. The sermon calls for a complete reliance on Christ for righteousness and peace, rather than self-effort or legalism.

Transcript

In speaking of redemption there are always two questions to be considered: firstly, the great truth of the work of Christ on the cross; and secondly, the application of His work to us. The last is principally that in which Christians go astray. It is the manner of availing ourselves of the blessing that is denied. The Galatians did not deny Christ; they were Christians, but they were mixing up the law with the gospel and connecting ordinances with works, which two always come together. When the heart is not satisfied with works, then it ekes out matters by ordinances. But ordinances cannot give peace to the conscience. God will not let you mix them with Christ. The apostle here shews the real ground of peace. Promise is contrasted with law. "Received ye the Spirit by the law or by faith?" (v. 2). The promised One is come: and the work being accomplished, the Spirit is given as the consequence.

Man is so attached to his good opinion of himself, that God had, as it were, to say, Well if you will have a law, here is Mine for you. They ought to have cried, Oh! we cannot keep the law, we are sinners, ruined; instead of this they presumptuously answered, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." What could such self-confidence end in but death? On the other hand, we Christians are not under law; nor are we under promise but under the effect of the accomplishment of the promise. He begins with the effect (v. 2): "Received ye the Spirit," etc. We are under the effect of redemption, namely sin put away by Christ's

sacrifice, and the Holy Ghost present as power for walk, etc. Did we get it by the law or by faith?

Verse 3. "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Whenever the law is brought in, so is the flesh also. I never put myself in any way under the law without being condemned and lost, beyond all help; whereas God must have perfect obedience and nothing less. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." If we get off this ground, it would be God accommodating Himself to sinners and allowing sin. When we start upon the ground of man's responsibility to God, we always fail. The Galatians professed to have found redemption by Christ. Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified before their eyes (v. 1). Again, had "they suffered many things in vain?" (v. 4). Was it all a mistake? When had they this power? It was in the Spirit. The law never pretended to give power. "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to Him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham" (v. 5-9). When he turns to the ground of faith, then we find the promise, "In thee shall all nations be blessed."

295 Here are thus two great principles in contrast. If it is a promise, what I have to do is to believe it. It is another who accomplished it. God undertakes this, and He accomplishes it by Christ. It is all on God's side. This is the difference between promise and the law. "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And so if I believe God, and it is counted to me for righteousness: "So then they that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." It is not as many as do bad works, but "as many as are on the ground of law-works." The law is good, but we are bad; and hence all is ruin on that ground; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not," etc. I cannot keep it so as to be saved.

According to Deuteronomy 27:1-10, they were to write, upon the stones with which they built the altar, all the words of the law on mount Ebal, where was the law; the letter was not on mount Gerizim, where half of the tribes were to bless (v. 12). But there was nothing there - the letter was only on the mount of cursing. In chapter 28 is both blessing and cursing, but these have nothing to do with Gerizim; they are the blessing and cursing of God's government, as regards their daily walk. We may come under chastisement in our daily walk. It is in vain to mix yourself up as the accomplisher of the law with God as the accomplisher of the promise. If your soul rests upon what God is in Christ and nothing else, you get the blessing. If you choose to stand on what you do yourself, how can you escape the curse?

296 Verse 13. "Christ hath redeemed us," etc. Then comes the accomplishment of the promise. Man was either, like the Gentile, lawless? or like the Jew, under the curse of the law. What is required by the bondmen of sin and Satan is redemption. The way God gives us blessing is, not by enfeebling the law, but by Christ's enduring the judgment of guilt for us. The curse that we deserved, another has borne! I do not fly to a promise for peace to my soul. Peace is the accomplished result of Christ's work (Col. 1), and, if you will, of the promise. Christ has been made a curse for me, and I am redeemed entirely from the curse of the law. The curse is utterly taken away. We ought to be astonished at such grace! - laid in the dust, as regards ourselves, but in perfect peace with God. The curse is altogether put away and gone; for Christ has borne sin and death. Then what remains? The blessing of faith as to all that results from His work. We are not merely born anew by the Spirit; but we have received the Spirit as the seal of the curse being gone - of redemption accomplished.

In verse 17 he speaks of God's way of dealing, in order to shew how sure it is. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made." In Genesis 12:2, 3, the promise is made to Abraham - nothing about the seed. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In Genesis 22 there comes a figure of the seed in Isaac. In verses 16 and 17 it is said, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son [a type of Christ], I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven," etc. These are the "seeds as of many." "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." In verse 18, on the other hand, nothing is said of a numerous seed. "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Here it is in one Seed, Christ. In chapter 15 is another set of promises, but the promise is to Abraham in himself. But after Isaac had been offered, we have the seed [Christ] without any conditions at all.

This promise, confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before the law came in, the law cannot disannul or make of none effect. The law being come, God could not bring in the promise till the curse was put away. Christ was born under the law, as a living man. The promise of God is in a Christ who had to die. But He is risen, the curse being borne. Then wherefore serves the law? (v. 19). To bring out transgressions, to convict of sin, to prove man a sinner, a self-righteous good-for-nothing sinner. The effect was to bring out the sin that was already in the heart. "Transgression" is a different thing from "sin," which is really said in 1 John 3:4 to be, not transgression of the law, but lawlessness. If I have a son who is idle and runs about the street, it certainly is a bad habit; but if he refuses or neglects to do what I bid him, this is positive transgression. It is not only lawlessness, but transgression of law.

297 Thus then the promise came first, next the law, and then the accomplishment of the promise. The law was in the hand of a mediator, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made (v. 20). Again, a promise does not want a mediator; for it is all on one side. "Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one," who is the accomplisher of the promise. In Exodus 19 God says, "If you obey my voice . . . I will bless you." The mediator comes with this statement from God, and God says, If you do all this, I will bless you. Israel says, "All that Jehovah hath spoken, we will do." Here is a promise of our God, conditional on something being fulfilled by man. The result is a total failure; because man has been brought in, engaging to do something which he is sure not to accomplish. The moment there is the legal mediator, man is engaged in a condition and has no possibility of fulfilling it. But (v. 21) the law is not contrary to the promise. The truth is that man was in a condition in which he could not earn the promises, because he could not keep the law. God proposes law and man breaks it. God accomplishes by Christ not merely the law but redemption, so that the original promise of blessing flows out to the Gentiles by faith, who had nothing to do with the law.

After faith is come, even the believing Jews are no longer under the law. We have put on Christ. We are not before God as sinners in our sins. He only thinks of us as in Christ. He does not see it in us, because it is put away; but we see it, hate it, judge it, though we know it has been judged in Christ. He puts the saints in the place of promise in this way. They are in Christ, and therefore they are the seed of Abraham (v. 29). All the promises find their centre in Christ Himself. The moment I am in Christ, all the promises of God are mine too, and I am come into the full blessing of all the promises of God. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

298 If I put myself practically under the law, my conscience gets tortured. The more spiritual I am to discern its holiness, the more miserable I become. One proof that a soul is converted is when he feels and says God ought never to give up His holiness, even if he is destroyed by it. It is nothing but pride for a sinful man to go about to establish his own righteousness. Can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? This unbelief hinders the soul from resting on the accomplishment of the promise. If the curse had not been

borne, it would have been upon you; but it has been borne, and there is no curse to the believer. Such is your position, because you have put on Christ. If you attempt to mix anything of your own with Christ, you will always be unhappy; besides, it is unholy to think of it, because it is not acknowledging that in "your flesh dwelleth no good thing." We are not our own at all; we are bought with a price. Whenever a man thinks he has a right to do anything of his own will, he is robbing God. We should render to Him our bodies; it is our reasonable service.

After promise the law was added, and this was, till the Seed, Christ, came. This is very important indeed for us to be settled in. We never shall have solid settled peace till the whole man is ploughed up and searched out, and we get clearly to see that we have no strength in us. Then we are cast over on accomplished righteousness in Christ, on nothing less than God's own Son made sin for us. To know this puts me down in the dust; but it gives me unchangeable peace. And what then is the claim of Christ on us? We ought to realise that we are given up to Him, body, soul, and spirit, even as we are purchased by His blood.

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