

All Lives Matter

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this morning with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in Galatians chapter 3, Paul's letter to the Galatians and chapter 3.

And if we take as our text the words of verse 28, Galatians chapter 3 and verse 28, where Paul writes, There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free.

There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Black lives matter.

Black lives matter. We've become familiar with that phrase over the past few weeks following the tragic death of George Floyd, who was a black American who was murdered while in police custody.

And as you would expect from such a painful and public death, a lot of anger and aggression has arisen from the black community, not only in the US, but as we've seen on the news, also here in the UK.

[1 : 13] And as we know, chaos and confusion and carnage has followed with there's been mass protests and lots of publicity emphasising and re-emphasising that black lives matter.

And this movement, it has also been promoted by protesters in the streets, and it's also been plugged by many football players and many politicians.

But, you know, sadly, while seeking vindication, the situation has become volatile and, in some cases, quite violent, with other groups claiming that silence is violence or that white lives matter.

But, of course, the truth is black lives do matter. And we do need to show the red card to racism. But, you know, because there should be no discrimination, there should be no distinction or no division because of your colour or the colour of your skin.

But more than that, there should be no discrimination, no distinction, no division because of your nationality or your social status or your gender or your occupation or even your sexuality because the truth is all lives matter.

[2 : 32] And, you know, as a nation, we actually believe that all lives matter. That's why we've been living in lockdown for the past three months. That's why we've followed the rules to stay at home, protect the NHS and to save lives.

We have all stayed at home because we believe that all lives matter. But because all lives matter, there should be no discrimination, no distinction, no division when it comes to the gospel.

Because as the gospel reminds us, we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Even though that image and likeness has been messed up and marred by our sin, yet the gospel assures us, it assures us that the offer of salvation is open to all, regardless of their skin colour, their nationality, their social status, their gender, their occupation, or even their sexuality.

The gospel reminds us that it is an open invitation to whosoever. The gospel is for sinners to come to Jesus Christ and receive the remedy to their ruin and salvation from their sin.

And this gospel offer is a free offer. And it comes without distinction, discrimination, or division.

Because the gospel says to us, all lives matter.

[3 : 56] All lives matter. And you know, that's what Paul is teaching here in Galatians 3. That when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, there's to be no discrimination, no distinction, no division.

Because all lives matter. All lives matter. And I'd just like us to think about Paul's teaching here in this chapter.

I want us to think about it under three headings. Law, liberty, and life. Law, liberty, and life. So we look first of all at law.

Paul talks about the law. We'll just read our text, verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. You know, Paul's statement here, it emphasizes that the free offer of the gospel is open to all. Without distinction, discrimination, or division.

[4 : 57] And Paul says that the offer of the gospel is open to all because all lives matter. But you know, the reason Paul said this was because there was a misunderstanding of the law.

Because the Galatian churches, they were Greek-speaking churches, and they were located in what is now modern-day Turkey. And the Galatians, they were young churches, which Paul had planted only about four or five years earlier, before he wrote this letter.

And as a young church, the Galatians were young in their faith, and they needed a lot of discipleship. But what happened to the Galatians was that the churches became infiltrated, and they became influenced by false teachers.

And these false teachers, they claimed that Jesus was insufficient. The false teachers taught the Galatians that Jesus wasn't enough for your salvation.

They said to them that you need something more than Jesus. You need something extra on top of Jesus. You need Jesus plus. You need Jesus plus.

[6 : 08] Jesus plus knowledge. Jesus plus good works. Jesus plus good living. Jesus plus circumcision. Jesus plus law-keeping. And because the false teachers, because they twisted the gospel to a gospel of Jesus plus, it inevitably left these young Christians feeling inferior and inadequate in their faith.

They thought that because Jesus was said to be insufficient, then their salvation must be insufficient. And the outcome was that these Galatians, they began to doubt their Christianity, and they questioned whether they were saved at all, and they lacked confidence in the cross of Jesus Christ.

But Paul wrote this letter only four or five years after he had planted the church. Paul wrote this letter in order to remind these young Christians that the gospel is not a gospel of Jesus plus.

The gospel is not a gospel of Jesus plus. And you know, when you read this letter, and I'd encourage you to read Galatians, read it today. In this letter, Paul is quite direct with the Galatians. Because he says back in chapter one, he says, I marvel that you're turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to another gospel.

[7 : 34] Not that there is another gospel, says Paul, but that there are some who want to deceive you and to distort the gospel of Christ. And then in chapter two, Paul gives the confession of a Christian.

And he says that the gospel centers around the cross. It's all about the cross, says Paul. It's not about Jesus plus. Paul says in Galatians 2 verse 20, he gives the confession of the Christian. I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

That's the confession of the Christian. And then as Paul goes into chapter three, he says there in verse one, he's very direct with the Galatians.

He says, You know, Paul, he's very direct with the Galatians.

[8 : 53] And he asks them, How can you be so foolish? How can you think that Jesus is insufficient? How can you think that the cross was not enough?

How can you think that having received the gospel and believed the gospel, that you now need Jesus plus the law in order to be a Christian? But you know, this chaos and confusion that came from the false teachers, it came from these false teachers because they claimed that in order for these Greek-speaking Galatians to become proper Christians, they needed Jesus, but they also needed to become Jews.

They needed to adhere to the Mosaic law, which included the covenant sign of circumcision. So these Greeks, they had to become Jews.

They were being told that they needed to become Jews in order to be a Christian. And the argument these false teachers would have used was that, well, Jesus was a Jew.

Jesus adhered to the Mosaic law. Jesus received the covenant sign of circumcision. And with that, the false teachers would have taught the Galatians that in order to become a Christian, you need to be like Jesus.

[10 : 05] You need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. You need Jesus plus the law and plus circumcision. You need Jesus plus. But here in chapter 3, Paul, he just pulls apart all these arguments of the false teachers.

And he emphasizes to the Galatians, again and again, Jesus is sufficient. And that the gospel is not Jesus plus. And you know, Paul does this.

We saw that when we read it. Paul pulls apart the teaching of the false teachers by using Abraham as an example. Because Paul, he asks the question, as you see, he's got this logical thought process.

Paul asks the question at the beginning, how was Abraham made righteous before God? How was Abraham saved? And Paul asks, was it by works of the law or was it by faith?

How was Abraham made righteous before God? And Paul answers the question and he says that Abraham was made righteous before God by faith.

[11 : 15] Because as it's written in Genesis 15, Paul says, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. Abraham was made righteous by faith.

Abraham was saved by faith. He wasn't saved by works. He wasn't saved by the law. In fact, Paul says that it wasn't for another 430 years after Abraham had died that the law came into effect.

And Paul says that the law only came into effect because of the transgression of the Israelites.

Therefore, Paul is saying, you're not saved by works of the law.

You're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And as Paul affirms in verse 10, he says, all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.

It's written in the Mosaic law, says Paul. It's in Deuteronomy 27. Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law and do them.

[12 : 21] And then in verse 11, Paul continues his logical thought and he makes it absolutely clear that no one is justified by the law. No one is made righteous through the law.

No one is saved by keeping the law and doing good works. No, Paul says, you're saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone because on the cross, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us because cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree.

And so Paul is saying to the Galatians, you're not saved by what you do. You're saved by what Jesus has done. You're not saved by keeping the Mosaic law.

You're not saved by being circumcised. You're not saved by becoming a Jew. You're not saved through Jesus plus. No, you're only saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

And you know, my friend, to apply this to our own context, Christ, you're not saved because you were brought up in a Christian home. You're not saved because you were baptized as a child.

[13 : 30] You're not saved because you went to Sunday school. You're not saved by being a good person. You're not saved by owning or reading the Bible. You're not saved because you pray.

You're not saved because you watch or listen to sermons. You're not saved because you're a church member or an elder or a deacon or a minister. You're not saved because of anything you do, but because of what Jesus has done.

Therefore, you can only be saved through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

And Paul says, that's why there needs to be no distinction, no discrimination and no division between Jew or Greek. That's why there needs to be no distinction, no division, no discrimination.

That's why the offer of the gospel is to be an open invitation to all because it's not about keeping the law. It's not about becoming a Jew.

[14 : 34] It's not about being a good person. It's not about being circumcised. No, Paul says salvation is all about faith in Jesus Christ. It's all about trusting in Jesus Christ.

It's all about committing your life to Jesus Christ because all lives matter. All lives matter. And so, my friend, the gospel is not a gospel of law.

It's a gospel of faith. It's a gospel of faith. But the second thing Paul teaches here is that the gospel is not a gospel of slavery.

It's a gospel of liberty. So we've seen law, and then secondly, liberty. Law and liberty. Liberty.

Paul says in our text, verse 28, There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free.

There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

[15 : 40] Many Americans, they recently celebrated Juneteenth. Juneteenth. Juneteenth. Because Juneteenth is an annual celebration that marks the end of slavery and the freedom and liberty of African-American slaves.

Where on the 19th of June, 1865, all African-American slaves were proclaimed as free. And now, 155 years later, Juneteenth, it's become a national holiday in America with people in cities and

towns across the United States marking the occasion with all these celebrations.

But what's interesting is that the initial celebrations of Juneteenth, they were held in churches until, like many things, they became commercialised.

But this celebration of liberty and freedom from slavery, known as Juneteenth, it's also known as Freedom Day or Liberation Day or Emancipation Day or Jubilee Day.

Jubilee Day. And I find it fascinating that Juneteenth is referred to as Jubilee Day because the Jews also celebrated liberty and freedom from slavery.

[16:57] They celebrated that in the year of Jubilee. In the year of Jubilee, it took place every 50 years. And it's mentioned back in Leviticus.

In chapter 25. Where in the 50th year, the Jews would proclaim liberty and freedom throughout the nation of Israel. It would be a year of redemption.

And during the year of Jubilee, God's mercy would be made known. All debts would be forgiven and forgotten. And slaves would be set free.

It was a year of Jubilee. And you know, what Paul is actually saying here in Galatians 3 is that in Christ, there's Jubilee.

In Christ, there's freedom. In Christ, there's liberty. Because in Christ, you're no longer enslaved to sin. In Christ, you're no longer enslaved to the law.

[17:55] In Christ, you're free. My friend, when you come to trust in Jesus Christ by faith, you're free in Christ. You're free in Christ.

And that's what Paul goes on to explain in chapter 5. He goes on to say, chapter 5, verse 1, For freedom, Christ has set us free. For freedom, Christ has set us free.

And he set us free from the law of sin and death. Because, you know, before anyone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, the reality is they are held captive by the law.

They're enslaved to the law. And they're convinced that the only way to be made right with God is by keeping the law. The only way to be made right with God in their own mind is by doing something or by obeying the commandments or by being a good person.

And, you know, the irony is many people don't see becoming a Christian as liberty. They see it as lockdown. Because, well, they listen to the father of lies who is the devil and he convinces them.

[19:07] Maybe he convinces you that Christianity is oppressive. It's bondage. It's slavery.

Because being a Christian, it's all about rules and regulations.

It's all about do's and don'ts. It's all about boundaries and barriers. And that if you submit your life to Jesus Christ and if you become a Christian and confess you're a Christian, then you'll lose so much and your life will be absolutely miserable and you'll be so unhappy.

But, you know, my friend, nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth because Christ has fulfilled the law.

Therefore, faith and following Jesus Christ, it's liberty, it's freedom, it's jubilee. My friend, when you put your trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, you're no longer enslaved to the law.

Yes, the law is important. But you don't follow the law. You follow the Lord. You follow the footsteps of Jesus. You know, that's why Christianity is not a religion about Jesus Christ.

[20:14] It's a relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity is not a religion about Jesus Christ. It's a relationship with Jesus Christ. It's about following the Lord.

You know, someone once said, religion says do. Jesus says done. The law says slave, but Jesus says son.

Religion puts you in bondage, while Jesus sets you free. Religion makes you blind, but Jesus lets you see. And, you know, that's what Paul is saying in this chapter.

He's saying the law tells you to do something or be something in order to be made right with God, in order to be saved, in order to be someone who gets to heaven.

But Paul says, in Christ, you're free from the law. And in Christ, there's no distinction, no discrimination, no division.

[21:14] There's neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither slave nor free. There is no male and female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus. My friend, when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul is saying, all lives matter.

All lives matter. And when you're set free in Christ, you don't need to do something or be something in order to be a Christian. And, you know, thinking about it, Paul's teaching here would have been particularly helpful for these Greek-speaking Galatians.

Because the false teachers, they claimed that in order to be a proper Christian, the Galatians needed to become Jews. They needed to be circumcised. They needed to change their ways. But again, Paul challenged these claims by using Abraham as an example. because Paul said that when Abraham was saved by faith, he was saved by faith and not by works of the law. But when Abraham was saved, Paul says, he wasn't a Jew. He wasn't circumcised. No, Paul says he was a Gentile. Abraham was an idolater when the Lord met him and the Lord saved him. [22 : 29] When the Lord called Abraham to himself, Abraham was a Gentile. And yet the Lord called him and made a covenant with Abraham.

This binding promise. God made a covenant with Abraham way back in Genesis 12. And God made this covenant with Abraham not because Abraham was a good person, not because he was a Jew, not because he was circumcised, not because he kept the law.

But God made a covenant with Abraham simply because God is gracious. And because God is gracious, Paul says, God graciously made that covenant promise with Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

And that's what Paul says back in verse 8. He says in verse 8, And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed.

So then those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. And the point that Paul is making is that in order to be a Christian, you don't have to become enslaved by the law.

[23 : 47] In order to become a Christian, you don't have to be circumcised. In order to become a Christian, you don't have to become a Jew. In order to be a Christian, you don't have to adopt a religion or perform a ritual.

In order to become a Christian, you don't have to do or be anything. You just need to receive and rest upon God's gracious gift of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ.

And my friend, this is the wonder of salvation, that this gracious gift of salvation is on offer to all the nations of the earth.

It's on offer to you today. And it's on offer to you because the covenant promise with Abraham was that through his offspring, through the passion of Jesus Christ, the gospel would go to all the nations of the world.

And you know, my friend, this is something we should never lose sight of. That it was always God's intention that the gospel of Jesus Christ would go to all the nations of the world.

[24 : 53] That's why Psalm 100, it expresses the great missionary vision, the missionary vision that was built upon God's covenant promise that all people not on earth do dwell would sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

That was the vision for the gospel. That was the hope of the gospel. But what's sad is that when the Jews received the gospel, the Lord told them they were to be a light to the nations.

But instead, they hid their light and they veiled their light and they kept the light of the gospel to themselves. And as a nation, they became a proud nation and a proud people and they created distinction and discrimination and division.

But Paul says, that's not the gospel. That's not the gospel because Paul says, in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female because in Christ, you are all one. In Christ, the offer of salvation is open to all people that on earth do dwell.

[26 : 06] In Christ, the gospel is for the whosoever. In Christ, the gospel is a free offer to those regardless of their skin, color, nationality, social status, gender, occupation, or sexuality.

In Christ, my friend, there's freedom, there's liberty, there's jubilee for all without distinction, discrimination, or division. Why? Because the gospel is saying to us this morning, my friend, all lives matter.

All lives matter. Your life matters. Your life matters. And you know, in this passage, Paul is teaching us that the gospel is for everyone.

The gospel is for you because the gospel is not a gospel of law. It's a gospel of faith. It's not a gospel of slavery. It's a gospel of liberty. And it's not a gospel of death.

It's a gospel of life. It's a gospel of life. That's what Paul says lastly. He's speaking about law, liberty, and life. Law, liberty, and life.

[27 : 17] It's a gospel of life. Paul says, You know, the month of June, it not only marks Juneteenth and the end of slavery in the United States, but the month of June, it also marks Pride Month in support of the LGBT community.

And, you know, what many people don't actually realise is that the Black Lives Matter movement, it's also a massive supporter and proponent of the LGBT movement.

But, you know, what comes across so clearly when you listen to these people and you see them is that from these groups, their identity is important to them.

Their identity is how they define themselves. They want to identify themselves in the world by their skin colour or their sexuality or even their gender.

And, you know, in many ways, we all do that, don't we? We identify ourselves in different ways by our nationality or our social status or our gender or our occupation. But, you know, the gospel says, and this is what Paul is emphasising, the gospel says our identity needs to be in Christ.

[28 : 42] Our identity needs to be in Christ because as those who have been created, all of us, created in the image and likeness of God, our identity, it has been marred and messed up by our sin.

But the gospel says that regardless of who we are, regardless of our identity, regardless of how we identify ourselves to one another and in this world, our lives matter, there's to be no discrimination, no distinction, no division because our identity needs to be in Christ.

Our identity needs to be in Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ assures us that the offer of salvation is open to all people regardless of how they identify themselves.

And that's because as Paul has repeatedly reminded us in this chapter, the gospel is a gospel of grace. It's a gospel of grace. In fact, the gospel is a person because the gospel is Jesus Christ.

The gospel is Jesus Christ. And you know, when you consider who Jesus is, he's the most loving and gracious person who ever lived because regardless of how people identify themselves in life, there was never discrimination, distinction or division with Jesus.

[30 : 09] There was no one to whom Jesus wouldn't move towards with compassion. It didn't matter who it was, Jesus went to them because with Jesus there was neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female.

And you know, how often do we read of Jesus moving with compassion towards women? There was the woman of Samaria. She had had five husbands. There was Mary Magdalene who was a prostitute.

You see it again and again. Jesus moving towards women because, and this was especially important because in the first century, women were second class citizens and yet, how often do we see Jesus teaching and talking to women or healing and helping women?

My friend, there was no one, no one to whom Jesus wouldn't move towards with compassion. Didn't matter who it was, Jesus went to them. He went to the lonely and to the leper.

He went to the publican and to the prostitute. He went to the sick and to the suffering. He went to the dying and the demon-possessed. He went to those who were unworthy, unwanted and even unwilling because, my friend, there was nowhere and there was no one to whom Jesus was not willing to go.

[31 : 32] No one was excluded. No one was exempt. No one was rejected. No one was refused. There was no boundary too big and no barrier too high that would keep Jesus away.

Not even you. Not even you because, you know, the glory of the gospel today is that Jesus is able to meet you at your point of need and he's more than willing to forgive you and cleanse you and make you his if you'll only come to him.

My friend, there was no one to whom Jesus ever said, the gospel is not for them. The gospel is not for them.

And, you know, it reminds me of a time when I was studying in the Free Church College in Edinburgh and I was studying with Andrew Longwee who is now the minister in Cumbernauld and one afternoon when we had a quieter afternoon Andrew went out doing door-to-door tracting in the Holyrood area of Edinburgh and he went with a man called Ewan Dodds who was at that time an evangelist.

He's now actually just recently been inducted as the minister in Kilmally. But as they were going door-to-door Andrew was going door-to-door up one street and Ewan was on the other side of the street doing the same.

[32 : 53] But as they were going door-to-door Andrew came to a tattoo parlor which didn't look the most welcoming of places. So he decided well I'll skip to the next door and go on to that one.

But as Andrew walked away from the tattoo parlor Ewan shouted from across the street is the gospel not for them? Is the gospel not for them?

And you know my friend it's a probing question isn't it? Because how often do we make decisions distinctions discriminations or divisions about the gospel where we decide we dictate we determine who the gospel is for and who it's not for.

But you know there was no one to whom Jesus said the gospel is not for them. And that's the way it ought to be for us. There's no one to whom we should ever say the gospel is not for them.

We should be willing to cross every boundary and climb over every barrier to make sure that the gospel reaches them. And you know with that Paul is challenging us here as Christians and as a church he's challenging us to live gospel centred lives.

[34 : 14] We're to live gospel centred lives. Why? Because all lives matter. All lives matter. Doesn't matter who people are.

Doesn't matter how they identify themselves. We're to remember that our identity it has been messed up and marred by sin. But our identity it needs to be in Christ.

It needs to be in Christ because there's life in Christ. Our identity needs to be in Christ because there's life in Christ. The gospel my friend it's not a gospel of death it's a gospel of life.

The gospel is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the life. And as Christians we're to live a gospel centred life and we're to share that life giving gospel.

Why? Because all lives matter. And that's what Paul is saying. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female for you're all one in Christ Jesus.

[35 : 17] My friend when it comes to the gospel there's to be no discrimination no distinction and no division for the offer of salvation is open to all open to everyone regardless of who they are or what they have done.

The gospel is an open and free offer to whosoever. It's for sinners to come to Jesus Christ and receive the remedy to their ruin and salvation for their sin.

And this free offer is open to all. All because the gospel says to us all lives matter. All lives matter. And you know my friend this morning your life matters. Your life matters and Jesus is interested in your life and he wants you to come to him by faith.

That's what the gospel is urging you. It's urging you to come to Jesus Christ by faith so that you will be forgiven of your sin. You'll be cleansed made new and become a child of God.

[36 : 30] All lives matter and your life matters. So you come to this life giving Jesus and ask him to give you life because that's what he promises.

He promises to give you life eternal life. All lives matter. There is neither Jew nor Greek neither slave nor free there is no male and female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together. O Lord our gracious God may we give thanks this morning for that wonderful reminder that the gospel is an open invitation an invitation to all people upon the earth to come regardless of who they are or what they've done regardless of how they identify themselves in this life.

We thank the Lord that the gospel is able to break down every barrier it is able to cross every barricade and Lord we give thanks for the wonder of the gospel that it is able to speak to us even in our sin and remind us that we need to come to Jesus by faith and Lord our prayer is that there will be rejoicing in heaven this morning over sinners repenting over people in their homes that they would turn to Jesus that they would go on their knees and ask the Lord to be merciful to them oh Lord we give thanks for this wonderful opportunity that the gospel is going to homes throughout our land and Lord we give thanks that there were a God who is still sowing this wonderful seed and Lord we pray that it would bring forth fruit to thine own glory Lord bless us then we pray keep us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen well we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning by singing the words of Psalm 100

Psalm 100 that great missionary psalm a psalm that was grounded firmly upon God's covenant with Abraham the covenant promise that through the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed and that's what the psalmist longed for and that's what we should long for that the gospel would go to all nations Psalm 100 all people that on earth do dwell sing to the Lord with cheerful voice him serve with mirth his praise foretell come ye before him and rejoice we'll sing the

whole psalm to God's praise all people that on earth do dwell sing to the Lord with cheerful light in
sacred purpose praise foretell come give me for him and rejoice know that the
[40 : 04] Lord is God in thee without the hate he did say we are his hope he doth us be and for his
sheep he doth us pay more more and than his gift with praise approach with joy his course unto
praise all and bless his name always far is his singly soul to who are why the

Lord our God is true his mercy is forever sure is true that all time firmly soon and shall promise to
age endure him to him to him his Father has ■ him