

## The Story of the Bible

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Galatians: Free At Last Series

Galatians 3:6-18

Let me begin with a story. This kind of experience has probably happened to many of you who have gone hiking in the woods without a background in the Boy Scouts or for those of you who don't have your Eagle Scout Badge yet. Once, when I was in college, there was a picnic for our Christian Fellowship Group. This friend and I took a little hike in the woods around the picnic grounds. We both suffered from "directional dyslexia." I should never go out in the woods without a trail of breadcrumbs and a rope around my waist that guides me back to where I came from. Marlene has to point the way out of big parking lots to me.

Anyway, the two of us directional dyslexics were walking through these woods and the trail kept branching and winding and curving. Unfortunately, you couldn't see any directional markers. So we turned ourselves around about four different times and kept walking by the same scrubby looking pine tree until we realized we were hopelessly lost.

I was a young Christian. I asked Christ to come into my life when I was 18. And so this was shortly after Christ came into my life. I said to my friend, "I am going to pray and ask God to guide us out of the woods." He wasn't as full of faith as me. In fact, he got really mad at me. He thought I was being very naïve and simplistic and that the God-Guidance Method would result in us starving out in the woods, being eaten by some wolves.

But I was back then really stubborn, unlike my present very flexible self, so I said, "You can stay here if you want, but I am going to pray and then I am walking." The amazing thing was that in about five minutes I stumbled on the right path and it led me right back to the picnic grounds. My friend, of course, was trailing right behind me the whole time telling me that we weren't going to find our way back.

Have you ever gotten lost in the woods? You know, I think that for many people the experience of reading the Bible is like a lost person wandering through the woods. Fighting through the underbrush; getting stuck with pricklers; doubling back on the same trail; completely confused! We don't have a trail map or a compass. Many people who read the Bible like to say, "Okay, I am going to read it like any other book." They start at the beginning of Genesis and they read a bunch of interesting stories that make for enjoyable reading. They read about Noah and his ark; Abraham and God's calling to him; Joseph and his coat of many colors – but how it all fits together and why these stories are there, folks don't have a clue. It gets worse when they hit the last 10 or so chapters of Exodus and feel like I am half my way through the underbrush and what is all of this about the tabernacle and the priests' garments, the weaving together of the curtains around the tabernacle, and the construction of the lamp stand and altar. And if

you persevere through that, the next book is Leviticus with different kinds of offerings and what to do with various skin diseases.

At that point, most people other than the incredibly determined completely give up on their Bible reading plan and just end up dipping into the Bible back to their favorite places. I think I will turn back to Psalm 23, “The Lord is my Shepherd! Yes, I like that one!” And I certainly like Psalm 121, “I will lift up my eyes to the hill from whence cometh my help. My help comes from the Lord.” Yes, I will just read those two Psalms for the rest of my life.

Now, what I want to do today is to help us find a way through the tangle. To give you some markers to guide you through this huge book called the Bible. And especially if you are unacquainted with the Bible this is going to be an important talk for you to hear. But even if you have been reading the Bible for years you may not see the big picture of the Bible. There is a message that God wants to communicate. Because while there are many human authors and 66 books in the Bible, there is one divine author, one God who inspired the Bible’s writing and one God who is speaking a consistent message from beginning to end. And so the individual stories, individual verses and individual books all have to be fit into God’s big picture.

Sometimes we are like folks in a museum with our noses pressed up against the painting. You see this splotch of brown and you say, “What is that?” Or this little funny pink line that it is only when you step back and see the whole painting you can say, “Oh, that splotch of brown is shadowing under the person’s eyes. And that pink line is helping to define the person’s mouth.”

Today we’re going to step back and see the big picture of the Bible. I want to give you some trail markers. If your taste runs to classical music, I remember when I was in grade school and they took us to an Italian opera. As a child I watched these rather large women singing in Italian. People were racing on and off the stage, crying, shouting, and dancing. It was really helpful to read the storyline, the Libretto, so that we could figure out why this large woman was crying or dancing.

In the text we’re going to look at today, Paul is giving us the libretto, a program guide, the trail markers, the big picture. I have called today’s talk very simply, “The Story of the Bible.” Let’s pray.

### **Galatians 3:6-9**

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

The whole Bible must be believed and embraced

Paul is making an argument from the Old Testament, from the story of Abraham in Genesis and then in verses 10-14 from the book of Deuteronomy, and from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk. As we begin, I just want to make one simple point and then we'll go into Paul's argument in detail. My simple point is that to be a serious follower of Jesus Christ means you take the entire Bible seriously as your guide for life. And I mean all of the Bible – the parts you like and the parts you don't like. The parts you agree with and the parts that you struggle with, and the parts that cause you tension. Christian spirituality is marked by believing and embracing and submitting to the whole Bible.

Paul's argument in certain places turns on a technical reading of one Hebrew word – whether the Hebrew word should be read as a plural noun, or a singular noun. In other words, the littlest detail in the Bible makes a difference.

So many people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century pick and choose. They say, "I like what the Bible says about love, but I don't like what the Bible says about not having sex outside of marriage. I like what the Bible says about forgiveness, but I don't like what the Bible says about divorce."

In so many contemporary discussions about hot-button political issues, you hear people say, "Well, that was Paul, but it wasn't Jesus, so we can discount the Apostle Paul's witness." Or, "That was the 1<sup>st</sup> century, not the 21<sup>st</sup> century; people back then believed that the sun moved around the earth and they believed that the sky was like a hard dome over the earth, so why should we listen to what they say about sexual ethics or marriage or immigration?"

And just as a side note, I have no idea, really, what Jesus in his humanity believed about the solar system or what the Apostle Paul believed. But they didn't stake their lives on the view of the solar system. They did stake their lives on their view of the Bible.

The principle upon which Jesus staked his life was his submission to Holy Scripture. I'm told that there are 1800 verses of Jesus' actual words in the New Testament. 1800 verses. If you have a red-letter Bible you can count them up. 1800. Of these 10% or 180 verses are scripture quotations from the Old Testament. Jesus frequently says, "It is written."

Let me put it this way. To say that you are a follower of Jesus, but you disagree with Jesus' approach to the Bible is to deny the very principle upon which Jesus based his life. It would be like saying, "I agree with Rich on most things, but I just don't get this Christianity that he is into. I personally think that it doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are a decent person. And I don't think it really matters what you believe about Jesus – whether he died on a cross for sin, or rose from the dead. After all, those things happened 2000 years ago and they are pretty irrelevant to us today. But, otherwise, apart from that, I really agree with Rich on the whole way that he thinks about life." I would respond and say, "You don't understand me at all!" The entire basis

on which I have staked my life – the way that Marlene and I have arranged our marriage, the way the we arrange our finances, my career choice and what I do in the morning, what I do during the day, what I do in the evening, my friendships, my choices, my future – it is all rooted, it is all staked on my view of Jesus!

So to say that I'm a follower of Jesus and deny the principle of his life which was his confident embrace of the whole of scripture is to simply conjure up a Jesus of your own imagination. It is simply the crudest form of idolatry which is always about re-making God in our own image. To follow the real Jesus means that you follow the real Jesus' approach to the Bible.

Let me make this really practical. As was pointed out by a pastor that I deeply respect, Tim Keller, at the depth of Jesus' sorrow and suffering, he quoted scripture. While he was on the cross, we read in John 19:28:

**John 19:28**

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

Why did he say, "I am thirsty?" To fulfill scripture.

In Luke 18:31, Jesus is going to Jerusalem. What does it say?

**Luke 18:31**

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

And in Luke 23:27-30 here's Jesus carrying the cross. He sees women and quotes scripture to them:

**Luke 23:27-30**

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then ""they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"

Jesus based his entire life on scripture. Christian spirituality means that you pin your entire life on scripture. And I particularly appreciate this insight of Tim Keller. That when Jesus was facing the hour of his greatest need, when he was suffering, when he was overwhelmed, when he couldn't possible move forward in human strength – when he faced the cross and when he was hanging on the cross, what does Jesus rely on? He relied on scripture. Over and over, especially on the cross, Jesus quoted scripture.

When you are at bottom, friend, when you are out of resource, when there is nothing in your to get you to be able to carry on, you've got nothing, you're at the end of your rope and beyond, how can you be a spiritual Christian? You rely on scripture – here is God's promise; here is God's will; here is God's goodness – I can't see it or feel it or presently experience it, but I'm staking my life on it. And I will tell you especially in good times feed yourself with scripture so that in bad times when you are squeezed what comes out is Holy Scripture.

Let me make one other brief point before we move on and that is much spiritual growth comes from precisely those texts of scripture that cause you great difficulty. If you find yourself being offended by the Bible, good! Now, it is possible that you are misinterpreting what you are reading. But it is also possible that you are interpreting it exactly the way that the author intended for you to interpret it and you just don't like it. And it is precisely in these places where we experience tension and struggle over what the Bible is saying that we spiritually grow. So, don't go through the Bible picking and choosing what you like and what you don't like. You will never grow that way. Allow all of it to come at you; to knock you down; wrestle with the Bible the way that Jacob way back in the book of Genesis wrestled with an angel all night. That's how you grow.

Well, here is the second thing:

The whole Bible is to be read through the story of Abraham

#### **Galatians 3:6-9**

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Verse 8 is incredibly important. It says:

#### **Galatians 3:8**

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”

In other words, the gospel that we believe today was pre-preached to Father Abraham, the father of the Jewish people and the father of all Christians 4000 years ago. Abraham got a preview of coming attractions 2000 years before God sent his Son into the world to die for sins. The gospel was announced in advance to Abraham.

Now, this text, Galatians 3:6-9, is so essential for Paul's whole theology that I want to go through it in some depth. When Paul teaches us here that the whole Bible is to be read through the story of Abraham, we understand first of all that the Bible is a story of God's single saving plan.

## A story of God's single saving plan

Remember, again, with me what Paul was dealing with in the churches in Galatia. Paul was a missionary and church planter. He had gone through the Roman Empire preaching the gospel message that salvation came by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And the people in the Roman province of Galatia which today would be found in South Central Turkey embraced this message enthusiastically. They came from a non-Jewish Gentile background. And God began doing incredible things through these young churches.

And then Paul left. Opponents of Paul came in. They were Jewish Christians like Paul, but with a different message. They said, "The Apostle Paul only gave you Galatians half a message. Yes, you need to believe in Jesus Christ, but you also need to be circumcised." And they were reading the Bible, in part, through the story of Abraham and we're going to see in part through Moses. But these opponents picked up the story of Abraham in Genesis 17 where Abraham is given circumcision as a sign of his covenant with God.

Paul says the Bible is to be read through the story of Abraham, but we don't start with Genesis 17. We start with Genesis 12 and the statement that he quotes in verse 8, "All nations will be blessed through you." God had a single plan announced through Genesis 12 to save and bless the world through one man, Father Abraham – a single plan. There aren't two plans to save the world – one plan for Jewish people and one plan for Gentiles. God didn't start off in one direction trying to save the world through law, but that didn't work, so he switched gears.

If you want to make your way through the thicket of the Bible, if you want to find the thread that runs through all of scripture, if we want to step back and see the big picture of the Bible, the big picture of the Bible is a single plan of God to bless and save the world through Abraham. And we are going to find that means to save the world through one of Abraham's descendents, Jesus Christ.

But the story of Abraham not only tells us about God's plan to save the world through him, but it also tells us the specific way that God is going to save the world. There is just one way that God intended to save the world. What was that way? Paul says, here is the way:

### **Galatians 3:6**

So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Now, Paul is quoting from Genesis 15. And I don't think we can fully appreciate the single story of God's saving purposes unless we go back to Genesis 15. Because it is here that we find:

## The story of God's unconditional promise

Now in Genesis 15 we read this is verses 2-6:

**Genesis 15:2-6**

But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” 4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” 5 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.” 6 Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

And verse 6 is what Paul quotes:

**Galatians 3:6**

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

But then this incident of Abraham looking up at the stars and believing God is followed up by a very strange ritual that speaks to us about God’s way of salvation. Here is what we read:

**Genesis 15:7-8**

He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” 8 But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

You need to understand in the Old Testament world the land was the place of salvation; it was the inheritance. It was the sign of God’s blessing. To have the land was to be saved, to be secure, and to be provided for. So Abram is saying to God, “How can I know that your salvation is sure for me and for my descendants. Show me the way of your salvation. Show me how you do it.” And we read these instructions.

**Genesis 15:8-11**

But Abram said, “Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?” 9 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.” 10 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. 11 Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

You say, “This is really weird. What’s going on with the cutting up of all these animals?” In ancient times the way that people would make an agreement with each other was they would cut an animal in half and they would set the animal up with one half on the left side, a space between, and one half on the right side. And they would walk between the pieces identifying themselves with that cut up animal and they would take

an oath saying: “If I don’t fulfill my side of the bargain, may I be cut in two, may I be treated like this animal, may I be killed if I don’t fulfill it.”

We see this, for example, in Jeremiah 34:17-18:

**Jeremiah 34:17-18**

Therefore, this is what the Lord says: You have not obeyed me; you have not proclaimed freedom to your own people. So I now proclaim ‘freedom’ for you, declares the Lord—‘freedom’ to fall by the sword, plague and famine. I will make you abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 Those who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces.

God was pronouncing judgment on the people in Jerusalem. And here is the judgment.

So, typically, both parties would walk through the cut up animals. In ancient times it was called “cutting the covenant.” They would walk through the animals and then they would call this curse down on themselves.

Now, let’s look at how God’s plan to save the world differs from this ancient approach of making a covenant.

**Genesis 15:12**

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

**Genesis 15:17-18**

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. 18 On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates

Darkness descends and Abraham falls into a deep sleep. Abraham doesn’t walk through the pieces. Instead, there is this fire, like a burning torch hanging in the air and this fire which represents the holiness and presence of God goes through the pieces alone.

What do we get out of all of this? We get that the single plan of God to save the world through Abraham is:

The story of God’s unconditional promise

See, if God said, “Abraham, you walk through first and then I will go through after you,” that would be a conditional promise. And that is the way most covenants are in the Old Testament. “If you do this,” God says, “then I will do that.” But God’s promise regarding salvation is unconditional. God is literally saying, “I am alone walking through by myself

without you, without anything you are doing. You are asleep. You add nothing to this at all.” God alone walks through the cut up pieces. And then God in his unbelievable condescension is saying, “May I be cut up like those animals. May it be done to me as has been done to these animals if I don’t fulfill my oath to save any who have the faith of Abraham.”

Wow! And do you know there was another moment in history when darkness did come. It was 2000 years after Genesis 15. It was the time we call Good Friday when God in the person of his Son, Jesus, hung on a cross and he said, “It is being done to me; I’m going to take all your broken promises and your whole broken life and I’m going to allow my body to be cut apart to save you.” Unconditional promise!

The reason that we don’t get the gospel is because we don’t understand this single plan of God who makes an unconditional promise to save. We don’t live in a world of unconditional promises. We live in a world of conditional promises. Our parents say to us, “If you eat your vegetables, you will get dessert.” “If you do your homework, then you can watch TV” “If you study, then you will get good grades.” “If you work hard, then you will get a promotion.” “If this, then that” – that’s the world of conditional promises. That’s the world we live in; reward is always based conditionally on our performance. If we do this, then good will come.

The gospel is entirely different. It is such a radical message that Paul was preaching. And, indeed, he says that the whole Bible is preaching. The gospel takes us into the world of unconditional promises. An unconditional promise is not if/then.

Conditional promise: If-Then

Unconditional promise: Because-Therefore

Because Jesus Christ has overcome the world and has overcome all of his enemies by his death and resurrection, therefore you will be saved. Because Jesus died and rose, therefore God declares you right in his sight for Jesus’ sake. Because Jesus has borne the sin of the world, therefore God declares you forgiven. Because Jesus has fully satisfied all of God’s requirements, therefore God declares you just in his sight. Unconditional promise!

Abraham’s asleep and God works and saves him. Or, as I described it last week we fall onto the back of Jesus Christ and he walks us on a tightrope across Niagara Falls to safety.

The third thing we see in this story, this single story of God’s saving the world through Abraham:

The story of the way of faith

Look at this with me in verses 6-9:

**Galatians 3:6-9**

So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” 7 Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. 8 Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9 So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

People constantly ask the question, “Well, Rich, how much faith do I need to be saved?” How much faith did Abraham have when he asked God about his descendents? He had enough to look up at the stars that God called his attention to and he believed. How much faith does it require to be saved? Enough to look outside of yourself and see something else that God is holding up in your line of sight – the cross. To believe that you are only going to be saved by that cross. That’s all you need – enough to not rely on you, but to look outside yourself to the cross where Christ is hanging.

How much faith did the thief on the cross have when Jesus said to him, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” The thief had enough faith to look to Jesus, to cry out to Jesus, to simply say to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he was saved. It is not our faith that saves us. It is Jesus that saves us. We just need enough faith to turn to him, to rest on him, to rely on him.

So, in stepping back and looking at the whole of the Bible, what do we have? We have a single story of God’s plan to save the world through Abraham. And it is the story of God’s unconditional promise to save through faith. Faith in what?

**Galatians 3:10-14**

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” 11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because “the righteous will live by faith.” 12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, “Whoever does these things will live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The whole Bible speaks about substitution as the way of salvation

The whole Bible speaks about substitution as the way of salvation. Paul is contrasting two different approaches to salvation. One is the way of Abraham (verses 6-9). And in verses 10-14, he begins to talk about the way of Moses. Abraham is the way of faith; the other the way of law. Abraham is the way of unconditional promise; Moses is the way of conditional promise – if you do these things, you will live. One is the way of Paul’s gospel; the other is the way of his opponents’ so-called gospel.

But Paul says even in the law, even in your approach, even in Moses', we find God's way of salvation. And God's way of salvation is always the way of substitution.

### **Galatians 3:13**

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."

John Stott said, "There is no clearer verse about substitution in perhaps the entire Bible." Listen to John Stott, who is one of the great Bible expositors of the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from his book *The Cross of Christ*.

These verses constitute one of the clearest expositions of the necessity, the meaning and consequence of the cross. Paul expresses himself in such stark terms that some commentators have not been able to accept what he writes about the "curse" which Christ "became" for us. [One commentator] wrote: "The language here is startling, almost shocking. We should not have dared to use it." [Another commentator] called it "a shocking phrase" and spoke of its "original offensiveness."

What Paul is saying here is not just that Christ was cursed when he hung on the cross. Paul said he became a curse. It is like 2 Corinthians 5:21:

### **2 Corinthians 5:21**

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

It is not just that Christ was punished for sin; God made him to be sin.

God made Christ to be sin

What does it mean to be cursed according to the Bible? To be cursed is to lose relationship. You see, the curse that Jesus became on the cross was not just the nails in his hands, but the hole in his soul where God used to be. We have no idea how great the pain was in Jesus' soul when he hung on a cross.

Let me try to put it this way. If we read about a stranger dying in the newspaper, we might say, "That's too bad." If an acquaintance dies, it hits us a little harder. If a friend dies, even harder. If your best friend dies, it hits even harder. If your parents die, even more. If your spouse dies after living together in a warm and loving relationship for your whole adult life, it rips your heart out.

Now imagine Jesus. Here he is struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane, crying out to his Father if there was any other way other than the cross. Why was facing the cross for Jesus so horrible? It wasn't simply because of the nails pounded into his hands. He looked down into hell. What is hell? Hell is the loss of relationship with God. He looked

down into hell when he was there in the Garden praying. And he asked his father, “Father, is there any other way other than me diving into hell, losing you?”

It has been pointed out on a number of occasions that we never hear Jesus refer to God by any other name other than “Father” except on the cross when he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsake me?” He does not call God Father, it is just God. On the cross, he lost the Father – this intimate eternal relationship that was closer than with a friend, with a best friend, a parent, or even the spouse of the best marriage. Jesus became a curse. That means he was legally treated. He was judged by God to be as if he were us. Isaiah 53:12 says this:

**Isaiah 53:12**

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

He was numbered with the transgressors. He was legally treated as a sinner. Listen to what Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, says:

All the prophets of old said that Christ should be the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, blasphemer that ever was or ever could be on earth. When he took the sins of the world upon himself, Christ was no longer an innocent person. He was a sinner burdened with the sins of a Paul, who was a blasphemer; burdened with the sins of a Peter, who denied Christ; burdened with the sins of a David, who committed adultery and murder, and gave the heathen occasion to laugh at the Lord. In short, Christ was charged with the sins of all men, that he should pay for them with his own blood. The law numbered him among sinners.

Think about this with me, friend. Think about yourself and your own life. Maybe you struggle with pornography or alcohol or anger or greed. Maybe you were partly or wholly responsible for your marriage breakdown. Maybe you’ve had an abortion or two or three abortions. You hold grudges. You are self-pitying. You are irritable. Maybe you’ve committed adultery. You struggle with homosexuality. You’re a lesbian. You have sex outside of marriage. When you look at Jesus Christ and believe that he is your substitute, is to say the shocking statement, “You, Jesus Christ, have become the adulterer. You are the porn user. You are the practicing homosexual or lesbian. You are the drunk. You are the unbiblically divorced person. You are angry, irritable, greedy, self-pitying person.” All that you are is laid on Christ!

And what the gospel says is that all that Christ is is given to you. He is treated legally as sin and we are treated legally as holy. He was accused so that we could be acquitted. He was judged so that we could be justified. He was killed so we might live.

The whole Bible speaks about Christ

**Galatians 3:15-18**

Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. 16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. 17 What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. 18 For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

Paul is making a point that lawyers would appreciate. That is that you can't add to a will in which the testator has died and it's gone through probate. The law didn't change the single plan of God to save the world through Abraham and Abraham's descendents or seed which is Christ. Everything in the Bible points to God's plan to save the world through Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ. All the laws, all these weird rituals in the book of Leviticus, all the thickets we find ourselves hung up on as we make our way through the winding history of Israel, all the prophets and their strange prophecies. It was all designed to point to Christ.

That is what Jesus said when he spoke to his disciples after Christ was resurrected. They were confused. They were lost in the woods of the Old Testament and Jesus points the way out.

**Luke 24:27**

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

And in verse 44 to another group of disciples:

**Luke 24:44**

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

The Apostle Paul says, “My gospel is no new innovation. It is not a sudden change of plan on the part of God. I'm not making anything up. This is what the whole Bible teaches. It teaches about Christ!”

One plan – God's unconditional promise to save based entirely upon Abraham's seed Jesus Christ becoming a curse for us so that through faith we might be holy in God's sight. Let's pray.

## The Story of the Bible

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Rich Nathan  
March 6-7, 2010  
Galatians: Free At Last Series  
Galatians 3:6-18

- I. The whole Bible must be believed and embraced
  
- II. The whole Bible is to be read through the story of Abraham (Galatians 3:6-9)
  - A. A story of God's single plan (Genesis 12:3)
  - B. A story of God's unconditional promise (Genesis 15)
  - C. A story of the way of faith
  
- III. The whole Bible speaks about substitution as the way of salvation (Galatians 3:10-14)
  
- IV. The whole Bible speaks about Christ and his amazing grace (Galatians 3:15-18)