

Be Set Free

Galatians 3:21-29

Today we acknowledge and celebrate the vindication of God, His Word, and His Messiah through the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit.

Happy Resurrection Day!

The Death and Resurrection of Christ Jesus is great news to all of creation regardless of whether you embrace its power for salvation.

This good news is life changing. You can't just say yes it's true and then move on with your rhythms and routines. According to the Scripture we are going to read today, you came into this world as a sinner and you were held in bondage by the Law of God. You did not come in as objective observer on the outside of the fishbowl glass. You are on the inside of this life and God is God over all. And He is not the God of your own making. He does not dismiss your wrongdoing and sins merely because you say sorry or accuse Him of being unfair.

And as we are about to read, God provided a harsh taskmaster who constantly has reminded you of how sinful you are...He provided this taskmaster so that you would realize you have been a prisoner who needs to be set free. And only Jesus, by means of His death in your place and His new life given to you, are you able to be set free to know, enjoy, and glorify God as you were created to relate to Him.

**21 Is the law therefore contrary
to God's promises? Absolutely
not!**

**For if the law had been granted
with the ability to give life, then
righteousness would certainly
be on the basis of the law.**

22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin's power, so that the promise might be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to those who believe.

**23 Before this faith came, we
were confined under the law,
imprisoned until the coming
faith was revealed.**

24 The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

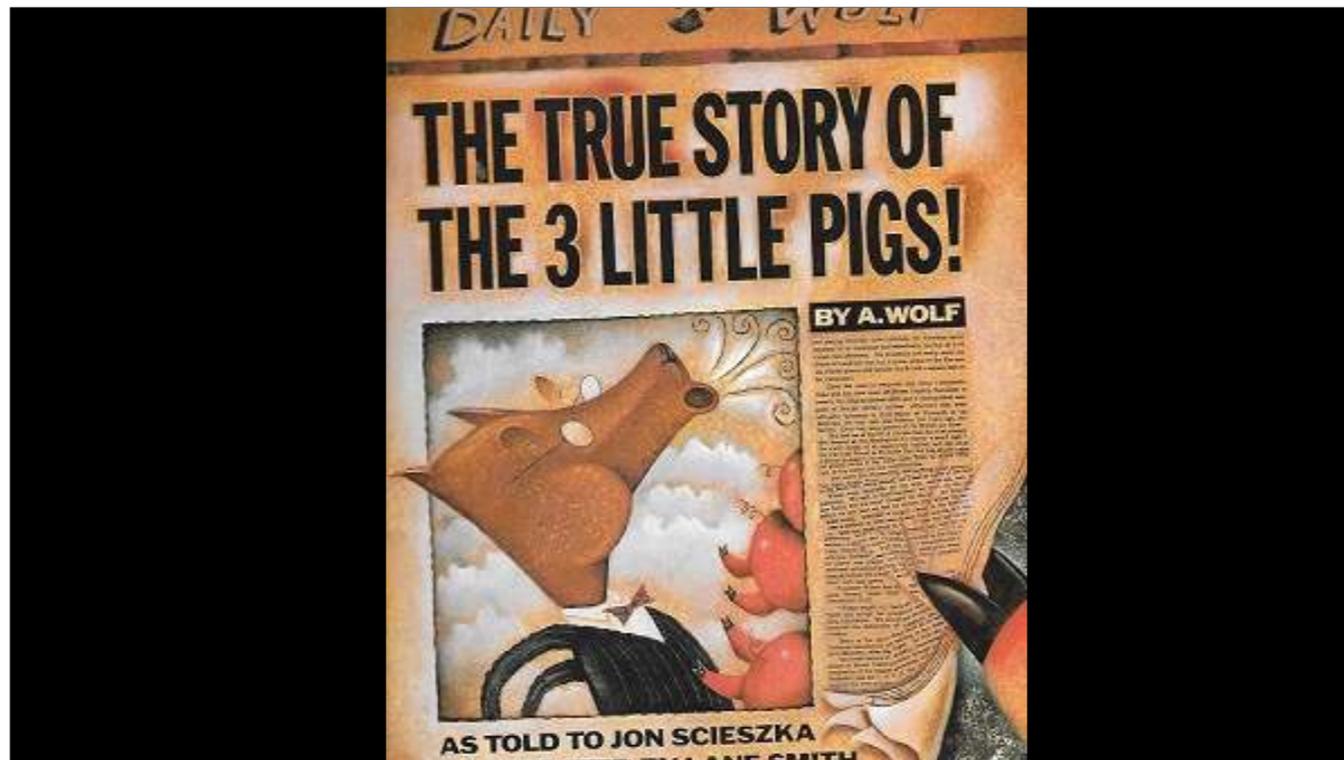
**25 But since that faith has
come, we are no longer under a
guardian,**

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

**27 For those of you who were
baptized into Christ have been
clothed with Christ.**

**28 There is no Jew or Greek,
slave or free, male and female;
since you are all one in Christ
Jesus.**

**29 And if you belong to Christ,
then you are Abraham's seed,
heirs according to the promise.**



Recently my daughters picked up a book from the library I had not seen since I was a kid. It was the “true” story of the Big Bad Wolf and the Three Little Pigs. In it the wolf tries to paint the pigs as horrible rude pigs who keep dying when he has little accidents that keep making him sneeze violently. And instead calling for help, he helps himself. In all of his story, he sees himself as a good guy and justifies in his own mind every action he did.

That was the wolf’s perspective, but it was distorted.

We each have a story, but we need the true story of Scripture to shed light on our stories.

Scripture is the real story of our lives.

***Scripture is the real story of our lives.

We need to see our lives in light of the cross and resurrection of Christ to realize we need Him to set us free.

We understand that we all have a story and all are shaped by the people around us, the places we've been, and the experiences we've had. But we also recognize that we have a common story as people in this world.

Scripture starts with the reality of the Creator, existing prior to time for He does not have a beginning or an end. He says of Himself that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

He created men and women to know and glorify Him as we enjoy and interact with the world He made (Smoky mountains)



We were meant to enjoy the world around us and



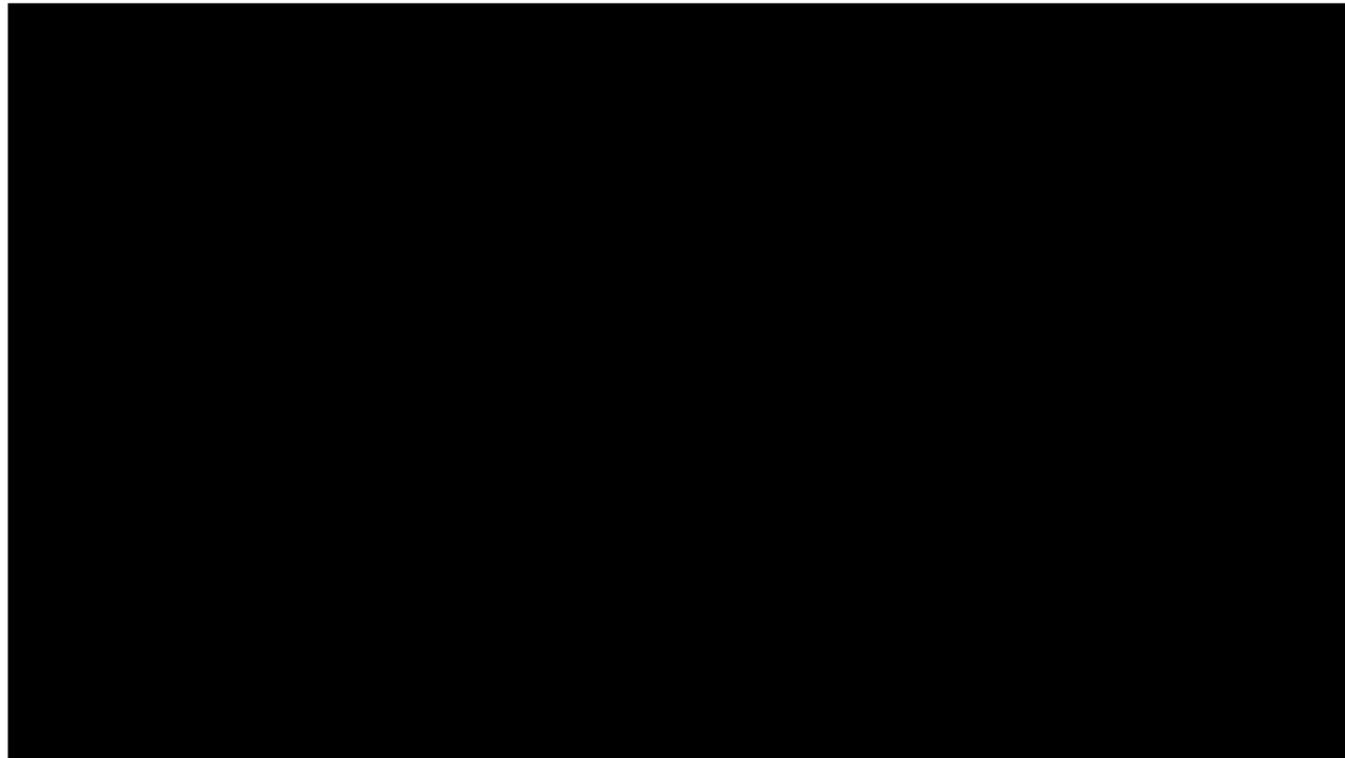
(turtle) to shape it for glory,



(tiger) explore its wonder, and (night sky)



worship God through enjoying its beauty.



But sin got in the way. Sin is a biblical word that describes falling short of a standard and being the opposite of what is good and right. It also is a malicious affront toward God, a slap in His face.

Adam and Eve disobeyed the one command that God gave to them to obey, and they plunged all of us afterward into sin and sinfulness.

Every part of you has been affected by sin. When doctors take a CT scan of patients they look for certain markers to show them what is abnormal, what might be wrong in the body. Scripture gives us a marker to let us know if sin is present in the world still. That marker is death. So people die. But also, people without the life of the Spirit of God in them are like walking zombies. Their hearts are constricting and releasing. Their brains synapses are firing. But they are dead toward God, self-centered in relationships, and in the process of dying physically.

We are made for eternity. And eternal life is able to be found, but we look for it in the wrong places.

In Acts 17, Paul says people blindly wander around in this world, but their problem is that they do not strive to find the One true God, or else He would make Himself known to them.

Still, people long for the benefits only God can bring.

—Pink/Chris Stapleton released a song in 2019 called “Love Me Anyway.” In it the singers ask if someone would love them no matter what. “Even if you see my scars, even if I break your heart, would you love me anyway? . . . If I get lost in all the noise, would you love me anyway?” It fails as a mere human love anthem. No one you will find in this life will love you perfectly and unconditionally in the way that your heart longs for, no one except God. It is a great song to show the longing we all have for things to be right, right with God and with each other, to know that we are loved and never have to question it.

The only answer and hope is for the kingdom that is still to come in fullness, which is only able to come about by means of Christ dying on the cross for sin.

He welcomes home now in love those who look to Jesus by faith. And one day when Christ returns, He will set everything right again. This longing is in your heart, whether or not you want to acknowledge it out loud.

As one Christian writer pointed, if we are all made with a longing for eternity that this world cannot fulfill, the logical conclusion is that we are made for another world, or at least another version of this world.

11 [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

According to Scripture, we are made for more than this current version of the world, but people have been bound by sin and their inability to live rightly before God.

In each and all our stories...(end previous point)

**We are made for eternal life, but
people are separated from God
by falling short of His perfect
standards.**

Have you learned that lesson yet?

*We are made for eternal life but are separated from God by falling short of His perfect standards. (Have you learned that lesson yet?)

The Law came after Creation, after the Fall into sin and depravity, and after the promise of blessing to all nations through the offspring of Abraham.

In that context, the Law, which revealed God's righteousness and set the parameters and stipulations for the nation of Israel, was set in place to teach us a harsh 2-fold lesson. First, you must live perfectly according to God's law if you want to be free from condemnation and death. Second, you will never live perfectly according to it in your depravity.

Through the Law, God provided temporary solutions to hold off His wrath, but they never changed the root of the problem.

And these temporary solutions were costly ones, costly in terms of the lives of animals, costly in terms of economy. They were to be meticulously followed, lest the temporary solutions from God's wrath should be the reason for God's wrath.

You see, sin and our depravity, or our sinfulness, was not a light matter. When we slapped God in the face with our rebellion, we did it knowing full well that it carried with it a punishment.

Now, you may be saying, "But I'm not Adam or Eve. I'm not even Jewish. I never have even read any of the OT Law. There's no way that I should be held responsible."

Well, this Scripture here says that you are responsible. Another passage in Romans 2 cites one of our tendencies that reveals we know we are responsible. Even if you never have read Exodus through Deuteronomy, you are given a conscience by which you recognize what society says is right and wrong. And you have tried to walk that

line, to fit in, to not do wrong. But each and every one of us violated even our different groups' expectations, at least in some minor way.

Guess what one of the Old Testament Law's stipulations is? If you break even one commandment of the Law, then you have broken the whole law and are deserving of death.

So, once you realize that you have been responding to a law, you are acknowledging that you believe that God has set this world in motion with justice and that you are responsible to live according to His righteousness. And you are failing. So the law then not only shows you are a captive to sin and in its prison, it also torments you . . . but for good reason.

The Law will point out over and over again how you mess up. It will never take a day off. It will never take a second off from pointing out in every way that you are insufficient. Broke a commandment, make an offering. Broke another commandment, make an offering. Sinned again but in the secret of your heart. Sinned again, even though no one else saw it. Saw that! You sinned again.

You may try to alleviate this pressure by berating others for their inability to keep the law, but you keep getting reminded of your inconsistency every time you point out others' inability to keep laws.

And then when you think it is silly to try to keep the law, you get these reminders of God's wrath that he poured out on Egypt and the nations and even on His people when they sinned like the nations around them.

So, it does no good to tell yourself that you have done nothing wrong. That would just be you telling God that you think He is a liar. Again, sin. And if you appeal to someone else and ask or pay them to tell you that there is nothing wrong with you and that you never do wrong, you also make that person into a liar about God.

So, what are you to do? There is a law that keeps tormenting you and telling you that you are not good enough to come to God and that His wrath will eventually come upon all who sin, bringing about eternal death.

You learn from it. You learn to look beyond it for hope beyond yourself so that God will set you free from our sin, from His wrath, and into life with God as it was intended to be.

**Christ Jesus died and rose
again to free those who trust in
Him to bring you home to God.**

***Christ Jesus died and rose again to set free and bring to God those who trust in Him.

The cross and empty tomb were necessary to fulfill the expectation of the law for punishment.

—biblical storyline matters

A) When Paul refers to baptism he is referring to that initial act of faithful obedience by which Christians identify with Jesus. It identifies us with Jesus's cross and resurrection. Some of you are believers in Christ and should follow Him in baptism. Others of you may have been baptized but never actually trusted in Jesus's sacrifice on your part. Baptism may represent the cross and resurrection, but it does not replace faith in Christ's accomplishment. Those who want to be set free by Christ must look to Jesus by faith, trusting that He has paid the penalty required by God's Law for your sin. By identifying with Him in faith, Jesus fulfills the Law for you. The Law was intended to teach you that you cannot justify yourself before God and that you needed one who could stand justly before God. He is the means by which you come to God. By faith in Christ, you can be part of the

B) New people of God.

Your new primary identity then becomes God's child, God's son by means of Christ the Son. You get to have all the rights of a child of a parent because THE Son, Christ Jesus made the way for you. So, here's the deal. If you look to Jesus by faith, your relationship to Him becomes the most important detail of your life.

Its not Gen-X or Gen-Z. It's not Republican or Democrat. It's not southerner or Midwesterner. Its not Greek or Jew or American or Indian or Nepalese or Russian or Ghanian or Brazilian or Argentinian or Mexican or Filipino. Your primary identity is now Christian, one who belongs to God in Christ as a beloved child and member of the family. Then all our distinctions, male or female, rich or poor, and every single nation represented then testify to the our Great God who unifies us in Christ.

Friday night the voices of the nations of our church testified to Christ's death for our sins. And it was beautiful on Good Friday.

We in this church from among the various nations who have come to faith in Christ have become heirs of the blessing promised to Abraham. We get to be in the realm where God dwells with His people in blessing, which is only entered into by faith in Jesus the Christ.

In the last few days before his crucifixion, Jesus spoke of what the final judgment will be like—-sheep and goats separation.

What will be said of you? That you knew Christ and were known by Him and so set free by God to have life and to live for Him?

Or will you be found to be like the persistently unbelieving thief on the cross, mocking and cursing Jesus for wrong that He did not do, all while ignoring your own sins that condemn you?

Jesus was found faithful in every way, through His final breath and into death. When He arose He crushed the power of Satan and sin to hold you back from God. You are now able to cross over from the side of death to the side of life.

You may still be asking, "What does it cost me?" It's not what it costs you. It is what it cost Christ Jesus. He paid it. All you have to do is sign your name on the dotted line where it asks, "Will you believe in this Jesus?"