

## **Under the Law or in Christ?**

Galatians 3:23-29

1661

The whole of chapters 3-4 of Galatians, as we have repeatedly reminded you, are dedicated to Paul's presentation of salvation, his presentation of righteousness. The issue is simply this: how does a man get right with God? How does a sinful man make himself right with a holy God? There are only two possible ways; either by his own good deeds, he merits, or earns, righteousness, or God freely gives it to him. Those are the only two possibilities. Either God gives righteousness as a gracious gift, or man earns it by his own merit.

One is the view of works; the other is the view of faith. The works view says that a man must contribute something toward his own salvation. In other words, by certain good works, God looks at him and says, "You have merited forgiveness; you have merited righteousness, I grant you salvation." Most people who believe that you're saved by works would include faith, but would add works to faith. But the view that we believe is Biblical, and the view of faith, says that God has done everything. You don't need to do anything; in fact, you couldn't do anything. All that is required is that you receive all that God has done and offered to you freely. One view says, "Good works bring salvation." The other view says, "Salvation results in good works."

This is exactly the controversy that existed in Galatian churches. Paul had originally taught them, "You're saved by faith plus nothing, simply believing what God has done and accepting it." But some false teachers, who represented themselves as sent from Jerusalem (and probably represented themselves as having the apostolic faith), came along and said, "No, you must believe and be circumcised and keep all the laws." So they offered a faith plus works salvation. That's the controversy to which Paul writes in the book of Galatians.

The Galatians were confused. In Galatians 3:1, Paul uses the word 'bewitched.' They were troubled. So Paul writes this letter, to be circulated among the several churches of the area known as Galatia, to straighten out the issue. His thesis is pretty clear. His thesis is that salvation is a matter of God's grace, and all men need to do is accept by faith what God has done; no works are required, no good deeds, nothing can merit salvation. It is offered as a free gift; you can only take it, you can't earn it.

In chapters 3-4, Paul supports this doctrine. You'll remember, in chapters 1-2, he supported his apostolic authority because if he didn't have any authority, he didn't have anyone who would listen to him. So he established that he was rightfully an apostle, and now he gives to them his doctrine in chapters 3-4. His doctrine is that a man is made right with God, he is justified, that is, set in right standing before God, only by believing and receiving the gift that God provides, not by his own works.

He uses two things to support that. The first is experience. In 3:1-5, he says to the Galatians, "Your own experience should show you that you were saved by faith." Because they had already believed,

they had already been redeemed, and some of these Johnny-come-latelies had come in with this doctrine of salvation by works, so he says, in effect, "How could you possibly believe that when you've already received everything by faith?" I mean, if they'd never heard anything but the works salvation, it would have been understandable, right? But when they had already known all that salvation could give by faith, why would they want to superimpose a works system? So he says in 3:3, "Are you so stupid? You're going to begin in the Spirit and be made perfect by the flesh?"

The second area of reasoning, or support, for his thesis is Scripture. Incidentally, Biblically, these two are often used. There will be support for a certain doctrinal statement from experience and immediately following it, a stronger support will come from Scripture. Paul supports his view of salvation by faith alone from Old Testament Scripture. That's very important, because the Judaizers (the false teachers) were using the Old Testament to support their own view of salvation by works. Of course, they had twisted the Old Testament.

So from 3:6-4:7, Paul marshals all kinds of Old Testament texts to argue against salvation by works, and to argue for salvation by faith. The key one that he uses is in verse 11. "But that no man is justified by the law or by works in the sight of God it is evident." Why? Because the Old Testament says, Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith." So he says, "Your own Old Testament says that salvation, right living, righteousness, justification is by faith." Incidentally, that's only one of six different Old Testament texts that he uses in verses 6-13 or so. He has marshaled many Old Testament texts and that would be the key one.

Now, follow my reasoning so that we can move right into the narrative beginning in verse 23. All through this discussion, Paul's example is Abraham. He is continually saying, "Abraham, your father, to whom you trace everything, the one who really began the whole of the Judaistic line, he was justified by faith." That is made clear in verse 6. "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." He came by faith. "Now God," Paul is saying, "Hasn't changed anything. God is still redeeming men by faith, just as He did Abraham." This is a potent argument, because the Judaizers would probably use Abraham as their argument. At least they could say, "You see, Abraham had to be circumcised. That proves that you have to be circumcised."

You'll remember that I told you last time that Abraham wasn't circumcised until 14 years after God had already said he was righteous, so that's not a problem. But Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith. Circumcision was a physical identification; faith was that which justified him before God. So he has used Abraham to show that way back at the very start of Judaism, God justified by faith.

What's the obvious argument that's going to come from the Jew? This is what he's going to say, "Alright. I'll buy that. Let's say you're right, that, starting with Abraham, they were justified by faith. That was good. But, when the law came in with Moses, many years after Abraham, everything changed and from then on, men are justified by keeping the law." See, that would be the Jewish argument. "OK, so Abraham was by faith. When the law came, it changed all that, and God changed His approach to salvation." Well, Paul wants to answer that question, which surely will arise in the mind of the Jew. He tackles the issue in verses 15-22. We studied that three weeks ago.

In verses 15-22, he shows that the coming of the law never changed God's pattern. The coming of the law never nullified faith. No. In fact, in verse 15, he uses a simple human illustration. He says, "If it be a man's covenant, even a human covenant, if it be confirmed, no man can annul it or add to it. If

that's true of men's covenants, that they cannot be annulled or added to, then much more God's covenant. Even though the law came, it did not annul the covenant of faith, or the promise of faith, and it didn't add works to the promise of faith." He goes on to defend this through verse 22.

He says in verse 17, for example, "This I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, the law, which was 430 after that covenant, cannot annul." In other words, the law, which came later, cannot change the promise of salvation by faith. Well, that's an interesting statement. Because if you follow that closely, then your next question will be this. "OK, if the law didn't change the promise of salvation by faith, then what good was the law?" That's the next, most obvious question. Did the law have any purpose at all?

Verse 19. Yes! "It was added because of transgressions." In other words, the law was given that men might see their sinfulness. The law is like a mirror: it doesn't make you ugly, it just shows you that you are. God's law was a mirror dropped down in front of humanity to reveal to them what they were. That's all. But it had a great purpose. Because it isn't really until a man faces the fact of what he is, and the inadequacies of his life, that he will come to Christ, right? It's not until the law bruised us, it's not until the law crushed us, that we began to say, "We hurt," and allow Christ to bind up our wounds. It wasn't until the law arrested us, and imprisoned us, that we longed for Jesus to set us free. It wasn't until the law condemned us and killed us that we were able to look to Jesus for life. The law had a purpose, and it still does.

Believe me, people, today, there is the same reality. Men do not come to a savior until they feel the need. That's what Jesus meant when He responded to the people who criticized Him for hanging around with drunks and prostitutes and all of that. He said, "Well, I have come to take care of those who have need. I have come to heal the sick." He was very sarcastic. "You that are well, you have no need of a physician." Remember that statement? That's sarcasm. "You people that have no need, that feel no pain, that have no anxiety, that feel no guilt or inadequacy, that have no terrible fear of your own sin, you don't need Me. I've come to those who have seen what they are, and are in despair, to those who want an escape." So the law did have a purpose: it was added because of transgression. It was given to reveal sin.

In our text, in verses 23-29, Paul carries his argument further. He continues to contrast the works of the law and the promise of faith. When I mention the promise of faith, just keep this in mind. The promise of faith was this: it was simply the promise given to Abraham that, "Abraham, I'm going to send a Redeemer. I'm going to send the Seed. Do you believe that?" Did he? Yes. God gave a promise, Abraham believed it, and God said, "That's all I ask. You're righteous."

You say, "It's too simple." No, that's the way God made it. Later on, everyone wanted to complicate it by making up all kinds of rules. So we have the contrast between simply believing the word of God. From that standpoint, on that side of the Cross, they were believing that God was going to send a Redeemer. From this side of the Cross, we're believing that God already sent the Redeemer. It's the same thing; it's faith. It's believing. It's not by the deeds that we have done.

In our text, Paul carries his argument a step further. He's been talking about history, he's been saying, "The law came 430 years after the last restatement of the Abrahamic Promise. The law didn't annul it." In other words, he's talking in historical terms. There was a period from Abraham on, then there was the law. It's all kind of a history lesson. But in verse 23, he stops talking about history and makes a personal application. You'll notice in verse 23, there is an immediate introduction of the

personal pronoun 'we'. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law." Here, you see, he gets out of that third person and into the first person. Here is the personal application of the history that he's been talking about. This brings it right down to the experience of man.

If you wanted to give a good title to this passage, you could call it "The Before and After of the Christian." You all know what we mean by that. You see it on commercials all the time, the before and after. There's a before and after here. Verse 23. "But before faith came." Verse 25. "But after faith has come." That's the before and after. It's really what we're going to talk about, the before and after of the Christian life. You'll notice that it says, in verse 23, and we need to define the terms a little, "Before faith came, we were kept under the law."

Now, the 'we' here is, first of all, and most specifically, a Jewish 'we'. He is saying, "We Jews, for centuries, were under the law, until Christ was finally revealed." It's a historical setting. Beyond that, I think, in a very real and general sense, it has to be broadened to be a plain, old Christian 'we'. Not just Jewish history, but a Christian we. Look. "Before faith came, we were kept under the law." You know, that's true of me. Before I put my faith in Jesus Christ, I was a slave to God's law. Watch. Even if I didn't obey God's law, I was condemned by God's law, right? So I was in bondage to God's law whether I knew His law or didn't, whether I obeyed it or didn't. Every man in the world, beloved, is either a slave to God's immutable law, which ultimately will condemn and damn him, or he is a free man, set free by Christ. Every man. Isn't that true? Every man.

So it's not just a Jewish we, it's a universal we, in terms of every Christian. Before I put my faith in Jesus Christ, I was under the law of God. I was living in violation of it, and the law itself would be that which condemned me. So what we have here, really, is not just a history lesson for the Jew, not just a general lesson for the Galatian Christians, but I think we have here the biography of every Christian in the broadest sense.

Notice verse 23. Let me just read you this passage, then we'll go back and look at it. It's just a tremendous portion. See if this doesn't identify your own life.

"Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up under the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our paidagogos to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under paidagogos [we'll define that later] for you are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you be Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." By the time we get done with that passage, you're going to have some fantastic insights, because this is one of the greatest portions of Scripture there is in this book, and for that matter, in the Bible.

In the language of Paul, he says this. "Once, we were under the law," verse 23, "Now we are in Christ." That's where he begins to really go in verse 26. That is the contrast. Now watch. Just as, historically, the law prepared the way for Christ's arrival by showing the Jews and the rest of the world their need for a savior, so in my life, and in your life, the law of God, broken and violated, shows us our need for a savior.

It isn't just Jewish people who feel a need for a savior. I'm not Jewish. I never have been and never will be Jewish, but I've felt the need for a savior. You know something? There are some people who

have never seen a Bible, who have never read one law of God, but are convicted by their sinfulness. They know they need a savior. That is the law of God, but that's not the law of God written on tables of stone or on the pages of Scripture. It's Romans 2, the law of God written in their hearts. There is no man in the world that exists apart from the law of God. Do you believe that? There is no man. Because in Romans 1, it says, "The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and all unrighteousness." Why? "Because that which may be known of God is in them, but they reject it." They reject it.

So the law of God, for some, is on paper or written in stone. The law of God, for others, is written in the conscience. But every man is subject to that law. When a man comes to that place in his life where he knows he is in violation of that, when the despair is great and he finds no escape, it is at that point that he is ready to be introduced to the answer.

A young man came here a few Sundays ago and came up afterwards, wanting to talk to me. I presented to him the Gospel because he wasn't a Christian. I had the wonderful privilege of just talking to him, and he said, "Well, I'm not ready for that. I don't know that I can believe that. I don't feel the need for that. I feel fine just like I am." I said, "Well that's good, we can't help you. We can't do a thing for you until you're wretched, miserable, blind, naked, destitute and in despair." He didn't really know how to take that. But that's true.

God's plan for man, just as God's plan for the history of Israel, was that Israel would live under law. A man would pass under the law to be condemned and to be sentenced, and then that man would be offered a pardon in Jesus Christ. Can you imagine something of what those early Jewish Christians must have experienced when they came to Jesus Christ and were out from under the law? Can you imagine the liberty? It must have been just unbelievable.

Let's look at the two parts of the text: under law and in Christ. We could call them 'bondage', we could call them 'bondage and freedom', we could call them 'before and after.' Let's call them all three. Point one is under the law, in bondage. This is the before, in verses 23-24. Look at verse 23. "Before faith came," this is the first part of this biography, "We were kept under the law." That's point one, under the law. "Shut up under the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

Now, looking back from the vantage point of faith in Christ, as a Christian looking backwards, both Jews and Gentiles, everybody had to admit that bondage to law had had a good effect on them. The law had a tremendous effect on every Christian, because it showed you needed a savior. Aren't you glad for it? I am. I'm glad God made some rules that I could understand, and I'm glad God made me a conscience that reacted when I violated those rules, or I would have gone to Hell and never known it.

I can remember, and I share this because it's so vivid in my experience, many years ago when I was playing football in college. On one occasion, during a Thursday in practice, I had hurt my knee. Someone hit me after the whistle in a drill, which was irritating a little bit, so I knew I was going to be held out of the game. It was a non-conference game, but I wanted to play. It was important to me to play, and I wanted to play, so I went to the doctor. I got some cortisone shots in my knee and some bottles of ethyl chloride, which is that 'don't hurt no more' stuff that you've heard about. You squirt it on an area and it freezes the area, it takes away the pain. I got a couple of bottles of that with the little metal things on top that squirted, and I took care of all the little things I could. I went to the game, and I'll never forget it, I played the entire game and never felt a thing. I just kept squirting the

ethyl, and had the injection, and never felt a thing. It's typical of college football standards. So when the game was over, I felt great. In fact, I played the whole game, and even did some punting with the right leg that was injured. I never felt anything. Only I had torn the whole inside of my knee out. I still haven't recovered; I still have to favor that knee. You see, I rejected the system that God had built into me, to warn me about that.

In a sense, that's what God has given us in a conscience and in revelation. I'm glad for it, because it's a preventative. Looking back as a Christian, backwards from the point of view of faith, I have to admit that bondage to God's law served to prepare me for faith in Christ. So Paul said, when he looked back at the law, "The law was a wonderful thing. I love the law. You know what it did to me? It killed me. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. It slew me." Romans 7. We were all in bondage to God's law. We broke it, were condemned by it, sentenced to die. Every man is under the dominion of God's law.

Paul uses two similes here, and I want you to notice them. First of all, he says the law is like a prison Verse 23. He says, "We were kept under the law." The Greek is simply this: we were in the custody of the law. We were in protective custody. It has the idea of guarding. It was used in terms of cities. They would say a city was in custody, and it was applied when a city was sealed off to keep the enemy out and the inhabitants in. It was in custody. So the law captured us; there was no escape. There was no way to get out from under the law, there was no way to bust out. We were sentenced, we were locked up.

The next word expresses it in a more intense way, it says we were 'shut up,' literally, to be hemmed in or cooped up. Both verbs emphasize that God's law and commandments held men in prison with no escape. We were kept under restraint, on death row, friends. We were just waiting to die, "For the wages of sin is death." If the law has dominion over us, what does the law want to do? Kill us. So we were sentenced to death, just waiting for God to offer us a pardon.

The pardon is described in these words, "We waited unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." Now, historically, that was true of the Jew who waited under the law for the revelation that would come. It's true in my life; shut up under the law, doomed, confined, sentenced and condemned until faith was revealed to me. That's the biography of every Christian. The Jews were locked up under the law until Messiah came. Paul and all Jewish believers were locked up under the law until personal faith was revealed to them. All the Gentile Christians in Galatia were locked up under the law until they believed, and every man in the world is a prisoner of God's law, waiting on death row for execution as a law-breaker until the pardon is offered by faith in Jesus Christ. The pardon is offered when the Father offers it, when the Spirit offers it, when the Spirit convicts of sin and offers the pardon. At that point, the man can choose to accept the pardon and receive freedom.

Let me broaden the significance of the verse just a minute by giving you a little more background. Before Christ appeared in history, for all those years, God's moral law dominated the Jews. You know what tremendous thing it did for the Jews? It overwhelmed them with a sense of guilt and a sense of inadequacy. They were called on to obey the law, but couldn't do it. Even then, God provided a way of escape. Remember? All the way through, all they had to do was believe in God's future Seed, all they had to do was believe that God had promised a salvation that was free, that it was going to be free, that God was going to offer it graciously. If they believed that, if they believed that you could come with no money and buy, that's all God required, was to believe in a coming, gracious salvation.

But you know what happened? Most of the Jews failed to believe in that. If they failed to believe that they could be saved by grace, the only thing they were left with was law. Now watch. The only problem was, they knew they couldn't keep the law. So what they really did, in effect, was play psychological games and convince themselves they were righteous. They turned out to be called Pharisees. In other words, they just began to convince themselves that they were absolutely righteous. Instead of accepting a grace salvation, they just figured, "We're good enough."

You know, in effect, that's what people do today. Unwilling to bow before the Cross and accept a gracious salvation, they go about to establish their own righteousness. It's just like Romans 10, it's the same thing. So they refused grace, and by the time Christ arrived on the scene, He offered them a gracious salvation, but what did they do? They killed Him.

When He first spoke to them in the Sermon on the Mount, the one thing He did was try to destroy their security. He tried to shatter their hope, because they believed that they were great, righteous people because they kept the law. Jesus just destroyed that. He said, "Oh, you think you keep the law? You don't commit adultery? If you've ever looked at a woman and lusted after her, you've committed adultery. Try that one on. You say you've never killed? If you've hated your brother, you've committed murder in your heart. Try that one on." He shattered their self-righteousness. Still, they refused all His efforts and rejected Him as a Savior because they never came to the place where they saw a need.

Now that's what happens. You see, when a man refuses a gracious salvation, he's only left with absolute despair because he can't keep the law, or he has to convince himself that he's good enough. They did that. You know, one of those Pharisees came out all right. He got the message. Philippians 3:5. "Circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, touching the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Who's that? Paul! He says, "I was one of those blameless, self-righteous Pharisees." I like this. "But what things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He said, "I just chucked all of that and took the grace of Jesus Christ." Verse 9. "And am found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now Paul was a Pharisee who was living on the basis of self-righteousness. But when the gracious salvation was offered, he chucked his own efforts and accepted it by grace. Most of them didn't do that.

So the pattern was tragic. All those years of bondage, Jesus came and went, and most of Israel remained in bondage, and to this day, they're still in it. They're still in it. That's sad.

It's not much different from most people today, trying to reach fulfillment, trying to reach God, by purely human means. Good works, self-torture, sacrifice, and they come up bankrupt, they come up in despair, they go one of two ways. Desperately, they grab the offer of Christ's salvation, or they go backwards and convince themselves they're alright. It's tough to live with the kind of tension that comes if you're really in despair. The aim of the law, then, was to push men to faith, to shove them to the point of despair where they had, in desperation, only to reach up to the gracious God who offers a free salvation. What a blessed faith it is. What a blessed truth it is. So the law was a prison, a prison to drive men to despair. Then Jesus came along and offered them a pardon, but most men didn't want it.

Secondly, in verse 24, he says, "The law was not only a prison, but the law was a paidagogos." Why do I use that word? Because they probably couldn't have translated it any less adequately than 'schoolmaster'. Some translations say 'tutor', some translate it 'male governess', some translate it in the vernacular of 'nanny'. Remember what a nanny was? Not a goat, but a lady who took care of the kids? A nanny. Basically, paidagogos was a title, an identification. But it does not mean teacher, like schoolmaster does. That's didaskalos, that's a totally different word. The paidagogos was not the teacher, he was the guardian of young boys. He was a guide and guardian.

Usually, a paidagogos was a slave whose duty was to discipline boys. Like in your house, if you had four or five young boys (which was not uncommon), you would hire a paidagogos to raise them for you, to discipline them. He would teach them obedience and self-discipline. This guy would take them to school every day and bring them back. He would make sure they got to their lessons and returned home. He was not the boys' teacher, he was their disciplinarian. It's a very important point.

Paul uses the word paidagogos in I Corinthians 4:15. He writes, "You may have 10,000 paidagogos, but you only have one father." In verse 21, he speaks of the paidagogos with a rod in his hand. It seems to be, at least, that that verse is tied in with the concept of paidagogos. So we see paidagogos as a very common term for a disciplinarian who carried a rod and whacked the boys when they didn't conform. That's exactly what the law does. The law is a paidagogos. He says in verse 24, "It is the paidagogos to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The Jew would say, "You're saying the law has no purpose if everything is faith. What good is the law?" The law is a lot of good. The law carries a big club and whacks away at us, disciplining us, severe discipline. It readies the heart, under its tutelage, for eager acceptance of the freedom of the gospel of faith.

You know, I'm sure one thing a boy would want to do would be to grow up and get rid of this paidagogos. What a day when he experienced freedom! That's exactly what the law is to do; it is to drive you to freedom through the gospel of faith.

There is another beautiful concept in this idea. That is, that the role of the paidagogos was to take the young boys (and this we have from much historical material) to school. I can't help but think that that particular assignment may have a beautiful significance. Paul says, "The law was our paidagogos to deliver us to the Master Teacher, who is Jesus Christ, that we might be justified." What a beautiful thought. The law just took us to Christ. Once we were there at the feet of the Master Teacher, we didn't need the paidagogos anymore, for we subjected ourselves to Christ. After faith is come, after we've been delivered to the teacher, there is no longer any need for the disciplinarian.

So the law, you see, was never intended to save anybody. It was intended to deliver people to the One who could save them. You see? That's its purpose. If you look at the Old Testament law, and this is just an illustration, we could talk about the law written in our hearts or anything. But just as an illustration, if you look at the Old Testament law, you just take the ceremonial law. Remember that? It had all the rites and rituals and routines. If you study the ceremonial law, what are all those things really doing? They are really pictures of whom? Of Christ, aren't they? Sacrifices, offerings, oblations, feasts, all of those are pictures of Christ. The whole ceremonial law was never to save anybody, it was just to keep pointing at the Savior! You could take also the moral law. The moral law was never to save anybody, it was to show people how immoral they were.

As I told you, there was that Pharisee Paul who got the message. He wrote in Romans 7, "I had not known sin but by the law. For I had not known coveting had the law not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" In other words, the law was there to reveal my sin. "And sin, taking the occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of coveting. He says, "I was alive apart from the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. The law killed me. I thought I was a good guy, then I saw God's law. I realize what a wretch I was." That's why I've said before that you can't preach the message of grace until you've preached the standards of God. Grace means nothing until people understand what they've broken. Forgiveness doesn't mean anything to someone who doesn't think he's done anything wrong.

Paul says, "The law is holy, the commandment is holy, just and good. The only problem was me. The law showed me what a wretch I was and drove me to Jesus Christ." I suppose many of you have read The Pilgrim's Progress. If you haven't, you should read it. I can remember reading it several times when I was a young boy, then again in college. It's tremendous. But it starts like this, this is interesting, it's Bunyan's great view of the Christian's life.

This is what he says, "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I came upon a certain place. I laid me down to sleep and while I slept, I dreamed a dream. Behold, a man standing with his back to his own house. He was dressed in rags. He was reading a book and there was a great burden on his back." If I may interject a note, the book represents the law of God. "As he read the book, being no longer able to contain, he broke out with a great and lamentable cry, saying, 'What shall I do?'" If I may interject again, here's the man, exposed to the law, and driven to despair. "'I don't know where to go! Whither shall I go? How shall I escape?' Evangelist said to the man, 'Do you see yonder light? Just beyond the light, a little wicker gate. Just beyond the gate, the hill. On top of the hill, a cross. There you will find the burden rolled away. There you will find life and light and salvation.'" Remember the story? Pilgrim starts off toward the cross.

What was it, in the very beginning, that set him on his journey? It was his exposure to what? The law of God, which he saw himself in violation of. The law empties us, that we might be filled with the fullness of God. The law kills us, that we might be resurrected in Christ. The law strips us naked, that we might be clothed with the righteous robes of Heaven. So the law is important, it has a definite place, its purpose is to lead us to Christ. That was its purpose historically, in the life of Israel. That is its purpose even yet, in the conscience and in the written word.

Notice verse 25 is a little transition. It flips us from one side, under law, to the other side, in Christ. Now we're getting into the after. "After faith is come, we are no longer under a paidagogos." Here's the bridge; we're out of prison. Once I received Jesus Christ, I was free from the law, right? It had no more dominion. Romans 6 tells us, "The law has no more dominion over you. You've been freed from it. You're pardoned, grown up, mature." But you see, the Judaizers in Galatia wouldn't let the law stop. They had to keep the law going on. They said, "Fine. You believe. So the law is still required. Do this, do this." Paul says, "No. Once you arrive at Christ, the law has done its work. It's over. It was simply pointing. It was simply a shadow of the substance that was to come. Once you get to Christ, forget it! You don't need the ceremony. You don't need the ritual. God's moral and ethical standards haven't changed, but they can't redeem you. Don't count on them for redemption. Once faith has come, the law has done its work."

Listen, the day that you fell on your knees before Jesus Christ and received Him as Savior, the law

had done its work. That's right. You saw your sin, you came to Christ. The law did its work. That's why God gave it.

That brings us to the second point. Not under the law, but in Christ. Not bondage, but freedom. Not before, but after. Verses 26-29. Here's the after of the Christian life. This is fantastic. These verses are full of Jesus Christ. You know what a Christian is? I listened to a tape this week, a guy brought me a tape, and told me someone was teaching a Sunday school class somewhere and a person in the class raised his hand and asked what a Christian is. This teacher couldn't answer it. He was teaching a class on the book of Romans and couldn't answer what a Christian was. He said, "That's one thing I'll have to ask God when I get to Heaven." Only God knows whether he'll ever have that opportunity.

To ask the question, "What is a Christian?" That question is simply answered, right here. A Christian is one who is in Christ. That's all. You can imagine following the teachings of Buddha, following the teachings of Confucius, or following the teachings of Muhammad, but you can't imagine anyone saying, "I'm in Confucius. I'm in Buddha. I'm in Muhammad." There's no such thing as a Christian who isn't in Christ. You see, we're not following the teachings of a man, we're in union with Him. If that boggles your brain, you haven't heard anything yet. In Christ.

Look at these verses. "You are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. You have been baptized into Christ, put on Christ." The end of verse 28 says, "You're all one in Christ Jesus." Verse 29, "If you be Christ's." It's the whole thing of Christianity, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, all of this together. We are wrapped up in Christ. In Christ. That concept, beloved, is the heart concept of Christianity. It is what salvation is. Before you leave, I think you'll have a new insight.

Now, when Paul unfolds this concept of being in Christ, he shows three results. Right here, in these verses. One, you're sons of God. Two, you're one with every other Christian (verse 28). Three, you're heirs of the promise (verse 29). Sons of God, one with everyone else who is a Christian, thirdly, heirs of the promise. That is the definition of a Christian. Watch.

First of all, sons of God in verse 26. "For you are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. You're all the sons of God." Now, what a fantastic concept this is. Paul's saying to the Galatians, "Hey, you Galatians. What do you want that you don't have? By faith in Christ Jesus, you are all the sons of God. Whether you're Jews or Greeks or whatever you are, you're all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." What he's emphasizing is that it came by faith. If we could put some words in bold, capital type, those would be the words: by faith in Christ Jesus. That's what he's really banging home. "You're already the sons of God by faith in Christ, what are you looking for? You used to be prisoners, you used to be little kids who had to have a paidagogos, now you're grown-up sons. You're free sons. All by faith."

Let me add this. The Bible never teaches the universal fatherhood of God. No. Hang on to this one. The Father is the father only of the Lord Jesus Christ and those adopted into the family in Christ. That's the description of a Christian in this dimension, in this dispensation. He's not everyone's father. Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:44, "You're of your father, the Devil." You say, "To be a son of God, what does that mean?" I'll show you. It means a lot.

What are the benefits? Look at Galatians 4:6, right across the page. You want to hear some of the

benefits of being a son of God? Here comes one. Incidentally, this is repeated. John 1:12, "As many as received him, to them he gave the right [or authority] to become the sons of God." This is repeatedly the statement of the identification of a Christian. We are sons. But look what that means in Galatians 4:6. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, father.'" Watch this. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts." What's the first thing that a son of God has? The Holy Spirit. You ask, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" God. God. You know the first benefit of being a son of God? God lives in you. You like that? God lives in you! Paul says to the Corinthians, "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the spirit of God?" Yes, the Holy Spirit. That means an awful lot of things, but look at what he says first here. "Crying, 'Abba, father.'"

Abba is a diminutive Aramaic. Aramaic is a common language, and this is a diminutive. It's like adding 'ito' in Spanish; poquito, chiquita, it's a diminutive. It's like taking 'John' and making it 'Johnny'. It's a very endearing concept. So, it became a very beloved thing because Jesus had used it in His vocabulary, and it passed into the ranks of the early church. They would speak to God in the diminutive, which would be like saying, "Daddy." You know, so much of our prayer is, "Oh, Holy Father." It's all right, but God is not just some Holy Father distant person. God is also daddy, in the purest sense of a relationship. I think that is, in a sense, what Paul is saying. "Once the Spirit comes to live with me, I don't treat God like some great, hierarchical figure, but I feel intimate with Him." That's the work of the Spirit. The early church, at least these people in Galatia, needed to have it translated, so Paul says, "That means father, pater in the Greek. You see, they weren't used to the use of the word as were the Jerusalem Christians, some of whom had heard Jesus use it.

So he says, "One of the benefits of sonship is that you feel like one." Isn't that good? You can say, "Father, I just want to talk to you for a minute." You can go right into His throne room, can't you? Immediate access. Beloved, I can't tell you, if you're not a Christian, what it's like to have access to the Eternal God of the Universe. Not a conditional access, but freedom to enter at any moment, at any time, as a beloved son. Fantastic. The first benefit of sonship is confident trust that God is your loving father and a freedom to enter His presence and just dwell in it. What an exciting thing! Intimate, intimate fellowship with God, who is in me. Man, that's exciting.

What else does it mean to be a son of God? Look at Romans 8. You say, "How did I ever get to be a son of God?" I'll tell you how. Who is the son of God revealed in Scripture? Jesus Christ. Are you in Christ? Then you're a son of God. Romans 8:14 shows another benefit. Are you ready for this? "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Do you know what God does for His sons? He leads them. Is that exciting? I mean, is it exciting to say that, in my life, there is no misdirection but God is in absolute control? Is it exciting to go further in Romans and see 8:28? "All things work together for good for them that love God and are called according to his purpose." God is directing every step. Yes, one of the benefits of sonship is confident intimacy, but another one is guidance. My life is in His hands, He's directing. The life which I live is not mine, but Christ is living it through me. God is in control. Guidance.

In verse 15 is an almost-repeat of Galatians 4. "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, 'Daddy'." In other words, we don't go to God like, "OK, God, I'm coming into Your presence. Don't hit me! Don't hit me! I know I don't deserve it! Let me speak first, before You do anything." We don't go into God's presence with that kind of an attitude, do we? We go into His presence with a tremendous confidence. We say, "It's just me, Father, Your beloved son." That's exciting.

There's another thing. Verse 16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This just goes the same way as verse 15 does. There is some confidence that the Spirit gives us that we belong to Him, a security. Verse 17 has another thing. "If children then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If it be that we suffer with him." In other words, if we've been identified with His death (it doesn't mean that you're only saved if you've been persecuted), if we've been identified in His suffering, we'll also be identified in His glory. If we're in union with Christ, we're joint heirs. It's a fantastic thought: heirs of God, it says. Joint heirs with Christ.

Did you know that in Ephesians 1:13, it says, "God has laid up an inheritance for us." You say, "Yeah, I'd like to see what mine is." You know what yours is? Yours is the same as mine. "Oh, no. I have to share it?" Yes. You know what else? It's the same as every other Christian's. What is it? Your inheritance is God and all He is and all He has. That's it. Now, the Psalmist says in Psalm 16:5, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance." That's right. You know what your inheritance is? It's the Lord! You will inherit God for your own. In Revelation 21, God says, "I'm going to come down and dwell with you. I'll be their God and they'll be my people. I myself will wipe away all tears from their eyes." We inherit God; all He is and all He has.

You see, that's exactly what Christ inherits. You say, "How can we ever inherit what Christ inherits?" Because we are in Christ. Do you see it? We are in Christ. Whatever is His is mine. That's why I am a joint heir with Christ. God is not up there saying, "Let's see. There are X number of units, one for you, one for you, one for you, one for Christ. One for you, one for you, one for you, one for Christ." No. All of it is given to Christ. Everything is given to Christ. He is the Seed to whom all the promise was made. But we are in Him, therefore receiving all the promise. We'll share His glory.

Jesus prayed in John 17:5, "Father, glorify me with the glory that I had before the world began." Can you imagine the glory that He had before His humiliation? He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Can you imagine the glory that Jesus had? He says, "I want that glory returned now that I've finished the work on earth." You know what it says in verse 17? "We will be glorified together with him." Just grab that. It's a fantastic concept. If we've shared in His sufferings, His death and resurrection, we'll share in His glory.

Other passages speak of the benefits of sonship, Ephesians 1:5 for example. He says, "We've been adopted as sons." And what are the results? "Accepted in the beloved one." There it is again. The only reason God accepts us is because we're in Christ. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." We have wisdom, we have prudence, we have the mystery of His will, etc., etc. We have an inheritance, and he just goes on.

There's a great verse in Hebrews 2:10. "It became him [that's Christ], for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory." We're going to inherit glory. But do you know what I like best? You know what I'm going to inherit, and you're going to inherit, and I like better than anything else? You ready for this? "Beloved, now are we the children of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." That's our inheritance. You say, "Well, can you give any more details?" No, that's it. So that's what it means to be a son of God? Confident intimacy with God, the promise of guidance, the promise of security, the promise of an inheritance that staggers the imagination, to inherit all that God is and all that God has equally with Christ because we're in Christ. That's what it means to be a son of God. That's what it means. Fantastic.

Are there any responsibilities? Oh yes. If you're a child of God, the Lord has some things to say to you. Ephesians 5:1 is one of them. "Be therefore followers of God as dear children." Since you're His children, act like it. You know, it's nice to have your sons bring honor to you, isn't it? You ought to do that for God. If you're His child, you ought to bring honor to His name by the way you behave. In Philippians 2:15, it says you should be blameless, harmless children of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. We ought to really honor our Father. It's important.

Well, the basis for all this inheritance and all of this that comes to us as sons is stated in Galatians 3:27. He says this, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." You know why you're going to receive all that? Because you have literally put on Jesus Christ. You have been baptized into Him. I don't see any water in that word 'baptized'. You have been placed into Christ, you have been immersed in Christ. That's a spiritual concept. Paul is not teaching baptismal regeneration, not in the book of Galatians! Not when he spent six chapters trying to undo salvation by works, would he ever do that! Don't get water in there. He's not talking about water, he's talking like Romans 6. We are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. We're in union, and that's the miracle of salvation. The moment I believed in Christ, I was placed into His grave and I came out in new life. That's Romans 6. That's exactly what Paul says in Romans 6.

Let me read you those words just briefly. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" It's a spiritual concept. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." I don't understand it. That's the greatest mystery. But when Jesus died on the cross, somehow in some way, I was there. When He was buried and rose from the grave, somehow and in some divine, supernatural way, I rose with Him. I'm in union with Jesus Christ.

In Galatians, he says, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ." That means all true Christians that have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Oh, fantastic! When I believed in Christ, He covered me. I put Him on. There are several ways to illustrate that to you Scripturally. I Corinthians 6:17 says, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." You know, when God looks at me, whom does He see? Christ. Boy, that is really something. Exciting. Exciting concept.

There might be a reference here to a Roman custom. "As many of you who have been baptized into Christ," or immersed in Christ, or in union with Christ, or identified with Christ by faith, "Have put on Christ." There was a very significant ceremony among the Romans. It was kind of like bar mitzvah, only it came a little later. Roman young men went through it, and it was called toga virilis, which implied a robe and virility. It was the ceremony that occurred when a young man had reached the age of manhood. He was given a robe and robed with the toga virilis, which signified that he was now a grown-up son, enjoying full citizenship with all the rights and responsibilities that came with it, no longer to be treated like a child. Here he says, "You are no longer under a paidagogos, you've been through spiritual toga virilis, you have put on Jesus Christ. You are robed with Him." The Christian joined to Christ, baptized into His death and resurrection, in union with Him, is clothed with Christ's own robe of righteousness.

There's a really interesting verse, and I've really hunted around in my head for a way to illustrate this. I'm not sure I can ever illustrate it totally because it's such a deep spiritual truth. In Judges 6:34, it

says, "But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." What's so significant about that? The word 'came', in the Hebrew, is labash. What does that mean? It means 'clothed'. It means to be laid around someone like a coat of armor so that he becomes invisible. It says there that, in preparation for Gideon's battle, the Holy Spirit surrounded him so that he was invisible. That's exactly the same concept you have in Galatians. When you became a Christian, the moment you believed, you became invisible to God, in the sense that you were robed with Jesus Christ, clothed with Him. That's why God can pour out everything on you, because He's pouring it out on Christ. Blessings.

This is the great truth of our salvation, beloved, that I am His and He is mine. That's what he said in Galatians 2:20, isn't it? "I am crucified with Christ. I died with him. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God." In other words, it's Christ in me and around me, living through me. Listen, friend, in Galatians 3:16, it says this. "The promise was made to Abraham and to his seed was the promise made. He said not, 'And to seeds,'" God didn't make His promise to a whole bunch of people, He made it to one, "As of many, but of one. 'And thy seed,' which is Christ." Listen, all of God's promise to Abraham was for one person, Christ. The only way you'll ever get in on it is to be what? In Christ. You see the point of that? In Christ. If Christ has the love of the Father, so do I. If Christ has full access to the Father, so do I. If Christ has the full blessing, so do I. In fact, some day, I'm going to be just like Him. I will see Him as He is.

Beloved, there is no way that you'll ever know all the blessing of the Father unless you're in Christ. Someone gave me an illustration this week that may help you to understand this. Do you remember a man by the name of Thomas Edward Lawrence? He was a British scholar, soldier, and author who was better known as Lawrence of Arabia. He was one of the great heroes of World War I, and he was also a leader in the Paris Peace Talks of 1919. He represented a number of the tribes from the Arabian desert at that point.

It was interesting that it said in this little article that when he was attending the peace talks, several of the leaders of these Arabian tribes came to Paris with him and stayed in hotels there. Their greatest attention was attracted by the large water faucets in the bathtubs, which appeared to have an unending supply of water. All one had to do was turn a handle and water continued to flow. This was quite a luxury for people who had grown up and spent their whole lives in the desert.

As Lawrence was preparing to leave Paris, he discovered that the Arabians had secured plumbing tools and were taking the bathtub faucets off the wall. They explained to him that they were going to take the faucets back to the desert so that they could have an unending supply of water there. Lawrence had to convince them that it was not enough merely to have the faucet, but that the faucet had to be connected to a pipe, which, in turn, was connected to a water main, which went to a water reservoir, which got its supply of water from springs, rivers, and wells. Hence, in order for the faucet to work, it had to be connected to the original source of water.

There is no blessing that comes to any man unless that man is connected to the source. All blessing comes from the Father to the Son, and unless you are plugged into the Son, there is no blessing. There is none.

The first benefit of being in Christ is being a son of God. The second one is in verse 28. Automatically, when you become in Christ, you not only become one with Christ but you become one with everyone else who is in Christ, because we're all there, like it or not. Verse 28. "There is neither

Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, [and I love the way this is literally translated] you are all one person in Christ." Fantastic. We're all one person in Christ.

He gets very specific here. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female." You say, "Why did he pick those three things out?" Well, those are obvious distinctions, but more than that, there was a thanksgiving prayer that Jews said in the evening. If Paul was a good Pharisee, which I'm sure he was before he was saved, he probably said this every night. Part of the prayer went like this: I thank God that You have not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. That was part of the Pharisees' evening prayer. So Paul takes a straight shot at that and says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female." You say, "Well, that's part of Paul's problem. That's why he never got married. He didn't know the difference." No. He was not saying there's no difference, he was saying the difference doesn't matter spiritually. You get the difference?

No, he hit right at the points of prejudice. Listen, there is no place for racial prejudice. "There is neither Jew nor Greek." There is no place for racial partiality, none whatsoever. There is no justification for it Biblically. Romans 2:11 says, "There is no respect of persons with God." If you set yourself up partially to races over against other races, you set yourself above God. That is true in terms of your relationships, that is true in terms of your employment. Ephesians 6:9 says, "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." No respect of persons.

In Acts 13:1, we find that the pastors of the church in Antioch, five of them are listed, one of them (Simeon) is mentioned. Regarding Simeon, Niger, indicating the possibility that he himself was black and one of the five pastors there. Timothy was the child of a mixed marriage. I'll never forget the terrible, tragic suicide of a Southern pastor, who was caught in the tension of hatred in his own church toward black people. He wound up diving out of a third-story window and killing himself. There is no place in Scripture for any racial difference.

Secondly, there is no place for social strata. "There is neither bond nor free." There are no ranks in the body of Christ, none at all. In James 2:1, that most sensitive passage, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." You know, Dr. Ryrie made a very good statement. He said, "Sometimes our prejudice erodes into our faith," and that's what happened here. "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment," did you know people could actually go to church in crummy clothes? He was a poor man, he had nothing better. "And ye have respect to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say unto him, 'Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, 'Stand thou there, or sit here under my feet', are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,' but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." There it is. If you are a social climber and you do more for the wealthy and less for the poor, you have respect of persons and commit sin.

Thirdly, there is no sexual distinction either. "There is neither male nor female." Christianity elevated women to a place they had never known in the ancient world, never known. Spiritually, they are equals. In God's pattern for the church and for the home, the man is to rule and the woman is to be

submissive. But from the spiritual dimension, they are equally, in Christ, recipients of all spiritual blessing in the heavens, right? So we're all one person in Christ. The benefits of being in Christ are being sons of God and one with each other.

Lastly, we are heirs of promise. Verse 29. Oh, this is good. "And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed." See? The promise was given to Abraham and only fulfilled in Christ. As we are in Christ, the promise is ours. We become heirs of all the promise of God when we are in Christ. This, friends, is according to faith, not law or works.

I don't know about you, but I'm glad I'm not before but after. I don't want to be under the law, I want to be in Christ. I trust you are in Christ and experiencing all that is yours and shall be yours. Let's pray.

Lord, we've covered so much material tonight and our minds are thrilled and excited at what we've learned. Oh, God, we thank You that we are in Christ. That You look at us and we are surrounded, clothed with Christ. Father, how thankful we are for the fact that we are sons, beloved sons, sons of whom it says, "Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers." We thank You that we are one with each other. We thank you that we've become the heirs of every promise, all the promises, because Christ will receive it all and we are in Him. We thank you, Lord, for what You've done for us, and all of grace, not of works. In Jesus name, Amen.

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