

## ***“Sons of God Through Faith”***

February 27, 2011

Text: Galatians 3:23-29

### **We are in the middle of a wonderful study of Galatians.**

As we've seen, Paul wrote this epistle because the Xns in the churches of Galatia were being deceived by false teachers known as Judaizers.

They were teaching Gentile Xns that salvation required more than simply believing in Jesus as Lord/Savior;

That the Galatians also needed to become Jewish, through circumcision & obedience to the Mosaic Law.

In his letter, Paul strips away the false luster with which the Judaizers had portrayed the Law, showing that God intended it only as a temporary measure and that it is inferior to the Abrahamic Covenant of Promise.

It would never save anyone, but it would cause people to recognize their sin & their need for a Savior.

### **It is God's design that we pass thru the Law, on our way to faith in the Savior, & the salvation He offers us by His grace.**

\* Unfortunately, there are many would-be believers who start w/ the Law, never go on to faith in X, & thus become legalists.

Some try to combine the human works-righteousness of obedience to the Law, with God's grace, believing they do most of the work to earn their salvation, then God makes up for their shortfall, with His grace.

\* Today a far larger group simply ignore the Law altogether, & go straight to God's grace and faith in X.

They believe that the less said about the Law, the better.

They want to avoid the pain of the Law's condemnation.

But they never really deal w/ the grievousness of their sin, by dealing with the law, so they don't truly understand/appreciate how priceless God's gracious-gift of salvation actually is.

Their understanding of grace is cheapened/discounted by their having avoided the Law.

### **In today's text, Paul explains to the Galatians what a blessing it was for them to progress past the Law, to salvation by faith in Jesus X.**

And by extension, how absurd it would be for them to take the Judaizers' advice, seeking once again to revert back to the false hope of righteousness/salvation through the Law.

Paul does this by reminding them of what their lives were once like, before they believed in X for salvation;

And what their lives were like after they got out from under the terrible burden of the Law, and placed their faith in X alone.

This text applies to every one of us, just as it did to the Galatians.

Our salvation too begins with the Law's condemnation, and ends with Jesus removing that condemnation as we place our faith in Him, alone.

**The before and after shots of the Galatians' spiritual lives are described by 2 captions found at the beginning of=>**

\* Verse 23=> "*Before faith came,*" (the "before" snapshot)

\* Verse 25=> "*Now that faith has come*" (the "after" snapshot)

\* **"Before Faith Came"**

[Galatians 3:23]=> "*But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.*"

**Paul introduces the 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 analogies for the restrictiveness of living under the Law=> imprisonment.**

The phrase "*Kept in custody*" is actually a combination of 2 words=>

\* The 1<sup>st</sup> one means to guard something in order to keep it under strict control.

\* the 2<sup>nd</sup> one means to encircle something, & thus to keep it confined.

This is what Paul says the Law does to man on a moral level.

It shuts him up, and shuts him in—imprisoning/surrounding/incarcerating him.

**Some would argue that Paul is talking about the Jews alone, here, since it was to them that God gave the Law.**

And it certainly is true, that this was the effect which the Mosaic Law had on the Jews, historically.

However, remember that Paul is writing to Galatian Gentiles, for the most part, applying this notion of the moral incarceration of the Law to them too.

He can do that, because the principles of the Law are built into every man's heart, Jew/Gentile alike.

Rom 2:14-15=> "*When Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, / in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.*"

Everyone has an instinctive sense that lying/stealing are wrong, & that they should worship God, the Creator.

The Law keeps man in custody on death row, awaiting his final execution in eternity.

It reveals his sin, & convicts-him of it, because until he understands (at some level) that he has done things that are wrong and needs God's forgiveness, he won't be prepared to humble his heart before X, in faith, seeking his forgiveness.

**The comparison of the Law to a prison brings out its restrictive, unpleasant, and harshly punitive nature.**

We who are born again have experienced the Law as a merciless, unrelenting prison-guard, from whom we could not escape.

It was there with us when we woke up, all day long, & when we went to sleep at night, constantly accusing/condemning us (never giving us a break).

It scourged us for our thoughts, our words, what we did, and what we failed to do.

Even if we sang hymns in church, it lashed out at us for our hypocrisy—not to mention our hypocritical prayers.

If we got to such a point of frustration/despair that we decided just to give up & rebel against the Law, drowning our own consciences in disobedience, & searing our souls with sinful indulgence, the Law said, "You can't do that. You know too much about righteousness to forget about me like that. You can never escape from me that way."

If we tried to reason with the Law, saying, "I was baptized or christened as a baby, & I have attended church and have confessed/prayed regularly; I don't even smoke! Doesn't that count for something?"

The Law roared back, "Nothing!"

If we've pointed out to it, that we have done many good deeds & few, if any, truly terrible deeds, the Law hasn't been impressed, but has scoffed at us.

It has demanded moral perfection, and declared that the motives & attitudes behind our deeds were just as subject to its scrutiny and critical judgment as the deeds themselves.

It has decreed without sympathy/feeling=> "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in **all things** written in the book of the Law*" (Deut 27:26).

We found ourselves in the custody of an inhuman moral prison-guard who knew nothing of mercy or grace, compromise or negotiation, & required perfect/faultless obedience of us at all times.

**If all this sounds painfully familiar because the Law has imprisoned you in helpless feelings of guilt, don't be discouraged.**

It's actually a sign that God loves you, has chosen you, and is drawing you to Himself, using the Law to accomplish that.

To use Paul's words, He is "shutting you up" to the faith, later to be revealed to you.

He is cutting you off from your own self-deceptions, preparing your heart for the truth.

He is breaking down the idols in your heart, to make room for an altar to Himself there, so that you can worship Him once you have truly believed.

**In verse 24 we find Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> analogy for the moral restrictiveness of living under the Law=>**

[Verse 24]=> *"Therefore the Law has become our **tutor** to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."*

Paul compares the Law with a "*tutor*"—a paidagogos.

"*Tutor*" isn't a very good translation of this word, but the problem is we don't really have a good translation in our culture; a drill sergeant for children or a very stern/merciless governess might come close.

This was a slave who was responsible for breaking the willful spirit of a boy in a Gk/Roman home.

He walked the child to school, stayed there with him all day, whipped him if he disobeyed or didn't pay attention, and walked him back home afterward.

He was there as the child played/ate/studied—whatever.

Any misstep brought swift punishment from the paidagogos.

He was with the child day/night, and was such a harsh disciplinarian that ancient paintings often depicted a paidagogos as carrying rods.

His job was to toughen the boy up to face the hard realities of life.

And to begin that process by forcing him to surrender to authority (like a drill instructor at a boot camp).

When a boy was officially recognized as having come of age, the tutor's responsibility/authority ended (the ceremony of the *toga virilis*).

And now the young man no longer had to obey him, the assumption being, he had become a mature/responsible adult.

**In our text, Paul describes the Law as a paidagogos, because it is an oppressive disciplinarian, and God intends it to serve only a temporary function in our lives.**

It is to "*lead us to X*"—which means to a mature faith in X.

When a person believes in Jesus & becomes born again, the Law becomes internalized in his heart, so he doesn't need to read the Ten Commandments every day.

This was prophesied in Jer 31:33 (God)=> *"This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it.'"*

X sets us free from the Law's condemnation, and makes us mature sons of God who willingly obey Him, because we have internalized His Law in our hearts.

Ironically, the Galatian Xns, having been freed from the paidagogos of the Law through faith in X, wanted to go back & live under its rule, once again. The Judaizers had persuaded them the Law was a Savior. That was a misconstrual of the Law, which is really just a paidagogos, intended to drive people to the true Savior—Jesus X.

### **How (specifically) is the Law like a paidagogos?**

\* It reveals to us God's divine standard and teaches us our obligations to obey Him by keeping it.

It shows us what spotless moral perfection actually looks like, and commands us to achieve it, by what we are, how we behave, what we say, and even what we think/feel.

It tells us that even the beginnings of sin—a lustful/furtive glance, or a jealous thought—offend God's holiness.

\* It shows us our sinfulness.

We generally think quite well of ourselves, but the Law objectively points to God's commands and says, "You have failed to obey these as you should."

It breaks down our spiritual complaisance and self-confidence.

This is an unpleasant business, but it's absolutely necessary for the Law to convince us that we are truly sinners, needing to be saved.

There's no other way to come to X, but that of a humbled sinner.

Jesus died for sinners—only sinners.

If you're not convinced you're truly a sinner, you'll feel that His death for sin doesn't really apply to you.

A wise man will invite the Law to do its humbling work in his heart.

Jms 1:25=> "*One who looks intently at the perfect law [God's Law revealed in Scripture], the law of liberty [called that, because if it leads us to faith in X, it liberates us], and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.*"

\*3. The Law sweeps away all our excuses & self-justification.

We say, "I'll admit that I'm not perfect, but after all, you've got to take human nature into consideration."

The Law: "I have nothing to do with human nature, only God's nature."

We say, "OK, so I disobeyed the Law, but it seemed to be the right thing to do, given the circumstances."

The Law: “I don’t take circumstances into account.”

Ex 20:3=> “*You shall have no other gods before Me*” under any circumstances.

Ex 20:12=> “*Honor your father and your mother*” under any/all circumstances, no exceptions whatsoever!

We say, “I’m no worse than a lot of other people I know.”

The Law: They will stand before their Maker alone, and you will do the same, both accused for your own violations of His Law.

\*4. The Law relentlessly chases/chastens us, pointing out our sins.

Suppose we’re watching a steamy scene in a movie.

The Law is there, smiting your conscience, saying, “You know this is wrong!”

It keeps rebuking us, saying, “What are you doing now?”

“What if you were suddenly whisked away to stand before your Maker, unforgiven, with this dark stain on your conscience?”

“How could you account for yourself?”

It constantly reminds us that we never do anything absolutely right, by its perfect standards.

Mt 5:48=> “*You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*”

Even when we try our best, and hope to receive the Law’s commendation, it condemns, giving us no peace/hope.

It is a tutor, given to us by God, to make us sick of our depraved self, so we will stop relying on our own self-righteousness and look to Him for salvation, by His grace alone.

If that’s not a person’s reaction to the Law, it might be that God is leaving him content with himself, to enjoy this life as best he can, because God hasn’t chosen him for salvation.

Before faith came, we were under the restrictive custody and the suffocating, tutor-like oversight, of the Law.

\* **“Now That Faith Has Come”**

[Verse 25]=> “*But now that faith* [the gospel of salvation thru Faith in X] *has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*”

**Suddenly the mood of this whole text changes—from the stark negativity of the Law, to the positive impact of faith.**

The coming of the gospel of faith in X has changed everything.

X Himself has changed everything, so that verse 26 speaks of “*faith in X,*” verse 27 of “*being baptized into X,*” verse 28 of our being “*one in X,*” & verse 29 of “*[belonging] to X.*”

From here on, it's all about X and our faith in Him.  
A new system of morality based on our relationship w/ X, has replaced the old system, based human obedience to the Law.

**Paul lists 4 wonderful blessing that believers now enjoy because of this momentous moral/spiritual change from Law to X/grace, from obedience to faith.**

Blessing #1—Spiritual Freedom in Christ (no more tutors).

When a child grows up, precepts that were once imposed on him, enforced by outside authorities, now control him from within, because he as adopted them for his own.

When X arrives in a person's life, and indwells Him w/ the H.S., God's Law is written on that person's heart, and he's empowered to live by it.

He no longer refrains from sin out of fear of condemnation or hope for God's acceptance.

He refrains because he loathes it, & can't be at ease with it.

So 1 John 3:9 *“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”*

He still struggles with sin daily, because of his flesh, but it is now the warfare of a virile spiritual adult—no longer a child.

He is finally free from the condemnation of the Law, because of his trust that Jesus has paid the Law's penalty for him.

His is the attitude found in Rom 6:14-15—*“Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. / What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!”*

As a spiritual adult, walking in the Spirit, he overcomes sin.

[Verse 26]=> *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”*

**We are no longer spiritual children ruled by the pedagogue of the Law, but grown-up “sons of God,” enjoying all the rights/privileges of our sonship.**

Nor are we prisoners of the Law any longer, but fully recognized members of our Heavenly Father's household.

Paul often uses the phrase *“sons of God”* to speak of our liberty in X, first from childish fears.

E.g. Rom 8:14-15=> *“All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. / For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”*

At one time we constantly feared the rejection of God and the Law's condemnation, but now the H.S. assures us that God not only accepts us, but actually loves us, having adopted us as one of His own children.

We're also free from slavery to sin.

Rom 6:17-18=> *"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, / and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*

As sons/daughters of God, we enjoy spiritual freedom/liberty.

Not the freedom to sin, but the freedom/power to not sin, for the first time in our lives.

This is the height of spiritual/emotional freedom.

- \* Now we are "in X" (identified w/ Him by faith), so our old days of imprisonment by the Law, awaiting final execution for our sin, are passed, and now we are free from the Law's condemnation.
- \* In addition, faith has made us mature adults spiritually, so our relationship w/ our old pedagogue (the Law) has changed.

Jesus kept the Law perfectly, and He fulfilled all its demands.

Now that we are "in X," it's as if we had kept/fulfilled it ourselves, perfectly!

It can no more condemn us than it would condemn Him.

Notice that beginning in verse 26, Paul has changed from "we" to "you," because he really wants to drive home to the Galatians/us personally, their/our newfound freedom thru faith in X.

Paul wants you (his reader) to really feel your freedom from the Law and its condemnation.

### Blessing #2—New Identity in Christ

[Verse 27]=> *"For all of you who were **baptized** into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."*

Paul can't be talking about water baptism here, because he is teaching salvation through faith alone, apart from works.

He'd never give the Galatians something to do to get saved.

Paul is talking about the spiritual baptism of identification w/ X.

Being "baptized into X" is being immersed in X, identifying with His death and resurrection thru faith, & living differently as a result of it.

This is the baptism of Romans 6=> *"All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? / Therefore*

*we have been buried w/ Him thru baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead thru the glory of the Father, so we too might **walk in newness of life***” (6:3-4).

In our own text, Paul also describes this as having “*clothed yourselves with Christ.*”

It’s a different outward conduct/appearance that results from an inward transformation of attitude/perspective.

It’s taking on a new identity as someone whose life is immersed/hidden in X, so that we can say w/ Paul=>

*“I have been crucified with X; & it is no longer I who live, but X lives in me; & the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God”* (Gal 2:20).

Blessing #3—New Perspective in Christ (personal equality/unity)

[**Verse 28**]=> “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

**For the world, such distinctions are very important, determining the value/status/significance of each individual.**

Before we were saved, we shared the world’s perspective, but now we have a new perspective=>

Since Jesus died for people of every race/social-status/sex, we must relinquish all such artificial/prejudicial notions.

Not that we’re no longer aware of such distinctions;

But that we refuse to let them affect the way we relate to other Xns.

In terms of regeneration, Gentiles are just as worthy before God as Jews, slaves who believe are just as saved as freemen, and women are just as valuable to the Lord as men.

So any sort of distinction/partiality which might impair/undermine our unity in X must be abhorred/repudiated/banned.

There’ll be no assigned seating at our Fellowship Luncheon next Sunday (high-class people will not sit apart from low-class).

We are “*all one in Christ Jesus.*”

Within the home/church, God has established the principle of male headship/leadership, but such roles are a completely separate issue from our value, our regeneration, or our mutual love.

Jms 2:1=> “*My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.*”

James then asks if our motives aren’t evil, when we give favored treatment to someone who is obviously rich?

When we do that, we're reverting right back to the world's way of thinking.

Finally James says (2:8)=> *"If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,' you are doing well."*

The Law never told us we were doing well, but God does, when we respond to His royal Law in love, thru the H.S.

Blessing #4—New Hope in Christ (our future inheritance of all God's blessings for His children)

[Verse 29]=> *"And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

**Things are great for the believer, now that he's free from the imprisonment/tutorship of the Law, but they're going to get even better, because he's an heir with an imperishable inheritance, awaiting him in heaven.**

Believers are heirs of God's promise to Abraham—not the land of Israel (that God has given to Abraham's physical heirs), but all the spiritual blessings of justification by His grace, promised to Abraham's spiritual heirs.

The phrase *"You belong to Christ"* is a genitive which actually means *"you are of Christ"*—not only do you belong to Him, you are part of Him, being a member of His Body (the Church);

You are united to X, and have clothed yourself with Him.

You are *of* Him!

Because believers are *"of X"* and *"in X,"* they are joint-heirs with Christ, of God's promise to Abraham—that He would justify Abraham because of his faith in God alone, and bring him into all the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I.e., Jesus Christ has become everything to us who believe.

As 1 poet put it=> "So near, so very near to God, I cannot nearer be,  
For in the Person of His Son I am as near as He.  
So dear, so very dear to God, I cannot dearer be;  
The love wherewith He loves His Son,  
Such is His love for me."