

Sermon Series: *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians*

But Now That Faith Has Come...

In Christ Jesus You Are All Sons of God Through Faith

Galatians 3:23-39 (ESV)

29 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

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

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

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Introduction

In the text today, Paul continues his explanation of the purpose of the law, then moves ahead to describe the reality of what faith in Jesus brings. Faith in Jesus brings us into living union with the Savior-Son of God and enfolds us into the promise that God made with Abraham. Paul illustrates this by using a before and after comparison, Before (the) Faith and After (the) Faith, or Before Christ and After Christ, B.C. and A.C.



He contrasts the condition “Before the Faith” (B.C.), that of being **under the law**, with the condition “After the Faith” (A.C.) that of being **in Christ**. Just as we assume today in such comparisons that the condition “before” is worse than the condition “after,” so Paul will demonstrate that being **in Christ** is far superior and more desirable than being **under the law**.

Before The Faith: Under the Law = Prison & Paidagogos (B.C.)

Paul uses two words to grab our attention and describe life **under the law**; prison and *paidagōgos*. Prison, no doubt, you are familiar with. The Greek word *paidagōgos*, however, may need a little explanation to help us understand the true condition of attempting to live life under the law.

After The Faith: In Christ = Freedom & Family (A. C.)

BUT! being **in Christ** is far superior to being under the law. Being in Christ means freedom and family. Being in Christ through faith brings freedom from the law and it brings you into the family of God.

Galatians 3:23 (ESV)

23 Now before (the) faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

Before The Faith Came (vs. 23-24)

Paul has in mind a particular time, that is, **before faith came**. In saying “before faith came” he means before Christ was revealed. He makes this clear in the next verse, “...until Christ came...” (v.24). This is also clear in the Greek text, but not so clear in English translations. The word “faith” occurs twice in this verse and both times in the Greek text the definite article precedes it. A literal translation would be,

Galatians 3:23 (Youngs Literal Translation)

*And before the coming of **the** faith, under law we were being kept, shut up to **the** faith about to be revealed,*

So Paul is not talking about faith in general. He is talking about a particular faith with a particular content. Of course he is referring back to the faith he mentioned in the previous verse (v.22) which is specifically faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that one is not saved simply by “having faith,” as if the act of belief itself is what saves. No. He is saying that one is saved only by “having faith” IN Jesus. What saves is not the act of exercising faith. What saves is the object upon which that faith rests. In this case, Paul is saying THE faith that saves is a faith that rests in Jesus in particular.

Now Paul does not mean to imply that before the coming of Jesus faith did not exist. You will recall that he has just been arguing that Abraham was saved by faith (3:6-9), so “faith is at least as old as Abraham”¹ who was “the man of faith” (3:9).

What Paul means is that the specific object of faith was only revealed in Jesus. Prior to the coming of Jesus those of the faith of Abraham looked forward in hopeful expectation to the advent of Messiah (This is what we are representing each week by lighting the advent candle and reading Scripture. We are figuratively “looking forward” to the birth of Messiah.)

They did not know exactly who He would be. This is the reason the prophetic Messianic Scriptures were given, so that we would recognize Messiah. Now that Jesus has come, **faith has been revealed** because the specific person of Messiah has been revealed. He is Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus has now been revealed as Messiah and therefore He and He alone is the necessary object of saving faith.

Before Faith: Under the Law = Prison (v.23)

So what was life before faith like? How was it to live life under the law? Paul describes life under the law as a life in prison.

Galatians 3:23 (ESV)

23 Now before the faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

Life under the law was a life of bondage. It was a life in prison. [Remember to whom Paul is writing. He is writing to “the churches of Galatia.” He is writing to people who believed the gospel message under his preaching but are now in danger of forsaking Christ and placing themselves back under the law. Paul’s description of life under law will certainly cause them to seriously ponder how they will

¹ Richard N. Longenecker, vol. 41, *Word Biblical Commentary : Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 146.

live.] Under the law we were held **captive**. The word *phroureo* (φρουρεο), means “to keep under lock and key.”²

Captives have no freedom. They are those who have fallen under the power of ones who possess more strength. They are not allowed freedom movement. They are controlled by another who is stronger than them. Paul says that under the law we are **imprisoned**. We are confined and locked up. Under the law we are in bondage. Living life under the law is like living life in prison.

Before Faith: Under the Law = *Paidagogos* (v.24)

Galatians 3:24 (ESV)

24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

The second word Paul uses to describe life under the law was guardian. Living under the law is like living under a guardian. What exactly does this mean? Paul uses the Greek word *paidagōgos*, which describes one who “had custodial and disciplinary functions rather than educative or instructional ones.”³

The term is *paidagōgos*, which means “a child-custodian” or “child-attendant.” The pedagogue was a slave employed by wealthy Greeks or Romans to have responsibility for one of the children of the family. He had charge of the child from about the years six to sixteen and was responsible for watching over his behavior wherever he went and for conducting him to and from school. The pedagogue did not teach. Therefore the translation “schoolmaster” is wrong; if Paul had meant this, he would have used *didaskalos* rather than *paidagōgos*.⁴

In the *Republic*, Plato (427–347 B.C.) says,

Pedagogues [παιδαγωγῶν] as part of the retinue of Greek patrician households (373C), and characterizes pedagogues as “men who by age and experience are qualified to serve as both leaders and custodians of children” (467D).⁵

Two-Fold Meaning of *Paidagōgos*

The *paidagōgos*, here translated as guardian, served to make Paul’s point, which is twofold. First, the word serves to illustrate the inferiority of the one under the *paidagōgos* and second, the temporary nature of the role.

Like the *paidagōgos*, the law constantly stood over an immature person ready to correct or punish when mistakes were made. One was constantly subject to its scrutinizing gaze. The boy was forced to obey the instruction of the *paidagōgos*. It was his job to make the child obey and he had authority

² Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), Ga 3:23.

³ Richard N. Longenecker, vol. 41, *Word Biblical Commentary : Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 146.

⁴ Frank E. Gaebelien, Everett F. Harrison, W. Harold Mare et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 10: Romans Through Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 467.

⁵ Longenecker, 146.

over the boy and the power to punish the child in order to gain his obedience. The law functions in much the same supervisory way.

However, the role of *paidagōgos* was to be a temporary one until one reached a certain stage of maturity when one could be held responsible for one's own actions. At that time, the son would be released from the charge of the guardian. It was understood that one would not always be under the charge of the *paidagōgos* unless there was a serious problem. This word is powerful illustration of the inferiority of law under the law.

Imprisonment Under the Law Was Temporary

The law also had a temporary role. The law was only to have its dominion ***until the coming faith was revealed*** (v.23). Verse 24 explains that the ***coming faith to be revealed*** refers to Jesus. Therefore the law was ***guardian only until Christ came***. Jesus is Messiah and the one in whom all who would be saved must trust. So the captivity and imprisonment under the law was a temporary arrangement. The authority of the law was to last only until Jesus was revealed. The dominion of the law lasted only 1,500 years until Christ came and fulfilled all of the law's righteous demands (Matt 5:17; Rom 8:3-4).

Imprisonment Under the Law Was Purposeful

As with all things that God does, there is a reason for this. There were reasons that the law was given. Last week we saw that one of the reasons that the law was given was *to expose sin* and reveal the depth of the wickedness that lies hidden in the hardened, human heart. One of the purposes of the law is to make us aware of our sin. Why? To what end? Paul answers that question at the end of verse 24.

Galatians 3:24 (ESV)

24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

So That We Would Be Justified By Faith

The law was our guardian so that we would seek to be justified by faith. The law was never intended to be steps upon which we, through our own moral determination to obey its demands, might ascend into heaven. The law was intended to be a path that would lead us to the mature understanding that in our own efforts we cannot save ourselves.

The law was intended to lead us down the path of righteousness, not that we might earn our own righteousness, but that we entreat God to give us His righteousness. This is the glorious point that so many Jewish leaders sadly missed.

Romans 9:30-32 (ESV)

30 What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone,

The law was intended to cause us to seek God by faith. Its demands are so high and so comprehensive that they cannot be obeyed. There are only then two possible responses. We either fall on our knees trusting in God's grace and cry out to Him for mercy through the name of Jesus or we twist up our minds, turn away from truth, and reinterpret the law so that it affirms our own standards of righteousness.

We either look into the mirror of the law, see our own evil, and then look away from ourselves and to Jesus as our righteousness, or we look into that same mirror, refuse to accept the truth of what we see, and then smash it so we can then create our own righteousness by putting all the broken pieces back together calling that idolatrous image the beautiful mosaic of true religion.

Romans 10:3-4

3 *For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.*

4 *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

The righteousness of God comes by faith in Jesus. Jesus is the end of the law as means of attaining righteousness. The time for mistakenly thinking that righteousness could come through obedience of the law is over. Righteousness is only found through faith in Jesus. Jesus has fulfilled the law and so for those who believe in Jesus, the law has served its purpose.

Purposes of Law

- 1) The law reveals sin. It exposes the hidden sin in our hearts.
- 2) It pronounces judgment. The law teaches us that those who sin are worthy of death.
- 3) The law also teaches us that the only way to atone for sin is by the shedding of blood, through the death of one who is innocent. This is expressed in the entirety of the sacrificial system.

Jesus shed His innocent blood on behalf of all those who would put their faith in Him. His perfect blood has completely atoned for all our sins. He has now become our righteousness. Those who have faith in Jesus no longer stand under the prison bars of the condemnation of the law. By faith in Christ we are set free from the condemnation of the law.

After Faith: Freedom From the Guardian

Galatians 3:25-26

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

What is life like after faith? Now that faith in Jesus has come, everything is different. The word is FREEDOM! We are no longer under *paidagōgos*; we are no longer under the guardian. We are **freed** from condemning gaze of the guardian. We enjoy a new freedom.

Imagine for a moment that you had a guardian whose job it was to constantly, from age six to sixteen, to watch over you and correct you and punish you every time you got out of line. Every time you spoke out of turn he was there to tell you. Every time you laughed when you should not have he was there. Every time you failed to show proper respect to an elder he was there to give you a whack. Every time you forgot to “thank you” or “yes, ma’am” he was there to remind you. Every time you were not completely honest, he was there to jab you in the ribs. Every time you failed to keep your word he was there to prod you. Every time you sinned he was there to tell you, “You know you deserve to die for that!”

How happy would you be on your sixteenth birthday? How happy would you be on the first day you woke up and he was not sitting on the chair beside your bed—poking you telling you its time to get up? How happy it would be to go for walk in the field and enjoy the sunshine without him reminding you that ought to be doing this or that? How happy it would be to go to market without guardian so-in-so looking over your shoulder at every move? How happy it would be to be free from *paidagōgos*?

How happy it would be to be free from such a guardian? **But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.** How happy it would be to be free from the constant condemnation of the law? How wonderful never again to hear the law say,

- You know you failed again. You didn't love the Lord with all of your heart!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus always did."
- You know you failed again. You've really love your wife more than you love God!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus always loved God above all."
- You know you failed again. You enjoy looking in the mirror more than looking to the Lord!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus never did."
- You failed again. You say your a Christian but your mouth didn't sound like it just now!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus' mouth was always pure and He will help me with mine."
- You did it again. You let the whole day pass without praying!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus never did this, and I yearn to be like Him."
- You did it again. You were not completely honest in that last sentence!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know. Thank God Jesus was totally truthful."
- You did it again. You thought some pretty hateful thoughts about that mean guy!
 - The answer of faith will be, "I know, but Jesus' mind was pure, and He is working a change in mine."
- You did it again. Was that lust in your mind?
 - The answer of faith will be, "Yes, it was, but Jesus overcame this problem and He is working His strength within me."

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. The lordship of the law is over. Faith now brings us into a *new freedom* and a *new family*.

After Faith: New Family

Galatians 3:25-26

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

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

The new freedom and the new family all happen **through faith!** Putting your faith in Jesus removes you from being under the guardian, i.e. under the law and unites you to Christ. **Faith** in Jesus moves you from being **under the law** to being **in Christ**. When you put your **faith** in Jesus, you receive a **new family**. Being in Christ means you become a son or daughter of God. **Faith** in Jesus is the doorway into the family of God.

We Are Not Naturally Members of God's Family

We are not naturally members of God's family. We are not by nature sons and daughters of God. "We are by nature children of wrath, just like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:3). Jesus said to the Pharisees, the most outwardly religious people on the planet, "You are of your father the devil" (John

8:44). Everyone is not a child of God. We only become sons and daughters of God when we place our faith in Jesus.

John 1:12

But to all who did receive Him [Jesus], who believed in His name, He gave the right to become the children of God.

It is only through **faith** in Jesus that we are welcomed into God's family. The right to become sons and daughters of God is only granted to those who believe in Jesus. No one else has that right. It is faith in Jesus that unites us to God. Apart from faith in Jesus, we are naturally separated from God.

However, anyone who will put faith in Jesus will be united to Christ, no matter who you are. That is the point of verse 28.

Galatians 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not saying that race, and social and sexual status no longer becomes a reality after believing in Jesus. After believing in Jesus we are still either a man or a woman. Paul was Jew until his dying day and testified to the fact whenever he shared his testimony (see Acts 22:3).

What he is saying is that the racial, social, and sexual distinctions that separate us from one another cannot separate us from God *if* we put our faith in Jesus. All of barriers that keep us from close relationships with another in this broken world cannot not keep us from God *if* we put our faith in Jesus.

In fact, in a wonderful way, in God's family, all of His children are equally important to Him even though He gives to each a different role to play. God gives the inheritance of His Holy Spirit to each of His children whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. All share equally in the promise of the Holy Spirit and it is through the receiving of the Holy Spirit that we are joined to Christ.

Baptized Into the Family

Paul uses the analogy of baptism to describe what it looks like to be united to Jesus.

Galatians 3:27

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The verb translated "to put on" is often used in the context of theater where an actor takes on the mannerisms and characteristics of the one being portrayed. In this context it means to take on the characteristics of Jesus and so to become like Him.

A great illustration of this comes from the fifth book in C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia series, *The Voyage of Dawn Treader*. In it Lucy and Edmond's snobby little brat of a cousin, Eustace, is brought along on their adventure. On their journey, Eustace finds a dragon's hoard hidden in a cave. In his greed and selfishness he stuffs his pockets full and then falls asleep on top of the mound of treasure.

Lewis writes, “He turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragon’s hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself.”⁶

Eustace didn’t realize he had become a dragon until he saw his reflection as he was getting a drink. After being a dragon for several days he began to realize how beastly he had previously treated everyone around him. “He realized that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race.”⁷ He began to have a change of heart. As he was separated from those he previously detested, he began to yearn for their friendship. However, he also realized that he could not go back to them because he could not make himself stop being a dragon.

Then the Great Lion, Aslan appeared and told him to follow. Aslan led him to a beautiful garden in which there was a large pool fed by a spring welling up from the ground. Eustace knew that if he could bathe in the pool it would ease his pain.

As he started into the pool, but Aslan stopped him and told him to undress. So Eustace tried to scratch off all his old scaly dragon skin, but he could not do it himself. Aslan said, “You will have to let me undress you.”⁸ Although Eustace was afraid, he submitted and allowed Aslan to scratch off his old dragon skin. This is the way Lewis put it.

Eustace said, “The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off. You know—if you’ve ever picked the scab off a sore place. It hurts like billy—oh but it is fun to see it coming away.”

“Then he caught hold of me — I didn’t like that much for I was very tender underneath now that I’d no skin on — and threw me into the water. It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone... and I had turned into a boy again.”⁹

This is a wonderful picture of salvation. Only when we see ourselves the way we truly are will we begin to desire to be changed. When Eustace saw his reflection in the water, then he knew he was a dragon. The law has the same effect on us. The law, like a mirror, reveals to us that we are sinners — like beastly, foul dragons.

Eustace also realized that he could not change himself back into a boy. And so the law reveals to us that we cannot make ourselves righteous. Aslan had to tear off Eustace’s dragon skin and he started at the heart. Only the Spirit of God can give us a new heart and tear away the old nature. We cannot save ourselves by good works anymore than Eustace make himself into a boy. Eustace had to trust Aslan to do that for him. We must trust Jesus in the same way. We must put our faith in Him to remove the sinful nature and give us the new skin of a new nature. In Christ we are new creatures! (2 Cor 5:17)

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2001) p. 466.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 475.

After Aslan tore away Eustace's dragon skin, then he threw him into the water. After we put our faith in Jesus and He gives us His Holy Spirit, then we demonstrate that inward transformation by the outward expression of baptism. As many of us as have put our faith in Jesus, have been wrapped in His Holy Spirit. We show this in the symbolism of baptism.

Galatians 3:29

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Putting faith in Jesus delivers us from being imprisoned to sin under the law and into freedom by being united to Jesus. Before faith in Jesus life is like living in a prison. After faith in Jesus life is freedom and a new family.

Faith in Jesus is the doorway into the family of God. Those who belong to Jesus also belong to Abraham and therefore are heirs of the promise. The promise is God's Holy Spirit. And God will give His Spirit to all who ask Him, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman.

If you are a dragon and in need of shedding old skin. Pray right now to Jesus, the Great Lion of the tribe of Judah. Ask Him to tear off the old skin. Repent of your dragonish ways and ask Him to give you new life. If you ask Him, He will do it.