

**GALATIANS**  
Lesson 11

**Under Law of In Christ**  
**Galatians 3:23-29**

INTRODUCTION

This is Father's Day and this section of scripture speaks of becoming sons of God. As a son, my relationship with my father was not the best. Because he owned his own business, he had little time to build relationships with me. In fact, I never heard my father tell me he loved me until I was over 50 years old. Yet I knew he loved me and I can remember when I became conscious of this fact.

When I was twelve years old, my father and I were crossing a busy street and dad grabbed my hand and walked me across. I was embarrassed because guys don't hold hands, but I was also inwardly warmed, feeling a sense of security from my father. At that moment I knew my dad loved me. I felt accepted and secure in my father's love as a son.

So it is in Christ for Christians. We find a new identity in Christ and feel secure in our Heavenly Father's love. According to the Apostle Paul, before we can understand and appreciate our sonship, we must understand the purpose of the Mosaic Law.

In Galatians three, the Apostle Paul has been contrasting law and grace, and faith and works. He has pointed out that men have always been saved by grace through faith in Christ in all ages. Men have never been saved by the works of the law, for there is no law, not even Mosaic Law, that can give men a perfect righteousness, so they can stand accepted in the presence of a holy God.

Paul's whole point is that God has used the Mosaic Law to show men they are sinners and condemned before a righteous God. The lawful use of the law is to break, bruise, slay and terrify self-righteous people and to show them they are sinful so as to cause them to give up all hope of ever saving themselves by their good works.

The law should drive a person to seek salvation outside of himself and that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ. The law condemns all men because no one can keep the law perfectly (Rom. 3:19-20: **"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."**).

The law requires perfect righteousness for salvation and no man can be perfect. Righteousness can only be found in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21: **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**). Those who lay hold of Christ by faith are given Christ's righteousness and they are made acceptable before a holy God, not in their own righteousness but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I. OUR CONDITION UNDER THE LAW 3:23,24

**"Before this faith came"**

The words "this faith" refer to Christ Himself. Christ was the object of the Old Testament saint's faith but they were looking forward to the Messiah to come. The New Testament saints exercise faith in the Messiah who has come. Old Testament faith was in the prophetic Christ and New Testament faith is in the historic Christ.

The Christian has a different substance of faith than the Old Testament believer in that the Messiah has come and provided salvation. Faith as such did not come with Christ but faith in the historic Christ is for this present age.

### **“We were held prisoners by the law, locked up”**

The law shuts up, hems in, coops up all unsaved people in spiritual prison. The law holds men in a spiritual prison and so confines them they cannot escape. All people outside of Christ are prisoners to law (Gal 3:23), prisoners to sin (Gal. 3:22) and are under the curse of the law (Gal. 3: 1 0). The law confines and shackles a person spiritually so he is not free.

The law is a prison to those who have not as yet obtained grace. No prisoner enjoys the confinement. He hates it. If he could he would smash the prison and find his freedom at all cost. As long as he stays in prison he refrains from evil deeds. Not because he wants to, but because he has to. The bars and the chains restrain him. He does not regret the crime that put him in jail. On the contrary, he is mighty sore that he cannot rob and kill as before. If he could escape he would go right back to robbing and killing. The law enforces good behavior, at least outwardly. We obey the law because if we don't we will be punished. Our obedience is inspired by fear. We obey under duress and we do it resentfully. Now what kind of righteousness is this when we refrain from evil out of fear of punishment? Hence, the righteousness of the law is at bottom nothing but love of sin and hatred of righteousness.

All the same, the law accomplishes this much, that it will outwardly, at least and to a certain extent, repress vice and crime.

But the law is also a spiritual prison, a veritable hell. When the law begins to threaten a person with death and the eternal wrath of God, a man just cannot find any comfort at all. He cannot shake off at will the nightmare of terror which the law stirs up in his conscience. (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*).

### **Until faith should be revealed.**

The law shuts up all unsaved men in a spiritual prison of sin, but Christ, who has come and died for sinners, can set men free from spiritual bondage of the law. Only Christ can deliver a person from the prison to which the curse of the law has brought him, because Christ was made a curse for sinners.

The law should cause a man to flee to Christ for salvation, for no person within himself has a righteousness which can make him acceptable before God. The harder a person seeks salvation by law-works, the more frustrated he will become because it is impossible to be saved by works. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, and it will bring one inward peace concerning his standing before a holy God.

### **“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ”**

This literally says in the original Greek, “The law was our schoolmaster (disciplinarian, tutor, custodian) to bring us to Christ.” The actual Greek word is *pedagogue* which means “disciplinarian.” This refers to a slave employed in Greek and Roman families who had general charge over a boy in the years from about 6-16. He took charge of this boy wherever he went especially at school. The slave was basically in charge of the moral discipline of the child. He was often harsh to the point of cruelty on the child and is usually depicted in ancient drawings with a rod or a cane in his hand.

The law, therefore, was designed as a strict disciplinarian to bring men to Jesus Christ. The law rebuked and punished men for their misdeeds. There is simply no natural way a person can deliver himself from the cruel tyranny of the law. But thank God, there is a supernatural way to be delivered from the law and that is through Christ.

The law is not just another schoolmaster. The law is a specialist designed to bring men to Christ. The law should produce a desire within men for freedom from legalistic bondage and cause them to seek after Jesus Christ who alone can set them free.

### **“That we might be justified by faith”**

It is Jesus Christ who justified men, not the law. The word “justification” means “to declare righteous” and men are declared righteous by God because they have Christ’s righteousness, and not because they have any righteousness in themselves. Christ can do what the law could never do—give a man a righteousness that makes him acceptable to God.

How can a man be justified? Through faith in Jesus Christ alone! A man must believe that Christ died for his sins and was resurrected on the third day to declare him righteous.

### III. OUR CONDITION IN CHRIST 3:25-29

**“Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”**

The person who has received Jesus Christ is no longer under the law with its 613 commands. Christians are not under the law in the sense that it is their disciplinarian and judge; they are not condemned and imprisoned by it. The true believer is “in Christ,” united to Him by faith and accepted before God on the merit of Christ.

The key to understanding this section is in the words “in Christ.” We are sons of God in Christ (Gal. 3:26). We have been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). All Christians are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). The basis of all Christianity is in the “in Christ” relationship.

**“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

In Christ men are sons (and daughters) of God. In Christ, God is the Christian’s Father who has accepted and forgiven him. The word “sons” refers to someone who is of full or adult age. Christians are sons of God with a complete adult standing before God. Christians do not need a schoolmaster or disciplinarian because they are adult sons and daughters in God’s family by faith in Jesus Christ. Every Christian has all the rights and privileges of a son in his Father’s house because he is related to Jesus Christ by faith.

Notice carefully this verse does not teach universalism (all will be saved), for the word “all” must be qualified by the words “in Christ Jesus.” The Fatherhood of God (that God is a universal father to all men) was not taught by Christ or the Apostles.

God is the Creator of all and King, ruling and sustaining all things He has made. However, God is the Father only of our Lord Jesus Christ and of those whom He adopts into His family through Christ. It is through faith men are in Christ, and through being in Christ that they are the sons of God.

**“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”**

In 3:26, Paul spoke of man’s responsibility to exercise faith to get into Christ. In 3:27, he explains how a Christian was placed into Christ. In this verse, he is viewing the divine side of being plugged into Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This obviously cannot refer to the physical act of water baptism, for water never made anyone a son or daughter of God. If water brings salvation, then we should stop preaching the gospel and get all men to plunge into a baptismal pool or run under a baptismal fount.

Furthermore Paul’s whole argument in Galatians is that men are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone; therefore, it could not refer to water baptism. The baptism referred to here is Holy Spirit baptism which places a believer into mystical spiritual union with Christ. This happens the moment a person receives Christ (Eph. 4:4-6 **“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”** 1 Cor. 12:12-13 **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”**)

The word “baptism” has as its metaphorical or secondary meaning “to identify” or “to place into union with.” All those who have been supernaturally placed into union with Christ by the Holy Spirit have put on Christ, or clothed themselves with Christ.

To put on Christ means to clothe oneself with the righteousness, wisdom, power, life and Spirit of Christ. In order to clothe, one must unclothe. Our unsaved life in Adam is exchanged for our new life in Christ. In Christ, we have a new birth which stirs spiritual life in us, new affections in the heart spring up towards God and new determinations affect our will. The Bible says we are new creatures or creations in Christ “ (2 Cor. 5:17). When a person trusts Christ, he exchanges his old life for a new life in Christ.

**“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”**

No Distinction in Race (Neither Jew nor Greek). The problems of racial prejudice in the early church were between Jews and Gentiles. There were bitter feelings between these races. The Apostle Paul says that in Christ all men are equals spiritually. The real church of Jesus Christ is universal and includes men and women of different races, colors and languages. All who have trusted Christ are recipients of God’s grace in Christ, forming the brotherhood of God’s people, a fellowship of believers.

Racial prejudice among true believers should not be tolerated. Christians are not, however, color-blind, and we do not mean that different races of people do not exist. When we say that Christ has abolished these distinctions, we mean not that they do not exist, but that they do not matter. They are still there, but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship.

Men of all races (black, yellow, red, brown and white), if they have received Christ, are brothers and sisters in Christ and should love and fellowship with one another. Christians who harbor racial prejudices are ignorant of the practical applications of the gospel.

No Distinction in Rank (neither bond nor free). In Christ there are no slaves or free men; all are brothers in Christ. This list could be extended to say there is neither master nor servant, teacher nor student, preacher nor hearer. It is not that distinctions do not exist but they do not matter.

In every society in the world, circumstances of birth, privilege and education have divided men and women from one another. But in Christ snobbery is prohibited and class distinctions are rendered void.

No Distinction in Sex (neither male nor female). God declared the equality of the sexes in Christ long before there was ever a Feminist Movement. Women were nearly always despised in the ancient world and not infrequently exploited and ill-treated. But in Christ men and women have equal spiritual privileges. However, this does not mean there are no distinctions in male and female roles in life and society. In God’s order of creation, there are definite functions for men and women but in Christ the sexes share equal spiritual privilege, so much so that married couples are said to be heirs together of the grace of life.

“There is much imparity among men in the world. And it is a good thing. If the woman would change places with the man, if the son would change places with the father, the servant with the master, nothing but confusion would result. In Christ, however, all are equal. We all have one and the same Gospel, “one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, one Christ and Savior of all.” (Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians*.)

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

In Christ the Christian is not only a son of God who shares a common life with all other believers, but is one who is vitally related to Abraham. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God made many wonderful promises of grace in salvation. Abraham believed God’s promise and God declared him righteous. The ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is in Jesus Christ. Therefore, all who have Christ have salvation and are spiritual seed of Abraham, being heirs to the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Being in Christ ties the Christian with 4000 years of spiritual history. Christians have a definite place in God's spiritual program, and they are not waifs and strays without any significance to history.

Most people today live a life of despair. There is no meaning or purpose to life and they have nothing to live for. Men do not feel as though they belong anywhere and life is a vicious circle with no real purpose. These misfits or outsiders feel as though they do not belong anywhere. They are unattached without any anchor, stability or security to life. But when men trust Christ, they actually find themselves. The unattached become attached. The wanderers come home. The lost are found.

In Christ, men find their place in eternity, for they are now sons and daughters of God. In Christ, men find their place in society, for they become brothers and sisters sharing the common life of Christ. In Christ, men find their place in history, for they are related to God's people down through the ages.

In Christ men begin to solve their identity crisis and discover who they really are, for they are related to God, to men and to history.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The difference in being under the law and in Christ is the difference of being lost and being saved. Any person who is trying to get to heaven by his good works is under the law and condemned by the law as a sinner. A person under the law must bear the curse of the law, which is eternal judgment. However, the person in Christ has cast himself completely on Christ to save him, knowing that only Christ can give him a righteousness that will make him acceptable to God.

God will justify or declare righteous any person who admits his sinfulness and casts himself on the mercy and grace of God to save him through Christ. Christ and only Christ is God's answer to the sin problem. Trust Christ and be declared righteous before a holy God. Christ will set you free from the bondage of law and sin and will relate you to eternity, society and history.