

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

 **828 7580 6094** ►

Thursday October 1, 2026

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 4:6 (NLT)

⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”

Under the Law or in Christ? (3:23–29)

Galatians 3:23–29 (NASB95)

- 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.
- 24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
- 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.
- 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- 27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- 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.
- 29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3:23–29 (NLT)

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

²³ Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. ²⁴ Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. ²⁵ And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian. ²⁶ For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

Continuing his discussion of works of the law as opposed to faith in the promise, Paul now contrasts the personal effects those two approaches have on people. After showing the historical relationship between the covenant of promise to Abraham and the covenant of works through Moses and then showing the redemptive superiority of the former over the latter (vv. 6–22), he now introduces the personal application of the two covenants. In doing so, he describes the before and the after of conversion, the character and orientation of a person's life before he trusts in God for salvation and after God grants him righteousness because of that trust. Before conversion a person is under the law and suffers the bondage that relationship brings; after conversion he is in Christ and enjoys the freedom that relationship brings.

POINT 1- UNDER LAW: BONDAGE

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore, the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.

(3:23–24)

After using the third person for most of the chapter (vv. 6–22), Paul reverts to the first person (**we**). In using **we**, he first of all identifies himself with the Jewish people, to whom both covenants were given. But in a broader and more comprehensive sense he is also identifying himself with all of mankind, Jew and Gentile. Even the most pagan Gentile who has never heard of the true God is under obligation to keep His moral and spiritual standards and, if he disregards those standards, to face the judgment of God.

Paul uses two figures to represent God's **law** and its effect on unbelievers, first that of a prison and then that of a guardian.

THE LAW AS A PRISON

But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. (3:24)

Prior to God's revealing salvation in Christ, men were in a spiritual prison. The powerful words of Paul in another epistle are a good place to begin the consideration of man's imprisonment **before faith came**.

Paul declared,

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened”. (Rom. 1:18–21)

In the next chapter of the same epistle Paul further explains that *“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” (2:14–15).*

Whether through the written law of Scripture or the inward law of conscience, until a person acknowledges his basic sinfulness and inability to perfectly fulfill the demands of God’s law, he will not come repentantly to seek salvation. Until he despairs of himself and his own sinfulness, he will not come in humble faith to be filled with Christ’s righteousness. A person who says he wants salvation but refuses to *recognize* and *repent* of his sin deceives himself. Salvation is deliverance from sin, and a person cannot want to keep his sin and at the same time want be free from it. He cannot truly want the new Christ-life of righteousness without renouncing the old self-life of sin. (See James 4:7–10 for a clear picture of the proper elements of saving faith.)

The purpose of **the law** is to reveal and convict men of sin. *“I would not have come to know sin except through the Law,” Paul declared; “for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ ... I was*

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died” (Rom. 7:7, 9).

Forgiveness means nothing to a person who is either unaware he has done anything wrong or is unconvinced the wrong he knows he has done produces any serious consequences to him. Grace means nothing to a person who does not know he is sinful and that such sinfulness means he is separated from God and damned. It is therefore pointless to preach grace until the impossible demands of the law and the reality of guilt before God are preached.

Not only from the viewpoint of the history of redemption, but even in a personal way throughout all times, **before faith** comes, every person is, in the deepest sense, **kept in custody under the law** of God and the burden of sin. Every human being either continuously lives as a captive slave chained under the judgment of God’s unchangeable, universal law, the demands of which he must pay by eternal death and hell, or he lives by faith as utterly free from judgment (Rom. 8:1) as a redeemed child of God under His sovereign and eternal grace.

The believer who looks back realizes that being **under the law** had a good effect, because it showed him his guilty helplessness, his moral and spiritual decline, his fearful danger, and his need of a deliverer. The impossible demands of the law are not designed to save but to condemn sinners and drive them toward the Savior.

As a college football player, I wrenched my knee during practice but was determined to play in the next game. I went to a doctor and was given some cortisone shots and a bottle of ethyl chloride to deaden the pain by temporarily “freezing” the tissue around the knee. I played the entire game

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

without mishap, periodically applying the ethyl chloride to eliminate the recurring pain. But the result of covering up the pain was a permanently damaged knee with more severe ligament injuries that still affect my mobility. By rejecting pain, the body's warning system, I paid serious consequences. The purpose of pain is to warn and protect. When that warning is ignored or covered up, the results are always bad. So it is with guilt. It is the divine warning system telling man he is destroying his soul. If ignored, the results are eternally bad.

In custody under the law, which he violates continually, sinful man is imprisoned. He is, as it were, on death row, sentenced to execution for his sin, the wages of which is death (Rom. 6:23).

Not only that, but he is **shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed**. Historically, the Jews were locked up under the covenant of **law** until the Messiah came and fulfilled the covenant of promise and **faith** given to Abraham. In a similar way, even the Gentile believers in Galatia, like Gentile believers of every age, were **in custody under the law** written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14–16). This custody, however, was not exactly the same as that of the Jews, who had received the revelation (cf. Rom. 3:2; 9:4–5) Again like the Jew, through personal **faith** in Jesus Christ, they are pardoned and freed.

The law had virtually dominated Jewish life from the time of Moses. And because its demands were so impossible, the spiritually-minded, Jew who sought to love God and serve Him was overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and inadequacy. He sincerely wanted to obey the whole law but knew he could not.

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Even under the covenant of **law**, therefore, God's way of **faith** was always open. The law was never a substitute for or barrier to faith. Under Moses, a Jew could be saved by faith and counted righteous by God, just as Abraham and many others had believed and been saved. They looked forward to the Savior, as we look back. But despite the fact that they could not keep the law, most Jews rejected the way of faith. They began to play mental games with themselves, devising traditions they *were* able to keep in order to convince themselves they could attain righteousness before God.

The first thing Jesus did in the Sermon on the Mount was to undermine that false security. The Pharisees were the epitome of self-righteousness, and Jesus declared that their self-declared goodness was worthless in qualifying a person to enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 5:20). *“Do you think you keep the law?” He asked, in effect. “If you have ever hated your brother, you are a murderer, and if you have ever looked lustfully at a woman, you have committed adultery” (vv. 22, 28).* They could not become righteous by keeping the law, because their imperfect hearts prevented them from keeping it perfectly, as God requires (v. 48).

“I bear them witness,” Paul said of self-righteous Jews, *“that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.”* Their unbelief kept them from *“knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:2–3).*

Spiritual pride characterized Paul for many years before his conversion. By human standards he was the essence of the proud and self-righteous Jew, *“circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the*

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Phil. 3:5–6). But when the Lord confronted him with the gracious way of salvation by faith, Paul *“counted as loss for the sake of Christ”* all those things he had prized so highly. *“More than that,” he said, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, ... and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (vv. 7, 8–9).* The law, even when kept to the best of a person’s ability, is nothing but a prison, a death row cell where one waits for eternal execution.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?**
- 2. What does the law do in Galatians 3:23 ?**
- 3. How does understanding grace free believers from guilt?**

Therefore, the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. (3:24)

Galatians— Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Second, **the Law has become** a guardian and guide to the Jews and, in a less unique and more general sense, to all mankind.

A (**tutor**) was not a teacher or schoolmaster proper (KJV) but rather a slave employed by Greek or Roman families, whose duty was to supervise young boys in behalf of their parents. They took their young charges to and from school, made sure they studied their lessons, and trained them in obedience. They were strict disciplinarians, scolding and whipping as they felt it necessary. Paul told the Corinthian believers—who often behaved liked spoiled children—that, even if they “*were to have countless tutors in Christ,*” he would be their only “*father through the gospel*” (**1 Cor. 4:15**). Continuing the contrast of tutor and father, he later asks, “*Shall I come to you with a rod or with love and a spirit of gentleness?*” (**v. 21**).

The role of the tutor was never permanent, and it was a great day of deliverance when a boy finally gained freedom from his tutor. His purpose was to take care of the child only until he grew into adulthood. At that time the relationship was changed. Though the two of them might remain close and friendly, the tutor, having completed his assignment, had no more authority or control over the child, now a young man, and the young man had no more responsibility to be directly under the tutor.

The sole purpose of **the Law**, God’s divinely appointed tutor, was **to lead men to Christ, that they might be justified**. After a person comes to Him, there is no longer need for the external ceremonies and rituals to act as guides and disciplinarians, because the new inner principles operate through the indwelling **Christ**, in whom is “*hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*” (**Col.**

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

2:3). The **law** in the ceremonial sense is done away with, though in the moral sense it remains always an intimate friend that one seeks to love and favor.

Before Christ came, the law of external ritual and ceremony, especially the sacrificial system, pictured the once-for-all, perfect, and effective sacrifice of **Christ** for the sins of the world. When the perfect **Christ** comes into the believer's heart, those imperfect pictures of Him have no more purpose or significance.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What stood to you in this section of the lesson?**
- 2. What is the purpose of the Law for Christians?**
- 3. What is a guardian in Galatians 3:24?**
- 4. What was most meaningful to you in this lesson?**

Closing Prayer