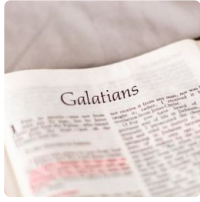


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Galatians 3:19 - 4:7



Galatians - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses Galatians 3:19 - 4:7 and the concept of faith in the Christian faith. Gregg makes the point that faith, not obedience to the law, is what saves people. He also emphasizes that the law was added because of transgressions until the Messiah, or Christ, came. Abraham, despite his imperfections, was justified by faith, and the covenant God made with him was fulfilled in Christ, not in the nation of Israel. Gregg stresses that Christians are children of God by faith in Christ and that God sent his spirit to confirm their relationship with him.

Transcript

In our last session in Galatians, we got up through about, I'd say, verse 18 of chapter 3. We covered chapter 3, verses 1 through 18, a little over half of that chapter. In this session, we want to not only finish the chapter, but at least get into, I don't know how far into, but into chapter 4 as well. Now, in the first two chapters, as I pointed out, Paul was making the point that his gospel was different than that of the Judaizers who had come to Galatia after he had left.

The Judaizers had brought another gospel. He called it a perversion of his gospel. His was the true gospel, and if anyone would preach any other gospel, he said, than the one he preached, even if that preacher was an angel.

Now, one should reject it and consider that messenger a cursed of God. And he is, in chapter 3, speaking very strongly, very emphatically, that those who have accepted this perversion of the gospel are foolish, even bewitched, that they're basically not thinking right, and they're maybe even under spiritual deception, perhaps even demonic deception. And he points out to them that the gospel that they were saved under allowed them to come into a relationship with God, to receive the Holy Spirit, even to experience, verse 5 says, the spirit's working miracles among them.

All of this simply by receiving by faith the message that Paul had preached. However, those who have come afterwards have wished to modify the gospel that Paul preached. They did not say that faith was unimportant.

They did not say that Christ was unimportant. But they were adding to faith in Christ the obligation to fulfill legal requirements such as those defined in the law of Moses. And as I said before, yesterday, that the problem with this was perhaps twofold.

There were two angles that caused this to be alarming. One was that it was defining righteousness and righteous standing before God in terms of obedience to certain rules, and this could apply to not only Jewish law, but could apply to any kind of legalistic system, whether it was made up by Christians or pagans or Jews or whatever. Any system that defined a person's relationship with God in the form of obeying certain rules and religious structures and rituals has missed the point.

And basically, righteousness cannot be obtained by observance of rules. Now, when I say rules, I realize that in many people's minds, there's not much of a distinction between one kind of rule and another. The rules, of course, that are coming up for consideration in Paul's discussion are rules like circumcision, and later on in chapter 4, he talks about observing days and months and seasons and years in chapter 4, verse 10.

These have to do with Jewish customs, Jewish ritual, law. Now, when I say that we're not saved by keeping rules, I mean it, but I want to make it very clear that the rules that are under consideration are ceremonial rules. There certainly is a rule of life for the believer today, as well as in Old Testament times.

There is a certain moral standard that God has always required, and this moral standard can never be changed because God doesn't change, and the moral standards that God wishes for us to observe are those which simply resemble himself. He wishes for us to be children in his image. He wishes for us to have the same honesty and the same justice and the same mercy and the same compassion and the same holiness that he has.

And while none of us perfectly fulfills that, and it's a good thing that we're not saved by keeping such rules as that, it is nonetheless the case that morality has not changed, and even if Paul says we're not under the law and so forth, he is not arguing that somehow morality is of no consequence to the believer. We are not under the ceremonial rituals of law, and in fact, we're not really under the Ten Commandments either, though many of those, most of them embody moral issues. We're not under those laws.

We live according to the moral standards that God has raised, but not because we're under any law that tells us to do so, so much as because God has given us a new heart and written his law in our hearts. And if you would actually be able to sit in and observe open-heart surgery where the patient was a Christian and you could see that person's chest open up and actually see their heart, you would not see laws written on it. When the Bible talks about God having written his laws on our hearts, he's not talking literally, he's talking figuratively, and what he means by that is that the Old Testament law was written on tablets of stone, which are not, of course, internal.

The person doesn't have those inside his body. And as such, it is possible to have imposed upon you an external law that contradicts or is resisted by what is inside, your inclination. Actually, I'm not sure, but that in writing the law upon stone tablets, God might have intended to symbolize the fact that people's hearts were like stone.

And he would take the stony heart in the New Covenant, he would take the stony heart and write his laws on it as he wrote, and transform that stony heart into a heart of flesh, as Ezekiel said, and he would take out the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. Perhaps the idea that God wrote his laws on stone initially symbolically suggested that in his ultimate fulfillment of the antitype in Christ, that he would take his law and write it on those stony hearts of man, which would then transform them from stone to hearts of flesh, soft hearts. But the writing of the law on the heart suggests that the heart has embraced the law.

The law has come to be part of the inward structure of a person's life. That the law has become part of the part of the has become agreeable to the heart. Which was never something that existed or certainly was not guaranteed by the imposition of an external law.

In the Old Testament, there were some people who did love the law of God. David, for example, in Psalm 40 said, Your law is in my heart. In Psalm 119 said, Oh, how I love your law.

It is my meditation all the day. There were people in the Old Testament who did love the law of God, but whether they loved it or not, it was in their heart. It was imposed on them and many people did not love it.

And they simply kept it outwardly. And although their heart was not in it, they thought themselves righteous because they, despite the protestings and rebellions of their wicked heart, they nonetheless outwardly kept the code. And what Paul is pointing out is that righteousness has nothing to do with keeping a code, even a moral code.

It's true that he's principally focusing here on the ceremonial ordinances, but even if he was talking about the moral code, we are not saved or made righteous before God by keeping the moral standards. However, Paul makes it clear that the moral standards are to be observed, that moral standards are standards. And then we are expected to observe them, but not as a means of securing right standing before God, because as soon as we look at morality that way, that, well, if I get if I just can get over this in my life, if I can just live consistently under this moral code, then I'll be OK.

I can be sure I'm safe. We can never then be sure we're safe because we are not perfect enough. We're not good enough.

And so Paul wants us to understand that, like Abraham, who himself was an imperfect

man, even after he came to walk with God, he made mistakes. Yet he was justified by faith. It says in Genesis 15, six and Paul quotes it here in Galatians three, six, just as Abraham believed God and it was a kind of him for righteousness.

Now, having said that a person is justified by believing or by faith, he talks about the law because the Galatians had been informed by the Judaizers wrongly that once you have been saved by faith, the law is really necessary to embrace in order to become fully saved. You have you've come a certain distance when you believe in Christ. But of course, you also have to keep the Jewish law.

And if you don't keep the Jewish law, then you're not saved. And in particular, circumcision was an issue here. This is because the Jerusalem Council had not yet convened and made a decision contrary to this.

And therefore, there were still some Jewish Christians who thought that Gentiles needed to become cross like needed to become Jews in order to be saved. That would require circumcision. Paul says, No, the law never saved anyone, never contributed to anyone's salvation.

If anything, it is simply brought a curse because it is written in verse 10. He says, Curse it is everyone who does not continue in all things that are written in the book of the law to do that. Well, who is who is continued in all those things? No one has.

Therefore, if the law is for us, the definer of our righteous or unrighteous standing before God, it can only define us as unrighteous and cursed. However, he said, Christ in verse 13 has redeemed us from the curse of law and become a curse for us. So we're not under that curse.

But not only are we not under the curse of law, we're not under the law either. It is not the law, our observance of it or lack thereof that has anything to say. Or I shouldn't say it doesn't have to say, but it doesn't have anything to do with procuring our salvation.

I wanted to modify my statement because it would not be quite correct to say that our observance of moral standards has nothing to say about our salvation. That does have something to say about it, but nothing to do with it in the sense that observing moral codes does not secure in any sense our salvation. But it does say something about our salvation.

If we are not living morally, that says a great deal about our salvation, because living a moral and godly life, living a holy life is the evidence that salvation is present. Paul has basically in verses 15 through 18 of Galatians 3, he has been using an illustration of a will. The word is covenant.

In our translation, brethren, I speak after the manner of men, though it is only a man's covenant. The word covenant, *diateke* in the Greek, actually means a will, and it is used

in Scripture more than once as a picture of God's covenant with his people, that God has written a legal will. Now, of course, there are some respects in which the illustration of God having a will doesn't carry directly into the analogy, because God doesn't die, although in Hebrews it does point out in Hebrews 9 that a will takes force with the death of the testator, and Jesus has died, and he is God, and therefore, in a sense, the will has become effective, because God in Jesus did experience death, and that's when a will becomes effective.

Hebrews 9 talks about that. We won't get off into that side issue right now. The issue here that Paul makes is that God made a will, and he bequeathed a certain inheritance to certain persons.

There are certain promises that in this will, somebody would inherit something. That's what wills do, and you can see the bottom line in verse 18 is for if the inheritance is of the law, it's no longer a promise that God gave it, that is, the inheritance to Abraham by promise. We're talking about a will and an inheritance.

God has made a will, and that will has taken effect because Jesus has died. Now, that will, who is named as the beneficiary in this will? Who is it who gets the inheritance? Well, it's verse 16 is a very, very important verse in answering that question. Verse 16 says, Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

That is, the beneficiaries named in the will are Abraham and his seed. Now, the word seed in English as well as in Greek and in Hebrew, by the way, is a word that can be singular, individual or singular, collective. When we talk about, when we use the word population, we're talking about, we're using a singular word because we could talk about populations, the populations of the combined populations of Germany and France and England would be plural.

But when we use the word population singular, we're still talking about multiple people. I mean, it's a collective noun, even in its singular form. Likewise, the word seed in virtually all languages relevant to our study of the Bible, Hebrew, Greek and English, is a term that can be used as a singular individual seed, like a mustard seed or a grain of wheat or whatever, or it can simply refer to collectively seed.

You know, if I go down to the feed store and buy grass seed, I say, I picked up grass seed today. I didn't say seeds, I said seed, but you know that I didn't buy just one seed. I bought probably, you know, several pounds of seed.

Likewise, applying to humans, my seed are my children. But at the same time, any one of my children might be called my seed. You wouldn't change the form of the word for singular or plural.

Seed can mean either. Now, Paul knows this. In fact, he uses the word seed collectively

in verse 29, but in verse 16, he wants to make a point that's of great importance to understanding Paul's theology and therefore true theology.

Since I go with Paul, whatever he said, he's an apostle. I'll accept his understanding of things. But he said, To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.

He, that is God, does not say to seeds as to many. Now, of course, God wouldn't have to say, and to your seeds. He could mean multiple seeds and still say to your seed.

The word seed, even in a singular, could mean plural. But Paul is sort of using a play on words here to say, look, you think the seed to whom the promise made is a lot of people, all the Jews, the seed of Abraham. But the word seed, though it may be plural, it may also be singular.

In this case, it is not meaning seeds, plural, which would have been unambiguous. It means singular to one seed, Abraham and his seed, singular one seed of Abraham. Now, he says that seed is Christ.

Now, what Paul has just said is that the promises of the covenant that God made with Abraham are not made to just about everybody who can claim to be one of the seeds of Abraham, which would be principally the Jews. What he is denying is that the Jews simply by virtue of being seeds of Abraham have any claim to the promises. That is what he is saying.

It is not to seeds, plural, and why would he say that but to eliminate the common way that the Jews thought about this. The seeds of Abraham. I am a seed, you are a seed, my grandfather is a seed.

We are all the seeds of Abraham and we all receive the promises. Paul said, no, the promises are not to Abraham and his seeds. The promises are to Abraham and to his seed, Christ, one seed, which Paul is thereby saying that the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled, not in the nation of Israel, but in Christ.

The statement which Paul quotes back in Galatians 3, verse 8, where he is quoting Genesis 12, 3, he says, in you, speaking to Abraham, in you all nations shall be blessed. Later, God said, in your seed all nations shall be blessed. The point is, the blessing of Abraham that comes as a result of this covenant promise is to those who are in Christ, to Christ.

He is the seed, it is through Christ that all the nations will be blessed, not through Abraham or the Jews. And Paul makes this in no uncertain terms. Now, we might not have gotten this from, we might not, if we had read just the Genesis passages, we would not have made an issue over the fact that it is seed, not seeds.

Because we realize, and Paul did too, that seed can mean seeds too. I mean, the word

can mean either way. But Paul tells us, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that in this case, seed is not to be understood plural, but singular.

Therefore, it answers, I would think definitively, the question of whether the Jews are the children of Abraham to whom the promises to Abraham apply. Paul seems to say very plainly, no, Christ is the seed to whom the promises apply. And he goes further, later on he includes those of us who are in Christ, because we are one in Christ.

One seed, only one seed, but fortunately those of us who are Jew, Gentile, Greek, Barbarian, male, female, slave free, we are all one in Christ. He goes on to say, we are all part of that one seed. We will get to that later.

But the point is, his argument in verses 15-18, which covers what we got up through yesterday, is that God made this promise to Abraham and his seed, it applies to Christ. The law came along considerably later. He says 430 years later, the law that was added could not change this.

The law did not change the will. It did not rename beneficiaries as a different group of people. He said that even in a human covenant, once it has been ratified, no one can add anything to it or take away from it.

Therefore, when the law came 430 years after God's will was made with Abraham, where he bequeathed an inheritance to Abraham and his seed, the law could not alter that, did not alter it, was not intended to alter that. Now, this raises, of course, the significant question, well then, what did the law do? If it did not alter that, what did it alter? What was it for? And that is the question that Paul takes up in verse 19, because if he had stopped at verse 18, he could have proven his point to the satisfaction, at least of the Galatians probably, and himself, and maybe some Jews, that yes, the law did not define a new means of justification. God had told Abraham, or it was said of Abraham that he was justified by faith, that was part of the blessing of Abraham that would come on the Gentiles through faith, may be justified, but the law did not then alter that.

The law did not alter the means of justification. But the Jew, who would read this, and it is not written to Jews, Paul himself could not ignore what the Judaizers would say in response. Of course, the next question, well then, you act like the law was for nothing.

Obviously in the Old Testament, the law was important. Sinai, the covenant of Sinai, is that nothing? What was that all about? How does that fit into the overall picture of God's plan for salvation of people? And Paul raises the question in verse 19 and answers it through the end of the chapter and on into the next, in a very powerful way, I think. He asks the question first in verse 19, what purpose then does the law serve? He answers, it was added because of transgressions till the seed should come, meaning Christ, to whom the promise was made, and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promise of God, or promises of God? Certainly not. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

But the Scripture has confined all under sin, meaning the law of the Scripture, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Now there's a lot here, and some of it can be interpreted more than one way, including the first part of his answer in verse 19. What purpose then does the law serve? He says it was added because of transgressions until the seed should come.

Now what does it mean because of transgressions? There are two opinions about this, both of which have merit and of course either one of them might be true. You could accept either of them and be quite orthodox, although it's not certain which one Paul meant. One was it was added because of transgressions would mean because of human nature being fallen, because of the seed not yet having come, because Christ had not yet come and the promise of writing the law in their hearts had not yet become a reality in Christ.

In the meantime, God had to restrain the sinful nature of man. He could not simply let man run wild. Therefore the law was added, and the law was there to put moral restraint on the fallen nature of man until God could come and write his law on our hearts.

And that new development would itself restrain God's people from misbehavior, because once the law is written in your heart, you'll have an inward governor. You don't need to have the law externally imposed. But until that time, something had to prevent people from going wild and running wild and letting their sinful nature be unchecked.

So God put the law there, and that would of course put some penalties upon immoral behavior. People were unrepentant, or even if they weren't unrepentant, if they did repent, they'd still be put to death under the law for certain things that certainly couldn't be tolerated. And therefore the law was added to kind of keep things in check.

Now there is in the later discussion here some support for that meaning of Paul's words, because he talks later on in verse 23, but before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. It was our tutor. It took care of us.

It kept us...it directed our behavior until we didn't need such direction anymore. It was like our jailer. That's what it means, kept under guard.

It's a terminology from imprisonment. The law kept us prisoners until we didn't need to be kept prisoners anymore. It kept us in protective custody for our own good until we could learn, until we could be transformed by the gospel and not need to be kept under lock and key under the law anymore.

So these points that Paul makes in verse 23 and 24 could easily support the idea that in verse 19 Paul means the law was added because we're transgressors and because we're transgressors we need to be...something's got to stop us from doing our evil deeds, and if we don't have it written in our hearts, God has to impose it externally for the time being. Now, that is how I think most interpreters understand this, and it could well be the correct meaning. There are some who have interpreted Paul's statements that it was added because of transgressions to mean something a little different, something a little more like what Paul said in Romans 7. Now, if you'll turn over to Romans 7, I'll familiarize you, if you're not already familiar, with this concept.

In Romans 7, beginning at verse 7, Paul says, What shall we say, then, is the law sin? Certainly not. On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law, for I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said you should not covet. But sin, taken opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire, for apart from the law, sin was dead.

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the commandment which was to bring life I found to bring death. Now, what's he talking about here? What he's saying is that before he knew the law of God, he wasn't necessarily free from misbehavior, but he didn't know that he was guilty of misbehavior. It's like if you're having a picnic on the lawn, having a good time, and then someone walks up and points out to you, and there's a sign that says don't, you know, stay off the grass, you know, and you're sitting there on the lawn, and you realize, uh-oh, I'm a lawbreaker.

All of a sudden it's rained on your parade, you know, it's ruined your party. You realize that you'd better get off lest you be subject to fines or whatever, you know, and you realize that suddenly, although you were free from the law, you were alive without the law, now that you know the law, it doesn't really change anything about what you are. It just defines what you are.

You're a lawbreaker. You knew you were on the grass before, but you didn't know what was wrong to be on the grass, and as soon as you became aware of the law, suddenly, suddenly you realize you're a lawbreaker and you became afraid of punishment or whatever. Now this is, this is the concept Paul says.

I was alive without the law. My heart was pure. My conscience was clean before God, before the law came, and when the law came, it pointed out that the things I was doing were against God's law, and therefore, although I was already sinning, the law made me

a transgressor.

The word transgressor speaks of a lawbreaker. Sin and transgression are, in some senses, interchangeable terms, but they have slightly different meaning. Sin is transgression of the law.

It says that in 1 John, but sin is falling short of the mark. The literal meaning of the Greek word sin means to miss the mark. It's like you're aiming at a target and you fall short of it and don't hit the target.

It's a flaw. It's a defect. But transgression calls to our attention the fact that it's a breaking of a particular law for which penalties should be expected.

Transgressing the law. Now, when Paul says the law was added because of transgressions, some translators and interpreters believe that what he means is the law was given so that the sins people were already committing might be defined as transgressions, that they might become aware of their criminal status. People do things wrong all the time, but if they don't know they're wrong, it makes a big difference in terms of their conscience and their sense of a need for forgiveness or for mercy.

If you're doing wrong things that you don't sense that you're guilty of anything, then what are you going to need mercy for? But if the law comes and points out that what you're doing is criminal and that penalties can be expected for it, then suddenly the desire and the need for mercy becomes awakened in you. Many of you may be aware of Ray Comfort. He's an evangelist and a teacher who has become very prominent in the last decade or so.

He's been around longer than that. He's written a lot of books. But he has principally one message.

It comes out in all of his literature that he writes, and that is that he believes in using the Ten Commandments as a tool in evangelism. Now, he doesn't believe the gospel is in the Ten Commandments. He understands Paul's use of the law pretty much as what I've described, that the law is there to be a mirror to show us how dirty our faith is.

You can be walking around with your zipper down and you're not embarrassed at all until you stand in front of a mirror and realize how long has that been there, or how long has that thing been hanging out of my nose, or whatever, you know? I mean, the mirror suddenly, it doesn't change the reality. It changes your level of embarrassment. It makes you aware that something has been wrong with you all along that you have not been aware of, and suddenly creates shame or embarrassment or whatever.

And that's what the... Ray Comfort believes, that we should always use the Ten Commandments because many people today don't know that they need forgiveness. And whenever he witnesses to anyone, it seems, he'll always ask them, do you feel the

need for forgiveness? And most people say no. They'll say, well, do you think you've lived up to the code that God requires you to live up to? And they say, well, I don't know, probably, or who knows, maybe not completely, or whatever, but they don't feel too convicted.

And so then he goes through the Ten Commandments one by one, explains what they mean, says, have you kept this? Have you kept this? Have you kept this? Have you kept this? And eventually, you know, they become awakened to their sense of guilt and need for mercy. Now, I don't personally follow him in saying that one must use the Ten Commandments. I think using the Sermon on the Mountain would be much more effective.

But actually, although he says that he uses the Ten Commandments, he frequently makes reference to the Sermon on the Mountain as well in his defining of the meaning of the Ten Commandments. But it's not so much that we need to use the Ten Commandments. It is clear, though, that people will not know they need Christ unless they know they are lawbreakers, and one cannot know that unless there's a law given.

Before the law came, people were sinners, but they didn't know they were sinners. Or if they knew it, they didn't know exactly what it was about their behavior that was sinful. They might have lived with a low-grade sort of sense of guilt and not measure it up to the standards they knew they should or whatever.

But God's law specifies which things man was doing that were unacceptable to God, and therefore defines sin as transgression against particular law. And some think that when Paul says it was added because of transgressions, it means simply that the law was added in order to create transgressions. Not to create sin, that was already there, but to make sin into a transgression that the person who was already sinning might recognize in his sin a transgression of a standard that he had not heretofore been aware of and to bring conviction.

So either one of those could conceivably be Paul's meaning, and we will not speculate as to which one he necessarily means here. All we can say is that the law did have a function in both moral restraint and arousal of a sense of guilt, both of which are good things, but neither of them are a function of bringing salvation. Neither of them are giving life.

And so he says the law was given and added because of transgressions until the seed, which is Christ, should come to whom the promise was made, and it, the law, was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now, he says the law was appointed through angels. We don't have any record in the Old Testament that this is true, but the Jews certainly believe that there was Jewish tradition that the angels had been involved at Mount Sinai in the giving of the law.

Stephen makes reference to this also in his sermon in Acts chapter 7, verse 53. He mentions that the Jews had received the law through the administration of angels and had broken it. Now, this may be true.

This may be Paul and Stephen affirming that angels were present, or it may simply be conceding the point. If the Judaizers had said to the Galatians, listen, you've got to keep on because, hey, angels, you know, angels were there, Paul might say, OK, fine, we'll grant that. True or not, we don't know.

The Old Testament doesn't say whether angels were there or not, but let us accept that point. Let us concede that point. Suppose there were angels there.

So what? But we're an angel from heaven preaching a gospel other than this gospel. Let it be a curse. It doesn't matter whether there are angels there or not.

Angels are not the highest authorities. The law, it may be, was given through angels, but more importantly, it was given to the Jews through a mediator, and that mediator is Moses, of course, he's referring to. And verse 20 is a very peculiar and difficult verse, but I think we can get the meaning of it.

It's in light of the previous verse. 20 says, Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. And what does that mean? What I think Paul is saying is that the gospel is something that God has personally initiated without mediation.

He came down in the form of Jesus and brought us the gospel. It was direct contact with Jesus. That is direct contact with God.

That the apostles had and that actually Paul had had also on the roads of Damascus. There is no mediation there. It was directly from God.

The law may have been from God, but it's passed down through mediators. The angels were there. Moses was there.

And hey, mediation suggests more than one party is involved. There are several levels to the detachment of God in the giving of the law to the people. You've got Moses and you've got the angels and you've got God somewhere up there.

A mediator, when you've got a mediator, you're not directly one on one. But God is one. And the God who has contacted us in the person of Jesus Christ has come directly to us.

And this is just it's a strange argument. But apparently his argument is that the gospel is superior to the law as a revelation from God, because it came directly from God without mediation. And the law came through mediation.

It was not as not given as directly, not that that would mean that the law wasn't a true word from God and having full authority from God. But Paul is simply pointing out that

when God gave the law, he didn't do it so directly as he did the gospel. And therefore, I should tell you something about his concern, his relative concern for the two.

The gospel is more important. God came down and gave that to his personal, not through mediators and angels and stuff. Verse 21 is the law then against the promises of God.

Certainly not. Now, why would that suggestion be made is the law against the promises of God? Well, because Paul has been saying that salvation has come as a result of the promise to Abraham and the promises were made to Abraham and to his seed and promise salvation is based upon promise, not on law. Well, then the law was that somehow a conflicting thing to the promises of God did somehow did the law provide a competing methodology for salvation to that of the promise? Not at all.

No, the law played very smoothly into the whole program of God, a program that featured salvation based on God's promise, not based on law, but the law had a role to play. And he tells he tries to illustrate what that role is. He says, for if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

But the scripture, meaning apparently the law in the scripture, has confined all understand that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ may be given to those who believe now the scripture, the law, the Old Testament scripture has made everybody sinners. It has not provided an alternative means of life. If there was a law given through which life could be had, then salvation would have been through the law.

But that laws don't don't confer life. And in particular, when the law is given to a lawbreaker, it certainly passes down condemnation, not life. But that was necessary.

That was a necessary part of preparation for faith in Christ. Until we had the conviction of sin, which comes through the law, we would not have any use for Christ. We would not know we had any need for a savior.

You don't need a lifeguard unless you're aware that you're drowning. And unless you know that you're guilty of great crimes, you don't need an advocate. You don't sense a need for mercy.

And so the scripture was given the law to confine everyone under sin. Everyone who reads it can know, Oh, I'm a sinner. I'm I'm lost.

I'm condemned. I'm a lawbreaker. This is so that the promise might be made to those who believe on which is in Christ.

But before faith came and by this he means faith in Christ, it can't mean just faith in general, because Abraham had faith and there wasn't a time before faith came. I mean, Abel had faith by faith. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice.

Hebrews 11 says he's not talking about before there was such a thing as faith, but rather before faith in Christ became the normative way in which people now relate to God. Back in the Old Testament times, before faith came, the Christian faith, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith, which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Now it uses two illustrations, and they speak of the period of time before we were Christians and before in history, before Christ came and more faith as a means of faith in Christ, as a means of salvation had been revealed in the gospel. In the Old Testament times, the law was used two ways, one to confine us, to keep us under guard, to keep us out of trouble. We were kept under guard by the law.

And secondly, as a tutor. Now the word tutor here, some would argue that the word tutor isn't the right translation. The Greek word is *pedagogos*, and we have an English word *pedagogue*, which generally means a teacher.

But *pedagogos* is the Greek word here, apparently a tutor. But many commentators have pointed out that this word in the Greek language spoke of, generally speaking, a slave of the household who was given charge of the safe conduct of a minor child, perhaps as they were on their way to school or anywhere, that they were sort of a guardian, sort of a bodyguard and maybe an older slave, who would accompany a minor child to make sure no harm would befall him and make sure he got where he was supposed to go. And so some would just say, companion.

You know, the law was our companion. But tutor is not bad either. It did teach us something.

It taught us of our need for Christ. And furthermore, of course, especially the ritualistic parts of the law taught us a great deal about Christ. Once understood, once their symbolic meaning is deciphered spiritually, we know a lot about Jesus from that.

The sacrificial system, the Passover, laws of clean and unclean, these things all have spiritual lessons in them, and it's given to teach us and to prepare us so that we might understand the issues, the spiritual issues of atonement and so forth, when Jesus came and we could put our faith in him. The law has a positive and a negative influence in the unsaved person. On the one hand, it restrains him from misbehavior, and on the other hand, it teaches him things that prepare him for receiving Christ.

So the law was not worthless, but both of these illustrations point out it was not permanent either. In verse 23, where he compares it to a guard keeping us in jail, he said we're kept under guard by the law until kept for the faith which would ever be revealed. The idea is that once faith had come, that's what we're being kept for.

We can be released now for that. And then in talking about a tutor being used, or a

pedagogue, a companion to come along to make sure we get where we're going, the law did that until we would come to be justified by faith. But he says in verse 25, that after faith has come, we're no longer under a tutor.

The law has a purpose, but not a permanent purpose, in the life of the unbeliever. In particular, of course, the Jewish law had this purpose in the life of Jews, because the Galatians, who were Gentiles, had not been under the law. But since the Judaizers were trying to put them under the law, Paul spoke to them to show what the law had done, what the law was for.

I mean, God had given the law to the Jews. Why did he give it to the Jews? So that they could be prepared for the coming of the Messiah, not so that they could impose it on Gentiles, or even continue to live under it themselves after becoming believers in Christ. Now verse 26, For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs, according to the promise.

Now, here he talks about us being in Christ. Up until this point, he's talked about the promise of Abraham and the promise made to Abraham and to Christ, and it wasn't through the law and so forth. But now, since we are in Christ, this promise is applied directly to us.

Christ was, or I should say, God was seeking sons. And when he promised that through Abraham many sons would come, he meant sons of God. The true sons of Abraham are nothing other than the sons of God, which is why Jesus said in the passage we looked at yesterday, or in the previous session, in John 8, Jesus said to the Jews, I know that you are descended from Abraham.

But they said, but if you were the children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham. He acknowledged they were physically descended, but they weren't truly the children of Abraham in the covenantal sense. They were not children of God.

And even the Jews themselves understood being children of Abraham as being the same thing as being children of God. Because in that discussion where Jesus was saying these things in John chapter 8, and I just point this out by appeal to the actual verses relevant, in John 8, 33, they answered him, We are Abraham's descendants. So they claimed Abraham is their father.

But a few verses later, in verse 41, John 8, 41 says, They said to him, We were not born of fornication. We have one father, God. And Jesus said in verse 42, If God were your father, you would love me, because I came from him.

Now, notice they said, Abraham is our father. God is our father. To them, that was basically two ways of saying the same thing.

Both of these statements came out of their opinion of themselves as Jews. We are Jews. That makes us children of Abraham.

That makes us children of God. And what Paul says is, No, there are people, and Jesus also said, No, you may be descended from Abraham, but you're not children of God. If God were your father, you'd love me, and you don't.

So you clearly aren't children of God, nor are you really children of Abraham, because if Abraham were your father, you'd do the works of Abraham. So to be a child of Abraham in the covenantal sense, to enjoy benefits of the Abrahamic covenant as the seed of Abraham, one must be a child of God. And Paul shifts the language from seed of Abraham to child of God in verse 26.

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Now, that phrase, in Christ Jesus, can connect that sentence more than one possible way. As it reads, it says, Through faith in Christ Jesus.

And we would understand that means by believing in Christ Jesus, which is, of course, an obvious meaning of the way it's phrased. However, the expression in Christ Jesus is a favorite expression of Paul's that has a life of its own. To be in Christ is to be organically a part of Christ.

You are in him like the organs in your body are in you. You share in his identity. You share in his merits.

You share in his destiny. You are in him. Whatever happens to him happens to you.

In Adam, you die. In Christ, you've been crucified, raised, and seated in Christ in heavenly places. In Christ is a Pauline concept that we need to get a little grip on here, or else we'll misunderstand his meaning in verse 29.

But some would say that the phrase in verse 26 could be restructured. It could. In Christ, you are all sons of God through faith.

Now, you can see that if you put in Christ Jesus at the beginning of the sentence, it slightly changes its meaning, but it could easily be so written. In Christ Jesus, you're all sons of God. In Christ Jesus, you're all the seed of Abraham.

In Christ Jesus, you are all the heirs of the promise. In Christ, you have this benefit. Now, it doesn't read that way in our translation, which simply says, you're all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

But because of the position of that last phrase, it could just mean through our faith in

Jesus, through our believing in Jesus. But that last phrase, in Christ Jesus, might be a stand-alone concept, so that in Christ Jesus, you are children of God. He is a son, therefore you share in his sonship by being in him.

If he is righteous, you share in his righteousness. If he is chosen, you share in his chosenness. If he is the son, then you share in his sonship, because you are in him.

And as such, you are all children of God through faith, like Abraham was. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Now, the assumption is that they know already they've been baptized into Christ, and he reasons that from that point, if that's the case, then you've put on Christ.

What does it mean to have been baptized into Christ? This is not identical to being baptized in the name of Christ, any more than being baptized in the Spirit would be identical to being baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized, the Greek word means to be dipped or immersed, to be submerged. And to say you were baptized into Christ means that you were submerged into Christ.

It might not even be a reference to water baptism here. It might be a reference to the fact that you as a person have been plunged into and submerged in and absorbed in the body of Christ. You are in Christ.

You've been baptized into him. Now, of course, water baptism may also be in his mind as a secondary thought that when you were water baptized, this symbolized the act of you actually being plunged into the body of Christ, into Jesus. But having been baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ.

And this language put on, Paul uses elsewhere, of putting on the new man and putting off the old man. The imagery is of what you do with clothing. Now, we don't have time to go off into an excursus as I would like to on the subject of the new man and the old man.

You first encounter this concept of the new man and old man in Paul's writings in Romans 6, 6, where it talks about our old man is crucified with Christ. And in both Ephesians and Colossians, there are references to putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Now, many people have understood the old man and the new man to be two natures in you.

As a Christian, you've got the old man in you and the new man in you. The Bible never uses the term that way. The Bible never speaks as if the old man is in you or the new man is in you.

It's rather you are in either the old man or the new man. It's like clothing. You don't eat clothing.

You put on clothing. You are surrounded by your clothing. You are contained in your

clothing.

When you put on clothing, you contain yourself within it. And he could say you have imbibed the new man. You've consumed the new man.

If you want to talk about something that's inside of you, it says you put it on. The old man and the new man are not something that is in you. It is something you are in.

You are either in the old man or you are in the new man. And I think if we would take the time to look at all the references, and there's only a few. It didn't take long, but it takes a long time to talk about them.

It doesn't take time to look at them, but to talk about them takes a long time, at least when I talk about them. Romans 6.6 and Ephesians 2.15 and Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3, that's the whole of it. That's the only places that Paul talks about old man, new man, any of that stuff.

But if you would correlate and look at all those passages and see what they have in common, I think you would find, I'll let you find it for yourself, and I'll tell you what I've found. You don't have to believe me until you find it for yourself. I believe you'll find that Paul speaks of the old man meaning Adam.

Adam, corporate body of Adam. We were in the old man. We were clothed in Adam.

We were surrounded in, we were enclosed in, we were part of the body of Adam. But now we're part of the body of Christ. We're now in Christ, the new man.

That Christ is the new man seems fairly unmistakable if you study Paul's use of the term new man in Ephesians, particularly. But this would seem to be, I would think, confirmed by Paul's language here in Galatians 3.27, because he doesn't say as many of you as were baptized in Christ have put on the new man. He says you've put on Christ.

But the expression is saying you've put on. And I think he's just saying the same thing in clearer terms without the imagery of new man, old man, and so forth. But I believe the old man is humanity in Adam.

The new man is humanity in Christ, the corporate body of Adam, the corporate body of Christ. We were in Adam at one time, but we've died to the old man. The old man is crucified.

And we are now in Christ, in the new man. We're to put on the behavior of the new man. We're supposed to live as those who are in a new humanity, in a new body, in a new identity.

We are now not identified in Adam. We're identified in Christ. And having put on Christ, I think, is an expression Paul uses here, identical with having put on the new man, who is

Christ.

And it means that we are now in Christ, just like you're in your clothing. You are in your clothing, physically speaking. Spiritually, you are in Christ.

And in Christ, once you're in there, it swallows up and cancels out all former identifying distinctions, whether it was Jew or Gentile. As Paul says in verse 28, there's neither Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free. Those are social distinctions, socioeconomic distinctions, or male or female.

This is, of course, gender distinctions. Now, these are racial, socioeconomic, and gender differences, are the very things by which people classify themselves when they are not in Christ. This has always been the case.

People think their race is better than another race, when in fact, no race is any better than any other. All are under sin, Jew or Gentile, black, yellow, red, white. They may be precious in their sight, but they're also a bunch of sinners in their sight, too.

And in Christ, all these differences, nothing exists of them anymore, in the sense that one is not better than another. One is not closer to God than another. One cannot look down his nose on another as somehow inferior in the sight of God.

In Christ, we all share one status, and that is in Christ. I used to be an American. I used to be a Anglo-Saxon Germanic, but I'm no longer that.

I mean, that would still describe my physical ancestry and also my earthly domicile, but it does not define who I am defined as. I am now in Christ, and in Christ it does make a difference whether a person is a Russian, a Chinese, a black, or American Indian, or white, or whatever one may be. If they're in Christ, they and I have exactly the same status.

There's no difference. There's no room for racism in Christianity. There's one reason why I've never been able to understand how some Christians can oppose interracial marriage on moral grounds.

Now, I can see people opposing interracial marriage on logistic grounds, perhaps. I mean, sometimes the cultures of different races can be very hard to meld into a single household. There are some races, in particular, when you mix them, the children might experience greater hardship socially.

They might experience persecution, and for logistic reasons, I can see how some people might not favor interracial marriage any more than they'd favor marriage between rich and poor, or whatever, just because of totally different lifestyles or something else or cultures. But on moral grounds, I don't see how any Christian could ever oppose interracial marriage. The Bible doesn't oppose it in any sense, and in Christ, all are one in

Christ.

Races are not a thing even to be considered in terms of association, moral association, and even joining. For a white person to marry a black person is not to be unequally yoked, because there's no unequalness there. Unequal yoking has to do with believer and unbeliever.

A friend of mine who's a Christian that some of you would know if I may, he works in a company that has quite a few Christians working there, and he fellowships with them at lunchtime, and he said he's discovered a lot of racism among the Christians there. And one of his co-workers, who's a Christian, found out that he didn't see anything wrong with black people. They said, well, how would you feel if your daughter married a black man? He's a white man, and his daughter's white.

How would you feel if your daughter married a black man? He said, well, how should I feel? I mean, it would not be an issue to me. I'd much rather that she married a Christian black man than a non-Christian white man. And the person he was talking to just couldn't relate with that.

And I can't relate with the person who can't relate with that, because I don't understand how any Christian who has read the Bible could ever feel that race is a defining trait among Christians. Now, if you're not a Christian, race is a defining trait, because the reason being that everyone is looking for a defining trait that defines them as part of a larger group than just themselves or their local or their little family, because it's a big world, and it's everyone against the world, and everyone wants to feel like they're not alone against the world. There's others like me somewhere who would, you know, I can see myself in solidarity with a larger group.

I don't feel quite so vulnerable. I don't feel quite so insignificant. I don't feel quite so alone in the world.

And one of the standard ways people have tried to identify themselves with some kind of solidarity is through their race, because race, I mean, whatever race you choose, there's a lot of them, you know, whether it's white, black, yellow, I mean, whatever your race is, you got a lot of company. And some people feel proud of their race. They feel like they need to look out for those of their race.

They need to, I mean, why do you think O.J. wasn't convicted? There's people who feel like they've got to be loyal to their race. Christians are mercifully delivered from such nonsense, at least they're supposed to. And others identify themselves by others of their own social class or of their gender. Of course, we're very aware of the feminist movement today where discrimination on the basis of gender has become a real focus.

In a sense, the feminist movement arose to decry discrimination against women as

women. And it has actually come to the point where there's reverse discrimination now, and so that a white male is not as likely to get a job if he's applying for a job where there's either a minority person or a female. Equally, or even maybe a little less qualified in some cases, the preferential treatment goes the other way now.

And there's been much written and much research done to show there's now reverse discrimination. But the problem is that there shouldn't be discrimination either one way or the other. It is true that men in some cultures have, in fact, oppressed women.

And it's true that in some cultures, some races have oppressed other races. It's also true that owners of slaves have oppressed slaves. And this has caused people's slavery or their gender or their race to become the defining issue with them.

You know, well, us slaves got to stick together, got to rise up as a whole. And, of course, we don't have slaves in our society, but sometimes, you know, there's revolutions in whole slave populations, not slaves in the classic sense, but in slave states, in states where there's dictatorial oppression. Sometimes the oppressed rise up en masse.

We've got to stand solidly together against the oppressors and so forth. I mean, human beings are always looking for a group to identify themselves in solidarity with so that they feel significant. And Paul says, whatever your group was before, it's over.

It's not relevant. It's a non-issue. If you still see yourself as having a greater loyalty to your gender or to your race or to your social class or to your nationality or to the hobbies you do, some people are defined by their hobbies.

Surfers, bikers, rockers, punk rockers, you know, rap people. I mean, you know, countercultures arise for people to find their solidarity in, too. But Paul says, none of that stuff matters.

In Christ, everyone's one. And none of those issues are relevant. Now, this verse 28 of Galatians 3 has sometimes been used to suggest by evangelical feminists, as they call themselves, the idea that it is wrongheaded for the church to restrict participation in certain church offices and certain functions to men only, as has traditionally been done.

And the scripture has traditionally been understood to restrict, for example, the office of an elder to men only. One would read Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2 and 3, which talks about him not allowing a woman to teach her authority over a man and gives qualifications for an elder, but he'd be a husband of one wife. It's quite clear that Paul seemed to restrict the office of elder to males.

And there are places where the Bible makes it very clear that the husband in a family is the head over the wife, and she's to submit to him and so forth. Now, those views have been understood in the church for centuries, but after the world began to question them in our society, the church, in its dutiful following of the world, as it so regularly and

predictably does, decided that maybe the world had a better idea than the church had, and they figured that maybe we could find in the Bible some support for the notion that a woman could be the head of the house over her husband if she were better qualified, or a woman should be a pastor in the church, or a woman should not be restricted from any activity from which men are restricted. Not restricted, I should say.

And one of the battle cries of this movement has been to find a verse which seems to suit the purpose of making this point, and that is Galatians 3.28. There is no male or female in Christ. And they say, therefore, it's obvious. If there's no male or female in Christ, then there are not differences of roles for men and women in the church.

And they would say that if you think Paul is restricting eldership to men only and not to women, then you're either misunderstanding what Paul is saying, or you have to realize Paul is just speaking to a certain cultural situation that doesn't prevail universally, and since that doesn't prevail here, we don't have to observe those rules. They would say that would make Paul inconsistent, because he said there's no male or female in Christ. I would point out to you that Paul also said there's no slave or free in Christ, but in about four or five of his epistles, he gave instructions to slaves and to slave owners.

Interestingly, he did not tell slave owners to release their slaves. He told them to be good to their slaves, to be kind to their slaves, to be just and fair with their slaves. He never told them to release them, as if owning slaves is somehow unchristian.

And he always told the slaves to be good slaves. He said, now, if you have opportunity to receive your freedom, use it, he said in 1 Corinthians 7, but otherwise, never mind, just be a good slave. And what Paul actually said in 1 Corinthians 7 is a man who is free is still Christ's slave, and a man who is a slave is still free in Christ.

So in a sense, being in Christ equalizes all that anyway. If socially, there's a difference in function. A slave owner who owns a slave, the slave has to submit to the owner, and the owner should treat him nicely too.

But there are some different instructions to slaves than there are to the slave owners. In Christ, they're all one, but in terms of their social function, they do have distinct roles. And the same is true in Paul's instructions to men and men.

Men have roles that are defined, and women have roles that are defined. Now, by the way, the role of women, which is frequently defined in Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testament, is, at least for the normal role for women, there are exceptions because God calls women to different things besides the norm. But the norm is that they marry, settle down, bear children, keep the home, raise their children, and so forth.

I mean, motherhood is laid out throughout Scripture as the normal calling of most women. And although there are some women called the singleness, as the Bible also

acknowledges, and therefore, I hope we don't make it inflexible, Paul doesn't, yet the norm for women is to be mothers. Now, I haven't seen a men's liberation movement rising up and saying, why should women alone be able to be mothers? After all, Paul said there's no male or female.

Why shouldn't we be allowed to bear children in our womb and nurse them at our breast? Well, obviously, no one is ever going to come up with a movement like that, not because it's not desirable to bear children in the womb or nurse them at the breast, but because it's impossible for a man to do that. And it's quite clear that though there's in some sense no difference between male and female, it'll always be the province of women, and not men, to bear and to nurse children. And since that is defined in Scripture as a principal role of theirs, it might also be that there's an abiding difference in the role of men, even though in Christ's sight there's no distinction in value.

We need to remember that a distinction in value does not have to exist where there's a distinction in function. Another way of putting it is that things that are equal are not necessarily interchangeable. God has designed men to do something, he's designed women to do something.

Now, some of the things men are designed to do, women can do pretty well. And some of the things women are designed to do, men can do fairly well, but that doesn't change anything. God designed one for one thing and one for another.

I mean, I can use a pocket knife to screw in a screw, but it doesn't work as well as a screwdriver does. Pocket knife is made for cutting things. A screwdriver is made for driving screws.

What's more important? Well, it depends what punch we're looking at. What's more valuable, a pocket knife or a screwdriver? Well, I'm not sure. You ask me what I have to do.

Do I have to screw a screw in? A screwdriver is more important, more valuable. Do I have to cut a rope? I'd rather use a knife. I might pay the same amount at the store for a screwdriver or for a knife, and they may be of the same value, but they're not interchangeable.

In some ways, they may be able to stand in for one another in an emergency, but that doesn't mean we should redefine their function to fit the non-standard emergency situation. I believe God can raise up women in roles of leadership. I believe women in special circumstances may have to take over the lead of their families if their husband is hospitalized or dead or mentally incapacitated.

There may be those unusual situations where God shows that He can use women to do what men would ordinarily do, and in some respects others. I mean, I had to be a mom

and a dad to my first daughter when I was a single dad for six years. I had to be Mr. Mom some of the time, but I don't consider that's what I'm designed to do, and I'm not going to redefine norms and say, since that worked out reasonably well, I think I'm going to redefine what men are supposed to do.

We have to acknowledge that in a fallen world, things will not always be as they should be, but we shouldn't change our opinion of what they should be. And to say there's no difference, there's no male or female, there's no slave or free, there's no Jew or Gentile, does not mean that these things are all interchangeable in function, that the slave can now tell his master what to do. But it does mean that in the sight of God, a person does not identify himself by his gender or by his race or by his social status.

We are all of the same identity. We're one in Christ. Now, he says in verse 28, and if you are Christ and by that mean you belong to Christ, you're part of him, part of his body, you put on Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to a promise.

Now, in one sense, Paul seems in verse 29 to contradict what he said in verse 16. He said that the promise of God's will in testament was that Abraham and his seed received the promises and the seed is not plural, it's singular, it's Christ, only Christ, not more than him, just him. And now Paul says, well, you guys, all of you Christians, you're the seed, you're the heirs.

Now, is Paul having trouble making up his mind whether the promise is to plural or singular? No, because he considers that we, plural, are one, singular, in Christ. In Christ we are one. The promise is to Christ, therefore the promise is to whoever is in Christ.

That happens to be a lot of us, but still that lot of us is just one, the body of Christ. The promises of God are to Christ. If you are in Christ, that makes you Abraham's seed because Christ is Abraham's seed.

You share in his seed-ship, his sonship, his heir-ship, meaning heirs of the promise. We are now heirs according to the promise. Now, I would like to ask anyone who thinks that the Jews today, that is, the unbelieving Jews, of course we know there are Jews who are Christians and it's not those that I'm focusing this comment about, but the Jews who reject Christ today, who consider themselves Abraham's seed merely on the basis of genetics, merely on the basis of biological descent.

I would like to know how those who would suggest that such Jews are still God's chosen people based on some promise made to Abraham and his seed can sustain their argument in the face of Paul's comments. Paul has left no doubt who Abraham's seed is, who the promises apply to, who are the heirs of the promise. Who are they? Christ and those who are in him, period.

And where does that leave any promises left over for those who are not in Christ,

regardless of their race, Jew or Gentile? They're not there. There are no promises left. The promises made to Abraham are made to those who are in Christ and not seeds, plural.

Only Christ, only Christ and those who are in him can claim any benefit from the promises made to Abraham. This leaves no one who can claim promises on racial grounds because there's no Jew or Gentile. Now that faith has come, now that Christ has come, in Christ is where it's all to be had, and there's no Jew, Gentile.

There's no distinction along those lines anymore of any relevance. And yet there are Christians who have tried in the past century and a half to revive such a relevance, although the church understood Paul's words, I think correctly, for hundreds of years, about 160 years ago or so, 165 years ago, there was a movement in the church that rose up that tried to reestablish the Jews' claim on the promises of Abraham, despite the fact the church had understood Paul's words quite plainly for centuries and understood differently. Let's go a little bit into chapter four.

We don't have much time, so we won't make any profession of plan to finish chapter four, but we do need to chip away at the material before us. And the opening verses of chapter four flow quite naturally without a break from what we've just read at the end of chapter three. Now, I say that the heir, notice he said in the previous verse, we are heirs according to the promise.

Now, I say that the heir, as long as he's a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is the master of all. That is, he may be in line to inherit it all, but while he's a child, he is incapable of managing the estate, and therefore he's not given the adult responsibilities. He instead is under babysitters.

He's under guardians, under pedagogues, even though he is in one sense the master of it all. He may be the only son of the owner of the estate, and there's no question but that he's going to own the estate. But while a child, he's not given rulership over it.

He's kept under guardians, it says in verse two. He's kept under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. What's that got to do with anything? Well, he tells us in verse three, even so, we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world, but when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father. Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Through Christ, of course, at the end of verse seven should be understood to mean in

Christ. I'm not saying it should be translated that way, but that's what he means from his earlier discussion. In Christ, you are an heir, because Christ is the heir.

Now, what's he talking about here? He talks about this state of the child heir. His father may own a great estate, and he may be directly in line to inherit it, but he's not any, as a child, he's in no better condition than the slaves who don't own any of it. He may, in fact, own it, but he doesn't get it until he's older, until he can be trusted, until there's a change in his life, which is, in the case of the illustration, maturity, when he reaches maturity.

Paul says, that's sort of how it was with God's people before Jesus came. Verse four tells about Jesus coming, but verse three tells about before Jesus came. That's when we were children.

Now, this can be applied to history in general, history before Christ, or it could be more individual, my history before Christ, before I knew Christ. In particular, though, I think that Paul is referring to the larger picture of history, pre-Christian history, because he breaks it up in verse four, but when the fullness of time came, Christ came. So, whatever was before that was before the birth of Christ.

He talks about Christ born of a woman, and so forth. So, he's not speaking just of individually, before I knew Christ. I was kept under guardians, and now something else.

Though, I think what he lays out is the historical big picture is true in the microcosm, too, of the individual life. What is true of mankind generally, historically, in the macrocosm, is true individually in our life, too. Before we knew Christ, we had to be governed by external religious controls, but having come to Christ, we now have the internal law controlling us and guiding us.

Now, one thing is very clear. Whether you're a Christian or not, you're not allowed to go around and raise hell. You're not allowed to go around and just run wild and do evil things.

That's not permitted to Christians or non-Christians, but Christians have the law written in their heart, and that prevents them from going out living in sin. Before that happens, they had to be prevented from doing that by external controls, the law imposed from without. Now, he used the illustration of human development from childhood to maturity, and when you think about it, what is the difference between childhood and maturity? With reference to the parents' recognition of maturity in a child, is it not the transfer from the need from external controls to having internal controls? I mean, when a child is born, he has no self-control.

He can't even control his bowels, his bladder, his temper, anything. A child has no control. He's an infant.

As he grows older, he learns gradually to control his muscles so that he can eventually walk, to control his speech organs so that he can learn to speak, to control his bowels and his bladder so that he can get out of diapers. Even a baby can't control his muscles. Have you ever seen a baby try to point to something and its fingers, you know, it's trying to point at something over there and its fingers go over that way? I've seen that so many times.

It's illustrated to me at this point on many occasions. I've watched babies try to point to something, and they're looking there and pointing over there. They don't know which way the muscle's going.

They don't have much control yet. That'll happen, though. They'll develop self-control.

But because they don't have self-control, they don't have internal controls, they need parents to control much of their activity, to make up the deficit for them. Even moral controls. The parents have to control the child morally.

They have to make sure the child doesn't run out into the street. The child doesn't have enough good sense to stay in a safe place. So, external controls are imposed on children.

But every parent knows and hopes that their child will develop internal controls. That the parent, when the child's 10 years old, won't have to be constantly watching to see if that child's running out in front of speeding cars. Or won't have to be so careful when the child's near a swimming pool or something like that.

They know that child can keep himself in a place of safety. Can do the right thing without the parent hovering over every moment and forcing them to do the right thing. Because they develop personal ability.

Internal controls. Now, a child cannot be trusted with much responsibility because of his lack of self-control. But maturity is measured in the independence of the child from those external controls.

And that independence doesn't just come with age, because some people never grow up. They grow up, but they don't ever mature. Maturity is seen in developing the ability to do what is right without those controls imposed from outside.

You develop character. You develop principles. You develop conscience.

You develop your own system of values that you don't need someone to tell you what to do. You'll do it by yourself because of your own values and your own character. That is what maturity is measured in.

And Paul uses that as an illustration of humanity in general. Before Christ came to build internal controls in the believer by writing the law in our hearts, humanity was like a

child who had no such internal controls and required external controls to be kept under guardians and stewards and schoolmasters. Obviously, he's referring to the law.

He had said that back in verse 24, chapter three. Therefore, the law is our tutor to bring us to Christ. Once we come to Christ, we don't need the tutor.

So also, we were like children before that. Before Christ came, the world needed those external controls. So the law was there to control them.

But now that Christ has come, well, something different has happened. Something has happened internal. And that's what he's talking about in verse four.

When the fullness of time had come, which in the illustration corresponds to the time that the father recognizes the child as mature enough to come into the inheritance and to control the estate. Now, seeing the humanity collectively as a child coming of an age. Now that the fullness of time had come, that the father Christ came, sent forth by his father, born of a woman, born under the law, because he came to bring it into the law.

The law was still in force when he arrived and he was under its demands. Therefore, he was circumcised and he was dedicated in the temple. All the things the law said he had to his parents had to do toward him.

He was born under the law, born of woman. The fact that he was born of woman may or may not be significant. Some people try to be a reference to the virgin birth, a doctrine that Paul nowhere else makes a reference to.

We know that he was, of course, aware of the doctrine of the virgin birth. Since Luke traveled so closely together, it's impossible that he would not have read Luke's gospel, which describes the fact of the virgin birth. But Paul never mentions the virgin birth directly in any of his writings, unless it's here.

And some people try to make this out to be a reference to the virgin birth. And it might be born of woman rather than of man. But at the same time, born of woman doesn't necessarily speak of virgin birth.

Jesus said, among all those born of woman, there's not arisen one greater than John the Baptist. Born of woman just speaks of a human being. It doesn't necessarily refer especially to the absence of a human father.

It is possible, though, that Paul chooses the phrase to accentuate the fulfillment of the promise made in the Garden of Eden. To the woman, God said, you know, I will make enmity between you and the serpent, between your seed and his seed, and he shall bruise your seed's heel, and your seed shall crush his head. The seed of the woman could be in what's in Paul's mind here.

But that's not, if it is sort of a subtle innuendo, it has nothing to do with his basic argument. He's just saying that Jesus came into the world as a human being. And not only a human being, a Jew under the law.

He came right into the midst of this situation that had to be changed. He did that, verse 5 says, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Now, here the adoption of sons, the word adoption to us in our modern usage in English, speaks of taking somebody else's child and bringing them into our family through some legal transaction.

They're not a natural born child, they're an adopted child. And this is also the meaning of the word adoption generally in the Roman and Jewish societies. And therefore, most commentators will say that when Paul talks about us being adopted or receiving adoption as sons, that Paul is referring to our being adopted out of the devil's family, or out of Adam's crew into the family of God.

Now, this is possible, but there are some things I've had problems with. For one thing, the Bible indicates we're birth sons of God. We're birth children of his.

We've been born again unto a lively hope. God has begotten us again. It says in 1 Peter 1.3, in many places, talk about us being born of God.

In John chapter 1 and verse 12, I think it is, or 13, it says of those who are the children of God, John 1.13, it says who were born not of blood nor the will of man and so forth, but of God. Christians are born of God. So why would Paul say we're adopted by God, which seems to almost make our relation with God only one step more remote than that of a birth child? I mean, it's a wonderful thing.

It's the grace of God that he would take a child of hell like me and adopt me as a son into his family to become the sons of God. Right. But right.

Those who receive them, they became sons of God, which we could interpret in terms of adoption in John 1.12. But the very next verse says they were born of God. So becoming a child of God is not necessarily through adoption, but through birth, rebirth. Now, let me just say that both metaphors can work, obviously, in one sense, it's true to say we've been born of God.

In another sense, you could use the metaphor of adoption, and maybe that's what is intended here. I've read one commentator, Jason L. Baxter, who said that the word adoption here does not mean what we mean by adoption. The Greek word is actually *hoiosthesia*, which comes from two Greek words, *hoios*, which means son, adult son, and *thesia*, which has to do with placement.

Hoiosthesia is the normal word translated adoption in the Bible, and it means placement as a son, which obviously could mean something very like what we mean by the term

adoption. You take somebody else's son, you place them in your family as your son. That could be placement as a son.

However, what Baxter said, and I can't confirm this from many other sources, so he may be wrong, but he seems right from the context of this passage. He says that the term does not refer to taking someone else's child and making them your little child, but taking your own child, who has up until this point been a minor, and like Paul said, no better than a slave in the family, and placing them in the role of an adult son with full responsibility of an heir. And that the Romans had a custom like this is undeniable.

Many commentators mention it, although they didn't apparently call it *hoiosthesia*. They had another name for it. But the Romans did have this as a custom, and that was that in a family, a child had no rights until he reached a certain age that the father determined, where he was recognized by the father as mature, and there'd actually be a ceremony there, almost like the Jews with their bar mitzvah for their 13-year-old sons.

The Romans had their own counterpart to this, they had another name for it. But where the child was no longer regarded as a child, but a full responsible heir with adult responsibility. And Baxter suggested that when Paul used the word *hoiosthesia* here, he's actually referring to something more like that Jewish custom of bar mitzvah or the Roman custom I just described, because it fits his argument better.

He says, we were like children before Christ came. We were heirs, but no better than slaves. We had no control.

We were kept under the law. We were kept under guardians and tutors. But when Christ came, we come to full maturity of sons.

We come into our own. We become full heirs. We receive adoption, *hoiosthesia*, placement as sons, which might or might not have the normal meaning of adoption that we usually think of.

It may also have, or may instead in Paul's special usage, refer to placing a young son into a position of recognized mature responsibility, which was a custom among both Romans and Jews, but it was not called *hoiosthesia* as near as I can tell. But anyway, Paul is certainly describing that phenomenon. It would be strange for him here to add to it the concept of adoption as we usually think of it, because you've been talking about us as children, even before Jesus came to our lives.

Children who were heirs, but no better than slaves. But now that Christ has come, now we are full heirs. Now we're like adult children.

Now we have the inheritance. And so I can't be sure. The commentators are not with me generally on this.

Only one or two have I ever encountered that would see it the way I'm talking about. Most of them with one voice see adoption in the normal sense that we usually think of it. But anyway, we won't wrestle with that right now.

But we now have the status of sons, not the status of slaves. He makes that very clear. In verse six, he says, Because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts.

You have internal control because the spirit is in your heart. The spirit himself motivates you to cry out, Abba, Father, which is, of course, to say that the Holy Spirit gives you the awareness of your sonship so that you can speak intimately with God as a child to a father. The law never did this.

Those who are under the law never could feel quite like God was, you know, unconditionally their parent. They had to keep the law as far as they knew, and the failure to do so would endanger their relationship. My children, even if they disobey me, they can still call me daddy.

They can still call me father. Their relationship to me is based on something more organic than the question of their obedience to rules I give them. And by the way, other children who are not mature might obey all my rules, but that doesn't make them my children.

Obedience to commands doesn't create relationship. The relationship exists organically. And our relationship to God is not based on keeping laws.

It's based on an organic reality that the spirit of sonship, the spirit of adoption, as Paul calls it in Romans eight, the spirit of Christ is in us, in our hearts. And this changes us, as Paul will go on to say later in chapter five, how that the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, self-control. These things are the things that the spirit in our hearts produces.

Right now, all he's saying is that the spirit in our hearts causes us to cry out, I'm a father, which is just another way of saying that it confirms to us our relationship of sonship to God, that we can speak in this familiar way to God as a father. Not because of some doctrinal conviction that God is our father, but because there's a spiritual awareness alive within us through the spirit of his son in us that opens up our understanding that we are children of God. How Paul puts it over in Romans eight, really dashing against the clock here.

We're going to quit in about a minute, but in Romans chapter eight, there's identity of thought here in verse 15, Romans 8, 15, Paul says, for you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out of a father and the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children that heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ. Now, this is the same idea

expanded in the book of Romans that we find here in Romans three, or Galatians four, excuse me.

And that is that because the spirit of adoption, the spirit of sonship has come in us. We have the now internal link with God as children. It's not based on some external performance thing.

It's an organic reality, a spiritual reality. And the spirit himself bears witness with our spirits that we're children of God. Our innate awareness of sonship with God doesn't come from someone teaching us the doctrine, but comes from the reality of the spirit bearing witness within us.

And as sons, we know that sonship carries with it an inheritance. That's what he's saying. So we're no longer a slave.

Galatians four, seven says, but a son. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. So this really just is the closing down of the discussion in chapter three, that the children and heirs of the promise to Abraham are those who are in Christ, not those who are the seeds, plural of Abraham, but those who are in Christ, the seed.