

## Galatians 3:23-29

<sup>23</sup>But before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. <sup>24</sup>So the law was our chaperone until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a chaperone.

<sup>26</sup>In fact, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one and the same in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.

## Identity

### I.

He had one primary function. He was designated by the head of the household to make sure the young man he was chaperoning made it to school and back without getting into too much trouble. Of course, as a servant and not a family member, his authority went only so far. He was not an instructor; he was not a disciplinarian; he was just a chaperone.

“The law was our chaperone” (Galatians 3:24, EHV). Paul was thinking of exactly this status of a servant designated as the chaperone to bring a schoolboy to and from his classes when he wrote these words.

We talked about what the law does last week. God says: “You shall be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2, EHV). God laid out what being holy involves, summarized in the Ten Commandments. Jesus summarized all the commandments with two over-arching themes: love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

The commands of God are our chaperone. Your identity is all wrapped up in the idea that you *need* a chaperone. God has made these demands about what you are to do and not to do, and someone needs to stand over you, watching you. But just because a chaperone is there telling us what the law says doesn't mean we are able to do or be what the law requires.

Young schoolboys often resented their chaperones. Whether he had any authority to discipline the boy or not, the chaperone would surely tell the boy's father what was going on as the boy went to and from school. The chaperone kept a boy in custody, however loosely, of his father's wishes.

“Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed” (Galatians 3:23, EHV). The law of God acts like a chaperone to the natural self. Just like a schoolboy would have felt imprisoned by the close proximity of the chaperone watching his every move, so the natural self chafes under the watchful eye of God's law. It imprisons us.

### II.

Even you, as a believer, know about God's Moral Law. You have heard that it is God's will for all people of all time, and that he expects us to follow it. Just like a Greek schoolboy who knew the chaperone was watching, you chafe at the thought of God's Moral Law telling you what you can and cannot do—what you *should* and *should not* do.

When you are told that you cannot do what you want, it makes you angry. Last week we looked at the statistics from the Barna Group that said that 55% of Americans believe that doing good works is going to get you closer to God or earn heaven for you. Doing good works means following God's Moral Law. “Be perfect” only works if *all* your works are good.

Paul says before today's lesson: "In fact, those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law'" (Galatians 3:10, EHV).

The law is a chaperone, not a schoolmaster, leading us to Christ. We keep doing things the chaperone is required to report to our Heavenly Father. The chaperone has to keep saying: these children of yours have *not* been perfect on the way to and fro in the world. We would love to try and ditch the chaperone; duck around some corner and use our superior skill and speed to get away so that our poor report would not get back to the Heavenly Father. But alas, we are not skilled enough to evade the chaperone of God's Law; it leads us only to despair. It reveals your identity—sinner. When we understand that the law demands of us what we cannot do, we realize our helplessness and our need for a Savior.

### III.

"But now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a chaperone" (Galatians 3:25, EHV). A few minutes ago we sang in the Hymn of the Day: "Faith is a living pow'r from heav'n That grasps the promise God has giv'n, A trust that cannot be o'erthrown, Fixed heartily on Christ alone. Faith finds in Christ whate'er we need To save or strengthen us indeed, Receiving grace from heaven's throne And humbly sharing cross and crown" (CW 404 vv 1&2 — Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven).

God's promise supercedes the Law. What God has done for us in Christ Jesus points the accusing finger of the chaperone away from us and at our Savior, instead. Jesus took the punishment we deserved. Before today's lesson Paul said: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:10, EHV).

The curse of the law is gone. The chaperone pointing an accusing finger has been dealt with. Jesus took the curse and the punishment for you and me. The law requires death—eternal death—as the just punishment for sin. Jesus died on the cross to pay that penalty. Because he had committed no sins against the law, he was the perfect and righteous sacrifice. As true God and true Man, Jesus paid the price of hell when God abandoned him on the cross. Because he is both truly God and truly human, his sacrifice was sufficient for *all* people, and because of that same dual nature, Jesus rose again from the dead, taking his life back up again.

"Indeed, as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27, EHV). The Old Testament priesthood wore a white robe that signified they were set apart by God to be holy in their service to him. At baptisms today, many families choose to have their child wear a white baptismal gown. It signifies being clothed with Christ at baptism. It signifies that by faith you have the very righteousness Christ won on the cross for all people—the perfection of Jesus is made your own.

"In fact, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26, EHV). Paul chooses his words deliberately. Not all children were able to inherit in the times in which he lived; only boys could—only sons. Paul calls *all* believers sons, who are able to inherit something precious from their Father.

Just so there could be no misunderstanding of his choice of words, Paul went on. "There is not Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one and the same in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, EHV). As far as your salvation goes, as far as the robe of righteousness that is yours because of your faith in Christ Jesus, there is absolutely no difference in your worth to the Heavenly Father. No matter what your station in life might be, you are

precious in God's sight.

“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29, EHV). Now Paul has come to the reason he specifically chose the word “son.” You *are* an heir of eternal life because you wear the righteousness of Christ. God made a promise to Abraham that he would be the heir of the world (Romans 4:13). That promise was based on Abraham's descendant—Jesus. He is God's Son and the heir of everything. Faith brings with it a promise—the promise that we are heirs with Christ of everything God can give. Our sins became Jesus' sins; his glory becomes ours.

#### IV.

Your identity has been changed. No longer are you a sinner who has been held in custody under the law, you are one who has been set free from the law by faith in Christ Jesus. You are not a snotty little brat that needs a chaperone to keep you in line, you are the heir.

Live like an heir who understands the fortune you are receiving. *Everything* is yours by faith in Christ Jesus. Riches and wealth far beyond anything others can imagine awaits you when you receive your inheritance. You will be with the Heavenly Father forever. You will be with Jesus, beside his throne.

Embrace your identity. Live as one who is clothed with Christ. Amen.