



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 3: 23-29

Galatians

“Why the Law”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this morning is Galatians chapter 3, and we're going to look at verses 23 through 29. We'll finish up the chapter. In verse 19, Paul wrote, "Why the Law then?" He writes in verse 23, "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now, that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." May the Lord bless this reading of His Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for the time we have to be here this morning. We're gathered here with believers in Jesus Christ and having the opportunity to worship together, to study together and to do what we're doing at this moment praying together. We know that we can do that. We can come boldly to the throne of grace because of Your grace, because by grace, we have, through faith, been clothed in the righteousness of Christ so that we who have believed in Him, as Paul tells us in our text, are sons and heirs. We are sons of God. We are sons by adoption.

We have been brought into Your family, and so when You see us, You see Christ. You see His righteousness that clothes us like a great white robe and makes us acceptable to You, and so we can come before You, and we can pray for one another,

and we can intercede for ourselves and for friends and give praise to You. And we can have the great joy of knowing that we do have an inheritance that's eternal and will not fade away. It will go on for all eternity and be new every moment and be greater than we can ever comprehend at any moment and will always be expanding and great.

And we praise You for that because it's all of Your grace. So we thank You, Father, for what we have in Christ. We pray that, as we study these things this morning, You would illuminate our minds and give us a great appreciation for who we are in Christ for what he's done for us with Your grace. Guide us and direct us. We thank You that we can come before You and pray, as I have said, and pray not only for our spiritual needs, which we do. We ask for Your blessing upon us in this hour and, again, this evening when we come back to this place and remember our Lord, but that we also pray, Lord, for our material needs as well. They are great.

Pray for those who are sick. Pray that You give healing. Pray that You would bless those who are discouraged, weighed down by the cares of life, those who are going through difficulties at work or at home. We pray that You give them encouragement, help them to remember the great promises that we have in Your Word and know that You're faithful to Your promises and that You will bless in the midst of difficulty. We pray for those that are grieving. We thank You for the life that's eternal that, even though we leave this world physically, we are with You spiritually. And the day will come when these bodies will be raised from the dead, and there will be a glorious kingdom and a new heaven and a new earth. That's our hope.

That's what we are heirs of, by grace, and we thank You for that. I pray that You will help us to keep that in mind and ever before us and keep life in perspective in light of the inheritance that we have. So, Father, bless in these ways, bless spiritually, bless materially. And we pray for ourselves that You would prepare our hearts for a time of study together. May it not only be a time of learning, pray that it will be that, but it will also be a time of worship. Help us to understand the things that we will study, understand our great privilege and position in Christ; and as a result of that, with joy, worship You in our hearts. We look to You to bless us now. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] There are some big questions in life that beg for answers, questions like why is there something rather than nothing? And where did I come from? And where am I going? One of the big questions in the Bible is why the law? And for those concerned about where they're going and about eternal life, that is a question that begs for an answer. Paul has been giving the answer to this question in the second half of Galatians 3. He has stated that the law adds nothing to a person's salvation. We are saved through faith alone. He proved that from Scripture and from the Galatians' own experience as he reminded them they received the Holy Spirit when they believed apart from the law.

But if that is so, why the law then? If it doesn't save, why did God give it? Paul answers that by explaining that it was given to expose sin and show the need of salvation. In verse 22, he said, "It was like a judge that has shut up all men under sin." The law is not a liberator. It is an incarcerator. It condemns and confines and gives no escape to the guilty. To emphasize this work of the law, Paul changes the picture slightly in verse 23. Instead of describing the law as our judge, he describes it as our jailer. "But before faith came," he writes – meaning, before faith, specifically, in Jesus Christ – "before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law."

Men, of course, have always been saved through faith. Abraham is the great example of that. He's the example that Paul has appealed to throughout this book. He appeals to Abraham's faith in the book of Romans to show that men have always been saved through faith. Paul is not speaking here of faith in general. He is speaking of faith in Christ. He is speaking of that particular faith in Christ following the incarnation. Before and the time of the Old Testament, men had the hope of a redeemer to come, and they believed in a deliverer to come, but it was vague.

It wasn't a person they believed in specifically as in the sense that he has been revealed in the gospels. So before that, before faith was centered in Christ, before Christian faith, during the Old Testament era, in the age of the law, "we were kept in custody under the law," Paul says. The law surrounded men with obligations they cannot keep, like guards that surround a prison cell. The result was the law gave men a sense of hopeless imprisonment. In fact, this expression "kept in custody" was used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:32 of his own experience when he was being hunted down in the city of Damascus. Paul was saved on the Damascus Road on his way to that city.

He entered the city, was there for a short time, and then went to Arabia for some three years, and then returned to Damascus, where he had a ministry and went from synagogue going to synagogue preaching the truth. Then as is often the case, the results caused a great deal of hostility, and in this case, hostility from the highest levels of government because he writes in 2 Corinthians 11 that "Aretas, the king, was guarding the city." He was seeking Paul, seeking to arrest him and to obtain Paul, to capture him. He posted guards all around to prevent escape.

Paul escaped only by being lowered in a basket through a window in the wall. But the law has no windows or doors for escape from its condemnation. It confines everyone within the walls of its rules and regulations. It exposes our failure and guilt, and there is no way out, at least no way out from within the law. It doesn't provide an escape. There's an illustration of this from a story by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Pit and the Pendulum*. Some of you may have read it when you were young. It is the story of a condemned man, a victim of the Spanish inquisition who wakes up after his trial in a dark dungeon.

There's no light. He can't see anything. To get his bearings, he stretches out his hands and finds the wall and begins groping along it. All he feels, though, is wall. There's no opening. There's no way out, just the hard damp wall. As he realizes the hopelessness of his situation, that there's no escape and he's doomed. Terror overtakes. That's the function of the law. It closes off all escapes to life and gives a sense of hopelessness by showing people their guilt, by giving them no solution. They are all these laws, all these rules, and as one tries to keep them and meets with failure every time, he or she realizes that there's no way out. And that leads to despair.

But it is that despair that leads to hope that alerts men to their desperate condition, their need of salvation and causes them to desire deliverance. That's how Paul explains it: "Men were being shut up under the law to the faith which was later to be revealed." In other words, the function of the law was not to save people. It was to prepare people, specifically, to prepare Israel for the coming of Christ, the coming of the Messiah by giving the people a longing for the Savior. So while the law was like a stern jailer, it was really a good friend after all. It shut men up to faith by keeping them from escaping to a false freedom of self-righteousness. That was the function of the law historically.

That was how it worked in Israel. But it also has the function in a personal way. The law functions that way in the personal experience of the believer who abandons all attempts to establish a righteous standing of his or her own and looks to Christ. John Bunyan illustrated this at the beginning of *Pilgrim's Progress*. If you're familiar with the story, I know Christian was living in the city of destruction in despair because of a heavy burden on his back. It's the burden of sin and he is there in his house in despair and with a great foreboding. When a man named Evangelist points him to a small gate, in the distance where he would be delivered of his burden, Christian flees the city and he runs toward the gate, is full of joy and hope, but he gets sidetracked along the way.

He meets Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who tells him that there's a much easier way to get rid of this burden on his back. He sends him to Mr. Legality in the town of Morality. Mr. Legality's house was by a hill called Sinai. As Christian walked by it, the burden on his back got heavier, and the hill flashed fire so that Christian quaked with fear. It was then that Evangelist found him and got him back on the path to the little gate where he came to a cross. And when he saw the cross, the burden falls from his back, tumbles down the hill into a sepulchre and disappears forever.

The law threatens death and strikes fear. It doesn't give relief from guilt. But in that way, the law acts as a friend because it turns away from works and from a sense of self-righteousness, which is false security and directs us to Christ. Now, Paul develops this idea further in verse 24 where he changes the picture again from the law as a judge and the law as a jailer to that of a tutor. He writes, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." The word "tutor" is translated from the Greek word, *paidagogos*, and we get our word "pedagogue" from it.

For us, a pedagogue is a teacher. That idea is reflected in the word "tutor" and in the translation of the King James version, "schoolmaster." But for the Romans, a pedagogue wasn't strictly a teacher, wasn't primarily a teacher, but a guardian or a disciplinarian who was often a slave. So the word often meant a "slave guardian." In many wealthy Roman and Greek households, a slave would be appointed to watch over a child in the family. And from the time the child left the care of his nurse until he reached maturity, usually from the ages of 6 to 16, the slave would accompany the boy wherever he went and teach him good manners.

He would take him to school and he would wait for him there in a special room for the tutors, or sometimes he would sit in the classroom with him. Then he would take the child home and test his memory by making him recite the lesson that he had learned. He would make sure that he ate all of his dinner. He made sure that he went to bed on time and got up usually earlier than he wanted to. Wherever the child went, the pedagogue went to protect the child and to discipline the child. Some ancient drawings depict the pedagogue with a rod or a cane in his hand. He was like a babysitter who governed and restricted the conduct of the child with scoldings and whippings.

It was not an easy relationship. And sometimes children chafed under it to the point where they would rebel and beat up the pedagogue. But it wasn't a permanent relationship. When the boy became a man, he gained his freedom, and his relationship to the pedagogue changed completely. The pedagogue, the tutor, might have given the boy a whipping the day before, but not the day that he came of age. The boy was now the master and the pedagogue just a slave with no authority. Now, Paul found in that Greek and Roman institution an illustration of the law.

God gave it to Israel as a temporary system, like a slave, a pedagogue, or a tutor, to supervise the life of the people, the life of his children. Its rules and regulations controlled life. The law doesn't give life. It restricted life, and by its punishments, it reminded people of their sin and guilt. It was hard. Paul and Peter both called the law a yoke. It was like a heavy yoke, a heavy burden around people's necks that causes them to be dissatisfied with their lives because they saw that there's something lacking, that they're not measuring up, that they cannot meet the standard.

An example of that is found in the rich young ruler which is recorded in the gospels. Matthew 19 is one example, one of the passages where it's found. He was a man, as you remember, who misunderstood the law, didn't understand its function. He thought that he could gain an acceptable righteousness by observing it, and he even thought that he had kept it. "Yes, from my youth up," he says. He didn't understand the law, but still even with that misunderstanding, the law had done its work in his life because he wasn't satisfied. He was a man who evidently, if we can take him at his word, lives strictly by the law.

And yet after all of that, after seeking to be obedient to the law, he wasn't satisfied; and that's the reason that he came to Christ because he sensed that

something was missing. Well, that's what the law did. It left a person unsatisfying, sensing that something was missing, longing for that something that was missing, and longing for freedom from this burden of not being able to meet the standard. And yet, it could not give that freedom. It could not give deliverance from the burden. There was no escape from that in the law, not until Christ came. And then historically, after some 1400, 1500 years of the law's reign, it ended as a system governing the people of God and personally for the believer.

Its condemnation ends at the moment of faith in Christ. That law has served its purpose to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith. As Luther said, "With its whippings, the law draws us to Christ." Then the whippings stop, the yoke is removed, the law's control ends. That's what Paul says in verse 25, "We are no longer under a tutor." Now, Paul is saying more than everyone who believes in Christ is delivered from the condemnation of the law. That is true and that is important, but that's not Paul's meaning here. He is explaining the function of the law of Moses in history and is stressing that since Christ has come, the reign of the law has ended for those who believe.

The law was given as a temporary measure. Just as the pedagogue was appointed for a limited period of time in a child's life, so too, the law was appointed for a limited period of time. The age of the law of Moses was a parenthetical age in history that lasted for about, as I said, 1400 to 1500 years, from Moses to Christ. It was for the purpose of preparing Israel for the Lord's coming. It was given to Israel. It wasn't given to the nations. It was given so that Israel would be prepared for this great coming of the Messiah. Now that he has come, the law has served its purpose, and its rules are no longer binding on the people of God. It still has authority as God's Word.

It is still God's inherent Word. And we learn from it and profit from the study of it just as a Roman boy may have had a friendship with his tutor after he had become a man and even gained wisdom from him and sought counsel from him. But even so, the boy was still a man, and he was not under the control of that tutor any longer. That pedagogue had no authority to whip him or keep him in line. And the law of Moses, while it's still profitable, is not the rule of life for the church, as it was for Israel, believers have come of age spiritually and are no longer under the control of the tutor.

As Paul explains in verse 26 with the coming of faith in Christ, meaning, this new age of Christian faith, following the incarnation and the Lord's resurrection, believers became sons. That new status marks a significant change. It is like the change that occurs in the life of a Roman boy when he became of age and became a man. He was not just a child in the house any longer. Now, he was more than that. He was a son with all of the legal rights and privileges that sonship carried in a Roman household in Roman society. It was a great day in the life of a young man. The change brought new responsibilities, but with those new responsibilities, there was new freedom.

It was a moment that a Roman child longed for, looked forward to. That is what happens spiritually to the believer in Christ. We become sons of God. We become sons in God's household with all of the privileges and the responsibilities that are attached to that. So to put oneself under the law, which by the way, was not given to the Galatians. It was given to Israel. But to go back to that, to seek that for themselves, was not an advance spiritually. That's what they were being told. These Jewish teachers had come to Galatia to tell them it's good that you believe in Christ. That's the first step, but you need to take the second step. You need to advance. You need to come under the law.

But what Paul is saying is that's not an advancement; that's a regression. That's not stepping forward. That's stepping back. It's like an adult putting himself back under the care of his former babysitter. It's like a man who has been freed from prison returning there to live in his old cell. No wonder Paul called them foolish Galatians. They were like adults who wanted to be children again, who wanted to give up their privileges and return to the nursery. Today the people of God are sons. All of us are. That's what Paul says, "For you are all Sons" – Jews, gentiles.

All who have believed in Jesus Christ are sons of God, sons and daughters of God. And we don't obtain that privilege through circumcision or law keeping. "It's through faith in Christ Jesus," Paul says. Because faith joins us to Christ, who is the eternal Son of God. That union with Christ is the basis of our sonship because when we believed in Him, we were incorporated into Him, and we began to participate in His life. This idea of being in Christ, which is an important idea and a phrase that we find all through Paul's writings, is an idea that finds an analogy in Jesus teaching

about the vine and the branches in John 15:1-10. Just as a branch draws life from the vine that it is in and produces fruit, so too, we draw life from Christ by being in Him.

Just as the sap from the trunk of the tree goes into the branches and produces the bud and the flower and the fruit, so too, the life of Christ is in us through the Holy Spirit and transforms our life, makes us like Christ. We become like Him and produce the fruit of the spirit, which Paul will speak of later. That doesn't happen by rules and regulations from without, as though we have the ability to conform to them. We don't, in and of ourselves. We need something from within. We need life changing life that works within, as that does within a tree to produce the fruit and the life that we seek. Well, that is through Christ. It is not through the law.

Two things happen to the believer at the moment of faith: justification and incorporation. We were justified by faith and incorporated into Christ, simultaneously and instantaneously. Because we have been justified, we are legally acceptable to God, who then places us in Christ, and adopts into his family as sons and all of that in a moment as a result of faith. Paul explains this further in verse 27 by describing the believer's union with Christ as baptism, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." It's a way of describing the believer's identification with Christ.

Paul is not referring to water baptism here as if to suggest that he was replacing the right of circumcision with the ordinance of baptism. That would undermine the entire argument of the book. No one is saved by water baptism anymore than he or she is saved by physical circumcision. The emphasis here is on faith, which is mentioned five times in this paragraph. Baptism is mentioned only once and that's here. And it's not baptism into water. It is baptism into Christ, which is a way of describing our union with him through faith. It is a way of describing our identification with Christ.

Now, there's an example of this in 1 Corinthians 10:2, where Paul describes Israel's exodus from Egypt with the same wording that he uses here. He writes, "Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Now, that's a text that I'm sure most of you have read at some time or another, and it's one of those texts that you can kind of read and just breeze by and not really think about all the words and phrases that are used. But as you spend some time with that verse and you ponder it, you might wonder,

"Well, what does it mean to be baptized into Moses?" Paul wasn't referring to water baptism.

He didn't mean that all the people got wet in the sea with Moses. They didn't. They all passed through on dry land. He means that when the nation left Egypt, the people became permanently identified with Moses. Being baptized into Moses means being joined to him, being identified with him. Before the exodus, the Israelites were under the tyranny of Pharaoh. They were slaves of Pharaoh. They had to obey him. At the exodus, Moses became their leader. They left Egypt behind. They left Pharaoh behind. He had no control, no authority over them, and they were permanently under the authority of Moses.

Here in Galatians 3, Paul is saying the same thing. He is saying that all who have believed in Christ have left the old life and they have been joined to Him. They are united with Him. They are under His authority. "And everyone who has been baptized into Christ," he says, "has been clothed with Christ." It is a statement that may have been taken from the Hebrew tradition of changing clothes to represent an inward spiritual change so that when a spiritual change occurred in a Hebrew, he would change clothes, put clean clothes on to signify that an inner spiritual change had occurred. And it's very similar to what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 61:10, "He has clothed me with garments of salvation. He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness."

Later in chapter 64, Isaiah describes, "All our righteous deeds" - meaning, all of our attempts to keep the law, all of our attempts at goodness and obedience, all of that – he describes as being "like a filthy garment." We cannot produce righteousness that is acceptable to God. We need an alien righteousness. All of our attempts to produce righteous deeds, to clothes ourselves with righteousness, to be acceptable to God, Isaiah says, is filthy rags. It's filthy garments. What we need is to be clothed with the garments of salvation. We need to be wrapped in the robe of righteousness.

Long before our Lord came in his incarnation, before Paul wrote the book of Galatians, long before that, the prophets were speaking about the need of an alien righteousness, a righteousness that we don't produce, but that's a gift from God. We need a change of spiritual clothing, so to speak. We need to be clothed in a righteousness that is not our own. That is what Paul is describing here, the righteousness of Christ that we receive through faith in Him. But Paul may have been

thinking not of a Hebrew custom, but rather of a Roman custom with this change that he's describing in which the Galatians, as a Greco-Roman people, would have known and the custom that fits well with the teaching that he has given already on the pedagogue, the tutor.

When a Roman youth reached adulthood and officially became a man, he went through a ceremony that was somewhat like a Jewish boy having his bar mitzvah. He would remove the little toga pretexta with its crimps and border on the hem, a garment of childhood that he had worn all through his childhood, and put on the toga of virilis, the garment of manhood, signifying that he had become of age. It marked a great change as we saw earlier. The child was now a young man. He was no longer under the authority of the slave guardian. He was free from that man's restrictions.

He was accepted into the Roman family as a son with all of the rights and the privileges and the responsibilities of the family. He was mature. He reached maturity. And that's what happens to every believer in Jesus Christ. We are clothed with Christ. God accepts us into His family as sons with all of the rights and the privileges of sons. We become spiritually mature. When God looks at his Son, Jesus Christ, He sees his elect people gathered in Him. We are all in Christ Jesus. When He sees us, He sees us in Christ Jesus, clothed in His righteousness. That is the result of faith.

And it is the position of every believer in Jesus Christ without exception and without distinction. There are no second class citizens in the church. None. We are all equally in Christ. Some may have a seminary education. Some may be baby believers. But we are all equal in Christ. And that's the point that Paul makes in verse 28, where he deals with the three fundamental distinctions or divisions of the ancient society, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

All believers are equally united to Christ and in Christ regardless of race, society, or sex. As one writer put it, "These distinctions are covered up by the garment of Christ." That was good news to the Galatians. The law that they were putting themselves under made distinctions and divisions between individuals and nations, between the slave and the free man, between men and women, between the Jew and the gentile. Society made those divisions. Remove the law for a moment and look at ancient society. It had those divisions.

The world was full of slaves who were considered to be only pieces of property. They weren't considered to be people with souls. They were just property, chattel. Women were not treated much better. Gentiles hated Jews and looked down on them as unsophisticated and antisocial. Jews look down on gentiles as religious dogs, as spiritual pariahs. There was a prayer the Pharisees would pray each morning, "I thank thee God that I am a Jew not a gentile, a man not a woman, a free man and not a slave." But in Christ, these distinctions are removed. And it doesn't mean that there are no distinctions, that they cease to exist upon conversion.

The Jew who believes, continues to be a Jew by race. Men and women obviously continue to be male and female. We are not gender neutral in Christ. And social distinctions continue. There are rich and poor in the church today, just as there continue to be slaves and free men in the early church. Paul wasn't denying those distinctions. In fact, he later, in the book of Ephesians, in chapter 6, will tell the slave to be obedient to his master. Even though these distinctions are removed within Christ, they were still real.

So he wasn't obliterating those distinctions. Neither was Paul eliminating distinctions in authority. The husband is still the head of the home, and men are leaders in the church. Paul makes that clear in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2:3. Men and women are equal in essence, but different in function. That is true within the godhead. If there is some objection to this – and I should say very often this text is referred to by people who want to obliterate this idea of the hierarchy and function between a man and a woman – but if that doesn't sit right with people, look at the Scriptures.

They teach very clearly that there is this division even within the godhead because in 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul wrote, "Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of the Christ." Now, that doesn't suggest any inferiority between the Father and the Son. God and Christ are equal in essence, but there is a subordination of function. And that is true between the husband and the wife in marriage and men and women in the church. But Paul is not speaking here about function in the family or church. He is speaking about standing before God. Race and sex don't change in Christ.

Status may not change either. It may. Someone may become wealthy and move up the social ladder, but regardless of that, these things are of no value or

handicap in our relationship with God. Regardless of our differences, Christians are spiritual equals with the same status before God, equal access to God, and are heirs equally of the promises given to Abraham. And that is true for all in the same way through faith alone in Christ apart from the law. Believers are all one in Christ Jesus, Paul says. He concludes in verse 29 with a final result of that relationship, "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

Christ is the heir to the promise made to Abraham. He is Abraham's seed as Paul pointed out in verse 16. He's the heir of all the promises that are given to Abraham. Therefore, if we are united with Him, then we are united with those promises. His promises has become our promises. The promises given to Abraham are inherited by us because we're in Christ. So every believer in Jesus Christ is fully accepted by God now at the moment of faith and is an heir of the kingdom to come. We have a glorious future.

Now that doesn't mean by saying that we are heirs according to promise, that the material promises made to Israel in the Old Testament have been set aside or that all of those promises are spiritually fulfilled in the church. There is still a future for ethnic Israel. Paul explains that elsewhere. He explains that in Romans chapter 11. He says, "They did not stumble so as to fall." In other words, yes, Israel stumbled, and the Jewish people, as a whole, missed the Messiah. They didn't believe in Christ. They stumbled, but they did not fall into complete ruin. Israel still fits in God's plan of salvation and will be saved. But through faith, we gentiles have been grafted into the blessings promised to Abraham. We are heirs with Him. We have eternal life.

We have the hope of heaven and the resurrection to come and eternal glory. That's what Paul is speaking about here. That we who have believed, even though we be gentiles, we have been brought into these great blessings of Abraham. And not only do we have that great hope of the inheritance to come, which is beyond our imaginations, we have immeasurable blessings in this life. We have life now. We have spiritual life. We are completely, as I have stated in the past, we are completely acceptable to God at the moment of faith.

We cannot do more to gain God's acceptance than we have at that first instance that we believe. So we don't need to strive and struggle to gain God's acceptance. You don't need to put yourself under rules and taboos in order to gain God's approval.

You have it fully and completely. We have that. We have everything in Christ now. We have great blessings. We have immeasurable blessings now, life, spiritual life. We are sons. We are heirs. We have all of the privileges of sonship in God's family and that means we have His love and His protection and His guidance in this world, which is hostile to us.

But though the world be hostile to us and though Aretas, king of Damascus, tried to capture us and put us to death, the king of all kings, the king of the universe is working in our behalf so that these petty kings and enemies of this world cannot touch us until it's God's will that they do. We have His guidance and protection in this world. And we have freedom, true freedom. And it was for freedom that the law was given, to lead us to that, to lead us to Christ, to expose man's failure, and give people a longing for the righteousness that they could not produce in themselves, and that the law could not give to them.

The law was like a heavy yoke on men's necks. But Christ is the end of that. And He invites the weary and the heavy-laden to come to Him, "Take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for my yoke is easy, and my load is light." Have you done that? Have you come to Christ? Have you believed in Him? Or do you still have the idea that if you live a good enough life and you seek to measure up to the standard of the Ten Commandments, or some standard that you've invented for yourself to be a good Father or good husband, to be a good provider, to be a good doctor or lawyer or nurse or businessman or whatever the case may be, are you still living under that idea that if you do enough of those kinds of things, you'll be accepted by God?

Paul is saying that cannot be. That is a yoke. It cannot deliver you. Only Christ can do that. He alone is the way to life and to freedom and to the Kingdom to come. So turn to Him. And we who have done that, who have believed in Jesus Christ, our Savior by God's grace, may we never turn back to the law or to some legal system to gain acceptance with God. We have that fully and completely now. So we're to go forward. And the freedom that we have in Christ, under His yoke, His governance, His rule in our life, go forward as sons and daughters of God. May God help all of us to do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us. What a privilege it is to be sons of God, to be heirs according to the promise. We have that, not through any work of our own, but through faith in Christ alone. And then when we

understand faith in Christ, we know that ultimately, that's a gift. So we're like children born into wealthy homes. They didn't earn their position in that home. They were born into it and we, too, as we understand Your grace, understand that we were born into this. By Your sovereign grace, You made us Your children. You gave us new life. You gave us faith.

You adopted us into Your family. You placed us in Christ. We're sons through no work of our own, through Your grace. And we thank You for that. Thank You for Christ and for His death for us. May we live lives that bring honor to Him and seek to please Him. May we be pleasing to You in the way we think and the way we live. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.