

## Studies in Galatians (11/22)

**From Prison to a Palace.***Galatians 3:22-29*

Before proceeding to the close of this wonderful third chapter of Galatians, let us take a brief survey of the ground thus far covered in the chapter, that we may see just where we are.

Beginning with an expression of astonishment that the Galatians should be so foolish as to suppose that they themselves could perfect the mighty work which only the Spirit could begin, and that they could be induced to depart from the truth after they had seen Christ crucified among them, the apostle at once brings them to the case of Abraham, which at once settles the whole question of the method of salvation, and that for all people. They themselves had received the Spirit of righteousness by faith, "even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."

The blessing, we have seen, is the blessing of freedom from sin; but "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," since the curse is upon all who do not continue in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them, and "there is none that does good." So all are in sin; but "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," in hanging on the cross. He has redeemed us from the curse, that is, from the transgression of the law, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us, as upon all Gentiles, through faith. Faith in Christ crucified brings us into relationship with Abraham, and makes us sharers of his blessing, and no soul can ever get or hope for anything more. The blessing of Abraham is freedom from sin, through the Spirit of truth, who convinces the world of sin and of righteousness; and he who is free from sin is an heir of the sinless inheritance, even the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This is the promise of the Spirit.

How sure is this promise?—It is as sure as God's existence, for it was continued by an oath of God in Christ, and even a man's covenant, when it is once confirmed, can not be changed in any particular, or added to; much less then can God's covenant, confirmed by His oath, be changed.

When was it confirmed?—It was confirmed to Abraham 430 years before the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the law from Sinai. Moreover, it was made sure in Christ, who is the Seed of Abraham. Therefore the speaking of the law 430 years later can not in any way affect the covenant, which was that righteousness and the everlasting inheritance of

righteousness should be *given* to Abraham and his seed. The inheritance is not at all through the law, but solely by promise, "through the righteousness of faith."

What, then, is the use of the law?—It was given because of transgression, of lack of faith, as a witness to the fact that the seed of Abraham were in danger of losing the inheritance, and to show them the measure of the righteousness which they must have by faith. But it was in no sense against the promise of God to *give* them righteousness, since it was "in the hand of a Mediator," even "the Man Christ Jesus," who is the "one Mediator between God and men." The promise contained the law, and does still contain it, so that the law, however loudly it thunders its infinite demands, simply shows us the greatness of the righteousness which God freely gives us in Christ. This office the law performs until the Seed comes to whom the promise was made. This last fact, however, belongs to our present study. We come now to

#### **The Text for the Next Week.**

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:22-29.

**All Shut Up in Prison.**—Note the similarity between verses 8 and 22. "The Scripture hath concluded [that is, shut up] all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." We see that the Gospel is preached by the same thing—the Scripture—that shuts men up under sin. The word "conclude" means literally "shut up," just as is given in verse 23. Of course, a person who is shut up by the law is in prison. In human governments a criminal is shut up as soon as the law can get hold of him; God's law is everywhere present, and always active, and therefore, the instant a man sins he is shut up. This is the condition of all the world, "for all have sinned," and "there is none righteous, no, not one."

**"Under the Law."**—"Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." We know that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23); therefore to be "under the law" is identical with being "under sin." Let us get this clearly in mind. The Scripture hath shut up all under sin. What for?—"That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Thus we see that those who are shut up under sin are those who are not of faith. But until faith comes, we are kept

shut up under the law. Now since we are under the law until faith comes, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin, it is evident that to be under the law means to be under sin. Those who are under the law, therefore, are those who are transgressing it.

**The Law a Jailer.**—“So that the law hath been our tutor unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Verse 24, R.V. The words “to bring us” are marked both in the old version and the new as having been added to the text, so we have dropped them out. It really makes no material difference with the sense whether they are retained or omitted. It will be noticed also that the new version has “tutor” in the place of “schoolmaster.” The sense is much better conveyed by the word that is used in the German and Scandinavian translations, which signifies “master of a house of correction.” The single word in our language corresponding to it would be jailer. The Greek word is the word which transliterated is “pedagog.” The word has come to be used as meaning “schoolmaster,” altho the Greek word has not at all the idea of a schoolmaster. “Taskmaster” would be better. The idea here is rather that of a guard who accompanies a prisoner who is allowed to walk about outside the prison walls. The prisoner, altho nominally at large, is really deprived of his liberty just the same as tho he were actually in a cell. But without stopping longer over words, we have the fact stated that all who do not believe are “under sin,” “shut up” “under the law,” and that therefore the law acts as their jailer. It is that that shuts them in, and will not let them off; the guilty can not escape in their guilt. God is merciful and gracious, but He will not clear the guilty. Ex. 34:6, 7. That is, He will not lie, by calling evil good.

**Only One Door.**—Christ says, “I am the door.” John 10:7, 9. He is also the sheepfold and the Shepherd. Men fancy that when they are outside the Fold they are free, and that to come into the Fold would mean a curtailing of their liberty; but it is exactly the reverse. Outside of Christ is bondage, in Him alone is there freedom. Outside of Christ the man is in prison, “holden with the cords of his sins.” Prov. 5:22. “The strength of sin is the law.” It is the law that declares him to be a sinner, and makes him conscious of his condition. “By the law is the knowledge of sin;” and “sin is not imputed when there is no law.” Rom. 3:20; 5:13. The law really forms the sinner’s prison walls. They close in on him, making him feel uncomfortable, oppressing him with a sense of sin, as tho they would press his life out. In vain he makes frantic efforts to escape. Those commandments stand as firm as the everlasting hills. Whichever way he turns he finds a commandment which says to him, “You can find no freedom by me, for you have sinned.” If he seeks to make friends with the law, and promises to keep it, he is no better off, for his sin still remains. It goads him and drives him to the only way of escape,—“the promise by faith of Jesus Christ.” In Christ he is made “free indeed,” for in Christ he is made the righteousness of God.

*(Concluded next week.)*

E. J. Waggoner.

The Signs of the Times, Vol. 25, No. 8 (February 22, 1899), p. 131-132.