



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 3:23-29

"Once in Custody, Now in Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning in Galatians chapter 3, to verse 23 for our Scripture reading, and reading through verse 29; Galatians chapter 3, verse 23 through 29. Remember, the apostle in the third chapter is arguing his doctrinal position that a man is justified by faith in Jesus Christ, apart from the works of the Law. And the apostle has looked into the Old Testament and had been giving us a kind of transcript of Old Testament theology with the Abrahamic covenants and the Mosaic covenant in the background. And he is trying to point out, essentially, that the fundamental basis of our relationship to God is those promises that God made to Abraham. And he seeks to show that the Mosaic covenant does not violate that unconditional promise of God, which he made to Abraham, but rather the Mosaic covenant itself is a temporary covenant.

That naturally provoked the question, why then did God give the Law, and he has been seeking to show in the immediately preceding context, that God gave the Law not in order that men might be saved by what they do, but rather that they might know their sinful condition. And so, he gave the Law to make sin exceeding sinful. He continues now in verse 23, and along that line, and says, "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 unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Some of you have the Authorized Version, and you have the words "to bring us" in verse 24, but they should, I believe, be eliminated. You can see that they were in italics, and thus they were added by the translators in order to express what they felt was the context. But I think that what Paul is speaking about is simply the historic succession of one age of revelation upon another age. And so the legal age was a school master unto the age of 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 sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Incidentally, that verse can be rendered in different ways, and I am inclined to think that a comma should be placed after faith, that he is not saying we are the "sons of God by faith *in* Christ Jesus," though that's a valid idea. But rather, he is saying, "In Christ Jesus, we are all the sons of God through faith, not through the works of the Law." "For," to explain, "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." That one is masculine; he is not speaking about one in essence, but a kind of union in which a large number of people become one in the sense of an organism. "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."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the universal outreach of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in gathering his own people from so many places, so that some from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We thank Thee Lord for the privilege of proclaiming him in the city of Dallas, and to people who live in other places, through the ministry of this little church.

We pray Thy blessing upon its outreach over the radio, over the tapes, and on the written page. And for other churches that name our Lord as Savior and Lord, we pray for them as well. Bless them richly this day. We look forward to the day when we shall meet in heaven around the throne of the triune God. We pray now, Thy blessing upon us in this meeting. May the ministry of the word of God glorify Thy name. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for this morning in the continuation of the exposition of the Book of Galatians is "Once in Custody, Now in Christ." In a book on Galatians, the pastor of the Moody Church, Dr. Warren Wiersbe has made the comment that, "In the Old Testament, we have preparation for Christ; in the gospels, the presentation of Christ. That's true to the teaching of the word of God. The Old Testament is a preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ. And there is an interesting progression in the Old Testament revelation, which the Apostle Paul is emphasizing in this third chapter of his letter to the Galatians. It is the order of the covenants that exist in the Old Testament, and specifically the covenants of Abraham and Moses. Paul is making a great deal over the fact that God gave unconditional promises to Abraham, and that he gave these unconditional promises to Abraham long before he gave the legal covenant to Moses.

Over four hundred years before God gave the covenant on Mount Sinai, he gave covenant promises to Abraham, and these covenant promises were unconditional. They were not given on the basis of any work that Abraham would do. In fact, when the covenant was confirmed, he confirmed it in an elaborate ceremony, in which God alone did the decisive act, thus showing in pictorial fashion that God did not expect Abraham to do anything on his part in order that the covenant might bring its fruition. But God himself took it upon himself to fulfill those promises that he gave to Abraham. Four hundred years later, four hundred and thirty according to the Apostle Paul, at Mount Sinai the legal covenant was given to Moses.

In the history of the Old Testament, as you study the Old Testament record, and as you listen to the things that have developed from the statements from those who were present on the earth in the time of our Lord, it becomes very clear that Israel had over a period of time, begun to construe the second covenant, the covenant that God made with Moses, and specifically the Ten Commandment, the moral code of that covenant, as a means of salvation. And so the apostle argues here that the fundamental covenant is the covenant of grace, the promises given to Abraham. And that just as you cannot modify and earthly agreement between two people unless they are there to agree to the modifications, so the later covenant that God made with Moses, the conditional covenant, cannot annul those fundamental unconditional promises that God gave to Abraham; for that was an unconditional covenant, and God himself is the sole originator of that covenant, and he has not changed his promises.

So you can see that he argues from Abraham, and then Moses, on to the time of Christ, and in effect says, the Old Testament is the progression of the promises of Abraham, through the Law of Moses to the time of the Messiah. And the grace promises stand on an unconditional basis, and they are still valid today. The legal covenant, on the hand, was a covenant that had a specific purpose of bringing men to the knowledge of their sin, and then when the time came for the Lord Jesus Christ to come, the legal covenant came to and end.

This progression of promises or the word of God, through the Mosaic Law, through Jesus Christ is a kind of a picture of the biography of every Christian, because every Christian comes to faith in Christ through the conviction of his sin. It is absolutely essential that a person, if he comes to faith in Christ, come by virtue of conviction of sin. There must be some sense of need before he ever comes to Jesus Christ. And so, the progression of the Old Testament of the promises through the Law, and conviction of sin, and then Christ is a kind of biography of each one of us in our Christian experience.

There is a beautiful allegory, which John Bunyan wrote, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Back in ancient days, everybody read *Pilgrim's Progress*, it was like the Bible. You carried the Bible, you carried *Pilgrim's Progress* and a hymn book and then you were thoroughly furnished for every good work. [Laughter] But now it's different, and people don't know anything about John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. But if you've never read it, you ought to read it. It is rich in allegorical pictures of the truth of the word of God, and especially young preachers ought to read it and become familiar with it, because it's a prolific source of beautiful illustrations of the truth of God.

If you have read it, you'll remember that in the vision concerning Christian, Christian had met Evangelist and was told that he should go to the little gate in order to enter into the celestial city. But on the way he has some interesting experiences, and as he's going toward that little gate, he meets a man who is called Worldly Wiseman. Well, Mr. Worldly Wiseman advised Christian on the way to the city, and remember Christian is on the way to the city with the burden of his sins on his back. He advises him to visit Mr. Legality who lives in the city of Morality. And he is deterred from his going to the gate in order that he may enter in, by Mr. Worldly Wiseman who assures him the Mr. Legality is a very judicious man, a man of very good name, and that he has skill to help men off with such burdens as are on the back of Christian. And he went on to say that "If Mr. Legality is not at home, he has a son whose name is Civility. And Mr. Civility is able to ease the burden just as well as the old gentlemen himself," so Worldly Wiseman tells Christian.

Well, Mr. Legality lived on a high hill, and in parenthesis I think Mr. Bunyan put Mount Sinai, because Mr. Legality is obviously designed to represent the legal covenant from Mount Sinai. And as he came to the hill, it was so high and steep that when he got to it that Christian said he was afraid that that hill was going to fall on his head. And furthermore, that burden, the closer he got to Mr. Legality's home in the city of Morality, and the closer he got to Mount Sinai, the heavier the burden became on his back. And that was designed to represent the fact that the more we know of the Law of God, the

more we know of the burden of our sins, because it is the office of the Law to make sin exceeding sinful for us. And when he got to that hill, there came flashes of fire out of that hill that made him afraid that he would be burned, so Bunyan says. "Here therefore," the text says, "Here, therefore, he sweat and did quake for fear" at Mount Sinai, or at the place where Mr. Legality dwells in the city of Morality.

But Evangelist happened along about that time, and Christian began to blush for shame, that he had sought to deliver himself from the burden by means of Mr. Legality. Evangelist pointed out to him that by refusing the directions that he had been given, he was in danger of rejecting the word of God. He quoted some Scripture to him. He said, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Evangelist told Christian, at which Christian fell down before Evangelist and cried out, "Woe is me for I am undone." And then Evangelist gave Christian a little theological lesson. He said to him that Mr. Worldly Wiseman's counsel had three things that Christian must abhor. First of all, he turns you out of the way, and Worldly Wiseman always turns out of the way, those who are on the way to the gate of salvation.

Furthermore, he labored to render the cross odious to you, because you see, as Paul has been saying in Galatians, any kind of truth that causes us to think that we can be justified apart from the blood that was shed on Calvary is odious to us. It is to render the cross unnecessary. As Paul has been saying in Galatians, "I do not void the grace of God. If righteousness comes by the Law, the Christ is dead in vain." If it were possible for any man to be justified by what he does, then what Christ did has no significance at all, except as one of the greatest blunders that the universe has ever seen, that our Lord Jesus Christ should be crucified.

And then Evangelist tells Christian that he set "your feet in a way that leadeth to the ministration of death." A few pages on in *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian, with the burden of his sins on his shoulder, finally got to the place on which was the cross. And it had a

little hill, somewhat ascending, he said, and he discovered that as he came to the place where the cross was, his burdens fell off of his back. And he said, as he came up there was a little bottom over by the side of that hill, and there was a sepulcher there. And when he got up to the cross and the burdens fell off of his shoulder, the burden rolled down the hill. Rolled into the sepulcher and they saw it no more. That was Bunyan's way of saying that we cannot be saved through the things that we do; through Mr. Legality who dwells in the village of morality. The only way that we can possibly be saved is through the cross of Jesus Christ. And when we come to the cross of Jesus Christ, those burdens that do trouble us, and do bear us down with the weight of our sin and guilt and condemnation, they do fall off, and they do roll down into the sepulcher of his own grave, and we see them no more.

Now the office of Mr. Legality is to demonstrate to us that we are under guilt and condemnation. That is the purpose by which God gave the Law. We are so wicked that we can actually take things were given to us to show us our sin, and make them means of salvation. That is another illustration of the crookedness of human nature. Well, let's notice some further things that Paul says about the confinement of the Law in verses 23 and 24. Now, he's been saying the Law is not a saving instrument. And now he will stress its inferiority, and particularly the misery of those who are under Law. In the 23rd verse, he uses two figures incidentally, the figure a prison and the figure of a slave guardian. "But before faith came," in the original text at this point, there is an article before faith. Literally Paul wrote, "Before the faith came." I think it is proper to translate it at this place, "This faith," because he's been talking about faith in the incarnate Christ. That's what he means; he means before this faith came. That is the faith in the incarnate Christ, which it is our privilege to have today. "Before this faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

One might think, as a student of the Bible, that when Paul says, but before this faith came we were kept under the Law, that he might be suggesting that it was not

possible for men in the Old Testament to be saved. He's not denying that men in the Old Testament were saved, and that they were saved through faith. He's said that a number of times in this very chapter. Look in the 6th verse, "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And then notice the 11th verse, " But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." And then notice the end of verse 18, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. "So in the Old Testament men were saved through grace, and men were saved through faith. What then does Paul mean when he says, "Before this faith came?" That kind of faith was present in the Old Testament.

Well, he's talking about the historical progression of salvation under the legal age, and salvation in this age; salvation by faith in the legal age, and salvation was by faith now, but most of the Jewish people did not avail themselves of salvation through faith, but rather, misunderstanding the purpose of the Law, began to proclaim and attempt to carry out a system of salvation through the things that they did. And Paul is looking at it from that stand point. So he writes, "But before this faith came," that is faith in the incarnate Christ, the present age, "we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." Sometimes individuals are firm on the basis of what they think is the study of the Bible, that it was impossible for people in the Old Testament to have a faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But I think that a study of the Bible makes it very plain that the Old Testament saints did look forward, in faith, to the coming of the Redeemer. The great mass of the children of Israel failed in the latter stages of their history, but those who were saved were saved because they did look forward in the light of the promises of the coming Redeemer. So they looked forward to the cross that was to come.

In Paul's day, he caused his readers to look back to the cross. And in this age we look back to the cross as the foundation of our salvation, the blood that was shed there.

They looked forward to the Redeemer. True, there were many things that they did not know about him. They did not know his name would be Jesus. They did not know that his father's name would be Joseph. They did not know, although they might have guessed, well I shouldn't use the word guess, they might have, by very meticulous study of the Bible, have come to the conviction that his birthplace had something to do with Bethlehem. Specifically, I was speaking about Nazareth; they should have known that his birthplace would be in Bethlehem. The scribes did know that, but they might even have supposed that his life and ministry would have some significant relationship to Nazareth and Galilee if they read the Book of Isaiah very carefully.

But while they did not know many of the details, perhaps, they did know that a Redeemer was coming, and they did look forward to the coming of this Redeemer. There are many things that we do not know about the future, but we do know a Redeemer is coming again. And we look off now, or look up, to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. And incidentally, in the study of prophecy, it seems to me that in the light of the fact that the believers at the time of the first coming were surprised by a number of things that happened in our Lord's earthly coming, that we might expect to be surprised a little bit by the things that happened at the time of his second coming. And it's possible that we have not arranged every single event of the prophetic word in its precisely accurate order, at least yet. He says now, "But before this faith came, we were kept." That's a word that's used of guards doing sentry duty, and so he speaks of Israel being in protective custody. This was not something that they enjoyed. This was like a prison. This was like a jail; the Law put Israel in a jail. That's the word that is used of those in Damascus who were anxious to see the Apostle Paul in Damascus in order that they might put him to death. If you'll remember, the saints managed to get Paul's escape by means of letting him down from a wall in a fish basket.

You know, we often think of the Christian life as an experience, if you're spiritual enough, all you will have will be unusual miraculous experiences. That is not true at all.

Think of the degrading experience of having to run from Aretus, the king of Damascus and having to be let down from a wall in a fish basket, which probably smelled terribly. And this is an apostle, mind you. And this is the kind of escape that he must experience. The idea that when you become a Christian, and a spiritual Christian, everything is going to be lovely is not true to the word of God at all. Do you know that even apostles pray and don't get their prayer requests answered? That is, as they wish them to be answered. Paul prayed three times that the thorn in his flesh might leave, but it did not. And so, we must remember in the experiences of the New Testament, that the Christian life is not always the life of unusual supernatural deliverances. You can be sure that a person who claims that has not been reading the word of God. Paul says in the Old Testament times we were kept under the law, like in prison, shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed, enclosed by it. Well, that's one picture of what it was to be under the Law.

The next picture is given us in verse 14, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Schoolmaster, that's the rendering of the Authorized Version. It's not really a good rendering, because it suggests that the children of Israel were kept under a kind of principle, schoolmaster. But the word *paidagogos*, which is the Greek word here that comes from two words, one meaning "to lead," and the other "a child;" therefore having as its fundamental idea, child leader literally, ordinarily referred to a slave who had a task to perform with reference to the sons of the family. He was a slave guardian. That is he guarded children, but he was a trusted slave, generally speaking. He was ordinarily an elderly man, and he was a man, frequently, who was a Greek, because the Romans loved the Greeks. And they liked the Greek language, and they liked the Greek literature. They liked everything Greek. The Romans greatly admired the Greeks. And so, to have a Greek trusted slave who could teach the children Greek and instruct them in wisdom and philosophy and the other things that the Greeks knew a great deal better than the Romans, was an ideal situation.

So, many of the sons of wealthy Romans had a paidagogos. And some of them had even more slaves. Some of them had slaves who went with them to school and one carried his satchel, and the other carried his book or his lunch or whatever it might be. They had a whole retinue that followed them. That's the kind of home into which I would have like to have been born when I was young. [Laughter] This slave guardian was not simply a person who was a companion. He was a companion, but he was also a kind of moral guide, too. So the apostle is using this as a kind of illustrations, and is saying that the Law was a slave guardian. The Law was a moral guide. It was a kind of trusted slave under which we were put. But now you must not think of this as a very happy arrangement. There is a great deal of tradition to the effect that these slave guardians were very unpopular. You can imagine that many of the young people who wanted to be free of the restrictions came to dislike, very much, the idea of having to have the older man over them. So the idea of them being popular is not necessarily true. The point that the apostle is making is that when a person was under a paidagogos, he was in servility. He was in slavery. Even though he was a son, he was just like a slave. He had to do what that paidagogos told him to do. And so, it was not a very happy time.

There was at many times a close relationship. Marshall has some epigrams in which he points out that long after the childhood was over, the old slave guardian that spent so many days with the son, still would scold him and rebuke him when he did something that was wrong; even though he was now an adult. I guess you could say, there aren't very many of you who are this old, but I guess you could say that the slave guardian was very much like the nanny that so many southern children used to have so many years ago, back in the Golden Age. [Laughter]

Now, the point that Paul is making must not be misunderstood. He is not saying that the law, this paidagogos, he is not saying that the law was given in order that men might understand Christ and what he would do. No, the Law was a paidagogos to show us the depth of our sin and our guilt and our condemnation. In other words, the Law was

given in order to make sin exceeding sinful. It is not education that Paul has in view here, it is the servility and the misery of being under the Law that he is stressing. The man who wants to sign and serve Mr. Legality who lives in the village of Morality, can never be a free and happy person. He always will feel the bondage and the guilt and the condemnation of sin, because the Law condemns. The Law says, "Thou shalt not, thou shalt to, thou shalt not." And even if we erect little elaborate ways by which we fulfill the Law according to our own definition of what Law is. Then the Lord Jesus comes along on the Sermon on the Mount and truly interprets Law, and says that adultery is not the act of adultery only, but it's to look upon another person with desire. He says that covetousness is something that touches the inmost being of a man. He interprets the law so completely, that even these incidental little thoughts make us just as guilty as the act itself. To hate a brother is the same as to murder a brother. And no one can stand under that kind of scrutiny. So the Law then confines. It condemns, and it also makes it very plain that we cannot be justified by the things that we do.

Now, Paul turning to the other side speaks about the freedom of sonship, because the children did grow up. The paidagogos did, at a point in time, have to relinquish control over the child. And so, the little child that was tied to its mother's apron strings or its father's control did at a point in time come to be free. And so Paul speaks of it in verse 25 and 26, when he says that "After that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus." So the slavery of being under the slave guardian is succeeded by sonship indeed. And God or the Father, who before through the slave guardian was a judge, has now become a real father only. And of course, in the spiritual reality, the son who was a slave and the God who was under the Law, simply a judge, now discovers that the Father is a true Father.

Sons of God, that word "sons" I want you to notice that it is sons and not children, is a word that stresses the position that we have in the family of God. I think that it's very likely that the apostle has in mind another ancient Roman tradition here when he says,

"You were under a slave guardian, but now you are sons." Because at a time in this young son's life, it was the time when he was to reach his maturity, sometimes it was very early by our standards, thirteen years of age. The little child, which had been wearing the toga praetexta, or the crimson-bordered toga, which marked him out as a child. In an elaborate little ceremony before the members of the family, the toga praetexta would be taken off, and the *toa virilis*, from which we get the English word virility, a virile man, the tog virilis would be placed upon him, and he would pass from his immaturity into his maturity; putting aside the crimson-bordered toga for the put white toga of the adult Roman. And in the ceremony, which was an elaborate ceremony in which all of the family was gathered there, he would be at that point recognized as a son in the family, and therefore able to enter into the counsels of the men in the family who determined the future of the family and its life in the community. Incidentally ladies, I'm sorry to say this, there was no ceremony for the girls. Again, it was the Golden Age, of course, [Laughter] and so I would not expect that.

Now, it is important for us that we notice the rest of that verse. He says, "For ye are all the sons of God by faith." There are two great contemporary errors, they are very closely related. One of them is universal sonship. It is the opinion of many of our theological leaders today, that all men are the sons of God, universal sonship. Now, there is a sense in which the Bible does teach that. Did you know that? The Bible does teach that we are all sons of God. You look at the genealogy of our Lord in Luke chapter 3, it is traced back to Adam, and then the words are added, "Who was the son of God." Adam was son of God by creation, however, not by redemption. And we can say that every single human being is a son of God by creation but not by redemption. To be a son by redemption, can only be accomplished through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But there are many who teach that all people are sons of God; that is wrong. "Ye are all the sons of God by faith," the apostle says.

The other error is very closely related to it. It is the error of universalism, that everybody is saved. This past week I went over to Jimmy's country, and I was there to preach for about fifteen times in three days. We were doing a special project, and so I preached five times on Wednesday, five times on Thursday, and five times on Friday, and then came home to hear a brief sermon from my wife. [Laughter] Oh she really greeted me this time without any of her customary sermons. I enjoy her sermons, they're always convicting. [Laughter] In the course of my time in Atlanta, after one of the meetings a lady, a member of a well-known church, came up to me and said, "Dr. Johnson, the most amazing thing has happened in our church. Our church is a church, which believes that historically you become a believer by faith in Jesus Christ, but you can lose your salvation. But," she said, "it's weird that now, some of the ministers in the church, that I know, are combining this doctrine with the doctrine of universalism. How is it possible, Dr. Johnson, for the doctrine of universalism to be combined with a doctrine that you loose your salvation?" Well, that puzzled me, I couldn't answer that. That's totally irrational, but nevertheless that happens to be the truth, evidently.

Universal sonship or universalism, these are very serious errors and the Scriptures speak out against that kind of thing on almost every page. We are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. When I was at theological seminary many years ago, a Bible teacher, a well-known Bible teacher came to speak in chapel one morning. And in the course of the message he made reference to universal sonship, and he said, "The modernists teach this." This was the word that we used to use in those days to speak of contemporary theologians. They were modernists. And so he said, "The modernists believe in universal sonship, and the universal Fatherhood of God. But I remember that the Lord Jesus spoke to many of the leaders in his day, and said of some of them in John chapter 8, "Ye are of your father the devil." And he said, "It seems to me from the study of the Bible that there are two fatherhoods. There is the Fatherhood of God, and there is the fatherhood of the wicked one, the fatherhood of Satan." And so then he offered a rhetorical question to us

in the audience. He said, now when a man who does not believe in the Scriptures stands behind the pulpit on Sunday morning, and says 'Our Father' to which father is he addressing his prayer? To which fatherhood does he belong?" He didn't have to answer, it was a rhetorical question.

The apostle says then we are sons of God by faith. And then in verse 27 and verse 28, he explains how this sonship came about. He says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Now he's not saying that some have not put on Christ, because he's just said you are all the sons of God. What he is now doing is speaking distributively. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Everyone has been baptized into Christ, so he's not talking about water baptism; he's talking about baptism by the Holy Spirit. "For by one Spirit, we have all been baptized into one body," Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:13. So here he states we've been baptized into Christ, he means that all believers have come into union with Christ. And it is not a second work of grace either. It happens the moment that we believe in Christ. We are all united to him. The fact that he used the term "put on Christ" may suggest that toga. That may be in the back of his mind. When you have come to Christ, you have put off the crimson bordered toga that suggests servility, and you have now put on the pure white toga, virilis, which suggests your maturity, or your position of adult sonship in the Lord Jesus.

And then he expatiates in verse 28, "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." The feminists have used this 28th verse in order to support the doctrine of the ordination of elders, and the ordination of women as preachers; women elders and women preachers. They have failed to notice, however, or failed to distinguish between the "in Christ" and "in the church." There are four spheres of life in which each of us may have a place. For example, we all stand before God individually, and we have certain responsibilities to him as a redeemed person. Then we also are in a family. Some of us

are husbands, and we have responsibilities in the family. We are to be the spiritual head of the family. The father is to be the head of the family. The wife is then to be in submission to her husband, and the children are to be in obedience to the parents. These are relationships in the family. Then we also have relationships in the church. And all of us, whether male or female, are to be in submission to the elders; of course, always as long as the husband is in accord with the word of God, and as long as the elders are in harmony with the word of God. But we all are to be in submission to the elders. And then there is the sphere of the state, and all of us are to be subject to the state. We are to pay our taxes. We are to obey the laws. There are different spheres, in which we, as individuals, function.

Now, in the place of "in Christ," it is true, there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. The females and the males, in Christ, have equal privileges, equal position. And that's what Paul means. There is neither male nor female in Christ. But now, in the church, that's something else. The apostle says, with reference to the church, that he suffers not a woman to teach. He says that the women should keep silence in the churches. And the things that pertain to the individual relationship do not necessarily pertain in these other places. Some of the feminists have said submission is inferiority, and if you have submission, you cannot help but have inferiority. And since Paul here says that there is neither male nor female, he doesn't teach inferiority. So submission, by the very name itself, connotes inferiority. That is not true. Let me read you one text from the word of God, 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and verse 3, the apostle writes, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ." Well, we don't say that we are equal to Christ, so I cannot use that clause. "And the head of the woman is the man." Notice these relationships. But then he says, "And the head of Christ is God."

Now, let me ask you a question. You who are Christians, who believe in the doctrine of eternity, is our Lord Jesus Christ equal with the Father. Well, of course. If

you're a Christian you must believe that. You must believe the doctrine of the trinity, that there is one God who subsists in three persons; that our Lord is very God of very God, truly God. But yet, the text says, "The head of Christ is God." He was in submission with the Father, but he was equal with the Father. Submission is not inferiority. So ladies, when we say that a woman should be in submission to her husband, and when we say that the women should not speak in the church, we are talking about functions. We are not talking about privileges. We are not talking about equality in Christ. The male and the female are equal in privilege, but they differ in functions.

Now, it is God who has arranged this. It is who is really responsible for this. It is not Paul. I know that we may be inclined to think Paul was just a male chauvinist pig, but he was not. He was simply giving what he thought was the word of God. There are some today who say that Paul just gave things that he learned from his rabbinical teaching. And therefore, he was wrong in these places. But what is to prevent us from saying that Paul was wrong when he talked about the atonement, too, because that itself is more offensive than this, it seems to me; to say that we are redeemed by the shedding of blood of a man. But you can see the extent to which our errors some times lead us.

Now he closes, and I must close, by talking about Abraham's seed and heirs. And he says, "If you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed, because our Lord is the seed of Abraham." And remember, that word is used not only of an individual person, but also of a collective group. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed," and if you're Abraham's seed, then you are "heirs according to the promise." By the way, no one is an heir, unless he is really, truly related to the Father. You can receive a bequest in someone's will, but you are not really an heir unless you are a true son. So when he says here that we are heirs, he is trading on the fact that we are the born again sons of the Father in heaven.

What are these things that we have, because we are heirs? Justification, he's been talking about, we're declared righteous in Christ, we also have life, this chapter refers to it.

In the 8th of Romans in a parallel passage he says that we should be glorified together with him, because we're joint heirs with Jesus Christ. These are the blessings that we have. The blessings of the Lord, they make rich, and add no sorrow, the Proverb says. And that is true. The Law of man is impotent to give us life or righteousness, it's a jailer. It's a slave guardian, and anybody who seeks to be justified by the things that he does is engaging in a form of approach to God that cannot help but to lead to condemnation, and ultimately to separation from God if the individual does not flee to the cross of Jesus Christ for the free forgiveness of sins that is provided for us there.

The larger question, of course, is a personal one. Are you Christ's? Do you really belong to him? Has there come a time in your life when, like Christian, standing at the foot of the cross, you discovered through our Lord's blood that was shed that your burdens had been taken away, removed forever. And now you're free, standing just in Christ, having eternal life, enjoying the presence of the Holy Spirit. Do you really belong to him? We invite you as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus to look off to the cross on that little ascending hill,, and like Christian take your steps there, and allow the burden to fall off, and roll into the sepulcher through the mighty grace of God manifested in the shedding of the blood. If God the Holy Spirit has spoken to you, we trust that within your own heart, you'll give thanks for what Christ has done for sinners, and receive the benefits for yourself. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these words that have been given us by the Apostle Paul, which set forth so wonderfully the experience of so many of us who have passed through the conviction of sin and conversion, by the grace of God in Christ. Lord, we do pray that if there are some here who have not yet come to know him who to know is life eternal, that today may this be the day in which the Holy Spirit brings home to them the conviction, of guilt, and condemnation, and the conviction of the

“Once in Custody, Now in Christ” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

sufficiency of the blood of Christ for our sins. May grace, mercy, and peace be with us
through this week. For Jesus' sake. Amen.