

GALATIANS - SERMON 14

GALATIANS 3:23-29 — THE NEW REPLACES THE OLD

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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 3:6-29

In this passage Paul's reference to the old covenant is a reference to the Mosaic covenant. His design is to show the inferiority of the old covenant with respect to the Abrahamic covenant. He does so by showing the true purpose of the old covenant, the restraining of sin in the nation of Israel. The old covenant was made necessary in order to preserve the national identity of Israel until the time when the Lord Jesus Christ should be born. Jesus Christ was the final physical seed of Abraham which had been promised and was to be the bearer of the blessings to many nations. The old covenant was added only *until the Seed should come*, vs 19. Once that Seed had come the old covenant passed away. Such was the argument of verses 14-22.

Beginning in verse 23 Paul's argument has to do with the replacing of the old covenant by the new covenant.

OUTLINE:

- I THE COMING OF THE NEW COVENANT TO REPLACE THE OLD COVENANT.
- II THE RAMIFICATION OF THE NEW COVENANT'S REPLACEMENT OF THE OLD COVENANT. (NEXT SERMON)

I THE COMING OF THE NEW COVENANT TO REPLACE THE OLD COVENANT, V 23.

But before (the) faith came, we were kept under guard by the law (old covenant), kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

A The interpretation of verse 23

The *faith* mentioned in verse 23 is not subjective faith exercised, but the body of doctrine and truth related to the new covenant. There are important reasons why this distinction must be made.

- 1) This *faith* is spoken of as being afterward revealed. It was not revealed until after the old covenant was concluded. It also speaks of this *faith* as having come. Clearly this indicates that this *faith* was not there before. Whatever this *faith*, it did not exist prior to the old covenant nor during the old covenant administration. The reason this word *faith* cannot refer to personal saving faith is because we know from the Scriptures that such *faith* did exist prior to the old covenant and during the old covenant administration. Hebrews 11 is the record of many saints during that period of time who exercised personal subjective saving faith.
- 2) The word *faith* in verse 23 is preceded by the definite article. See last week's sermon on the significance of this grammatical point. This is a reference to a particular body of truth - specific. This is a common use in the New Testament.

Acts 16:4-5

And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

The faith as used here must refer to the doctrinal content of the Christian religion and not to the idea of 'faithfulness'. It was a body of doctrinal apostolic teaching.

Galatians 1:23

But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."

Philippians 1:27

Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...

In the Galatians 3 passage *the faith* (new covenant religion) is contrasted with the old covenant - *before the faith came, we were kept under the old covenant (law).*

In verse 23 the use of the word *faith* is a reference to the new covenant brought by Jesus Christ in all the teachings that cluster under the covenantal arrangement. It is the body of New Testament revelation that came after the conclusion of the Old Testament revelation which was brought by Jesus and propagated by the apostles.

B The meaning of verse 23.

But before (the) faith came, we were kept under guard by the law (old covenant), kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

- 1 The word *kept* means to be guarded, put under the watch of another. A guard at a prison is often called the keeper. The old covenant was just like a prison guard who kept watch over his charges. This corresponds with our interpretation of verse 19.

Galatians 3:19

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

- 2 The word *under guard* (*shut up* - KJV) means to be confined within an enclosure. The old covenant was a guard and it was an enclosure. The Jews were in a state of restriction while under the old covenant. They were kept from mingling with the rest of mankind in order to preserve the bloodline that would see the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were given many peculiar customs and practices in order to maintain the separation called the *middle wall of partition*.

Ephesians 2:14-15

For He (Jesus Christ) Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace...

- 3 This was the purpose of the old covenant and it was designed to continue in effect only until the promised Seed, Jesus Christ came. Afterwards the physical seed is replaced by the spiritual seed of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:5

. . . who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

- 4 That the new covenant was prophesied is clear.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 'not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 'But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law [not a new or a different law, but God's law written elsewhere on stone and now on the tables of the heart] in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

- 5 When was this new covenant instituted?

Hebrews 7:18-19

For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment (old covenant) because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope (new covenant), through which we draw near to God.

Hebrew 8:7-13

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they

shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Jesus Christ came and preached this new covenant and He inaugurated it at the last supper.

Regrettably the word for covenant - διαθήκη is often translated 'testament'. Every time the word 'testament' is found in our English New Testament it is, without exception, from the Greek word for covenant. So when in reading the New Testament you find the word covenant or the word testament, it is the same Greek word for covenant - διαθήκη.

Our Bible is arranged by the two major covenants that govern God relationship and dealings with humanity.

Matthew 26:28

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Mark 14:24

And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."

Luke 22:20

Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

1 Corinthians 11:25

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

All of these passages demonstrate that the new covenant was instituted, in replacement of the old covenant, at the time of the last supper. As an inaugurated covenant it did not exist prior to its inauguration. This is the source of some covenant confusion. Some covenant theologians make reference to the so-called 'covenant of grace' which existed from Adam until now and equate it with the new covenant inaugurated at the Lord's supper. They are not equivalent. For one thing the covenant of grace is not a covenant at all but rather a method of salvation which God has always used. The new covenant is said in Galatians 3:23 to have been *afterwards revealed*.

C The meaning of verse 24.

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The word *tutor* (*schoolmaster* - KJV) is παιδαγωγος. This was a reference to a servant who was charged with safely conducting the children to certain destinations and keeping them from danger and mischief. This word did not originally refer to one who was a teacher so much as to one who was a supervisor, a protector, a disciplinarian, and even a baby-sitter. The old covenant was such a one to the nation Israel.

Israel is pictured here as a wayward child put under the care of a faithful, severe, and strict supervisor (the old covenant). The old covenant was like a slave employed by Israel to oversee them until they grew up unto maturity. That maturity was reached when Christ came and instituted the new covenant.

The reason why Israel grew up unto maturity under the new covenant is because the nature of Israel was radically transformed, like going through puberty. The nation was pruned and all unbelievers were removed from God's Israel. Under the old covenant national Israel included believers and unbelievers. It was necessary, under the old covenant, to evangelize fellow covenant members because they all did not know the Lord.

With the coming of Jesus the kingdom was taken away from national Israel and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof.

Matthew 21:43

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it."

Unbelievers were eliminated from the nation of Israel. Israel was stripped down to just the core of those who were saved.

Acts 3:22-25

"For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

In the Romans 11 analogy of the olive tree with the branches broken off we have an explanation of the pruning of national Israel of all unbelievers and the grafting in to Israel all true believers, including Gentiles. The new maturity of the new Israel is that all are saved. All who are in the new Israel have the Spirit of God. Under the old covenant all were not saved as they are in the new covenant.

Galatians 3:14

. . . that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

This new maturity is described in the next chapter.

Galatians 4:4-7

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Here are the two marks of the mature Israel, they are all *sons of God* and that they all have the *Spirit of His Son in their hearts*.

Galatians 3:7

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

D The meaning of verse 25.

But after (the) faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Once the new covenant had come and been inaugurated the old covenant which acted as a tutor is no longer necessary. It is done away with.

Therefore, to perpetuate observance of the old covenant and to bind it upon the new covenant church is as ridiculous and inappropriate to hire a baby-sitter to watch a twenty-five year old son. The new covenant church no longer needs the old covenant tutor.

The problem in Galatia was that the Judaizers were telling the people that they needed to be circumcised and that they must observe the old covenant law in order to be saved. This stems from a false understanding of the old covenant replaced by the new covenant.

Galatians 4 will develop this transition. One of the major differences between the two covenants is that the one is composed of saved and lost (old covenant) and the other by saved individuals only (new covenant). This is why infants are not brought in to the new covenant by baptism. The members of the new covenant are those who know the Lord and have the indwelling Spirit.

This presents a difficulty for the paedobaptists. Some must preach (not all) baptismal regeneration because they do recognize the biblical teaching about the difference between the two covenants.

E The meaning of verse 26.

For you are all sons (not children) of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

All in the new covenant are mature adult sons in Christ Jesus. There is radical change in the composition of the true Israel. Under the old covenant there were saved and unsaved, believers and unbelievers. However, under the new covenant only believers are a part of the covenant community.