



7. The Law Brings a Curse

Gal 3:10-29

(10) For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

(11) Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

(12) But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

(13) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

(14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

(15) To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

(16) Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

(17) This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

(18) For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

(19) Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

(20) Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

(21) Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

(22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

(23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

(24) So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

(25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

(26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

(27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

(28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Gal 4:1-7

(1) I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, (2) but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

(3) In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

(4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

(5) to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

(6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

(7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Galatians 3:10

Confirmation of [Gal 3:9](#). They who depend on the works of the law cannot share the blessing, for they are under the curse "written," [Deu 27:26](#), *Septuagint*. PERFECT *obedience* is required by the words, "in

all things.” CONTINUAL *obedience* by the word, “continueth.” No man renders this obedience (compare [Rom 3:19](#), [Rom 3:20](#)). It is observable, Paul quotes Scripture to the Jews who were conversant with it, as in Epistle to the Hebrews, as *said* or *spoken*; but to the Gentiles, as *written*. So Matthew, writing for Jews, quotes it as “said,” or “spoken”; Mark and Luke, writing for Gentiles, as “written” ([Mat 1:22](#); [Mar 1:2](#); [Luk 2:22](#), [Luk 2:23](#)) [Townson].

Galatians 3:11

by the law — Greek, “IN the law.” Both *in* and *by* are included. The syllogism in this verse and [Gal 3:12](#), is, according to Scripture, “The just shall live by faith.” But the law is not of faith, but of doing, or works (that is, does not make faith, but works, the conditional ground of justifying). Therefore “in,” or “by the law, no man is justified before God” (whatever the case may be *before men*, [Rom 4:2](#)) - not even if



he could, which he cannot, keep the law, because the Scripture element and conditional mean of justification is *faith*.

The just shall live by faith — ([Rom 1:17](#); [Hab 2:4](#)). Not as Bengel and Alford, “He who is just by faith shall live.” The *Greek* supports *English Version*. Also the contrast is between “live *by faith*” (namely, as the ground and source of his justification), and “live *in them*,” namely, in his doings or works ([Gal 3:12](#)), as the *conditional element wherein* he is justified.

Galatians 3:12

doeth — Many depended on the law although they did not keep it; but without doing, saith Paul, it is of no use to them ([Rom 2:13](#), [Rom 2:17](#), [Rom 2:23](#); [Rom 10:5](#)).

Galatians 3:13

Abrupt exclamation, as he breaks away impatiently *from* those who would involve us again in the curse of the *law*, by seeking justification in it, *to* “*Christ*,” who “has redeemed us from its curse.” The “us” refers primarily to the Jews, to whom the law principally appertained, in contrast to “the Gentiles” ([Gal 3:14](#); compare [Gal 4:3](#), [Gal 4:4](#)). But it is not *restricted* solely to the Jews, as Alford thinks; for these are the representative people of the world at large, and their “law” is the embodiment of what God requires of the whole world. The curse of its non-fulfillment affects the Gentiles through the Jews; for the law represents that righteousness which God requires of all, and which, since the Jews failed to fulfil, the Gentiles are equally unable to fulfil. [Gal 3:10](#), “As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse,” refers plainly, not to *the Jews only*, but to all, even Gentiles (as the Galatians), who seek justification by the law. The Jews’ law represents the universal law which condemned the Gentiles, though with less clear consciousness on their part ([Rom 2:1-29](#)). The revelation of God’s “wrath” by the law of conscience, in some degree prepared the Gentiles for appreciating redemption through Christ when revealed. The curse had to be removed from off the heathen, too, as well as the Jews, in order that the blessing, through Abraham, might flow to them. Accordingly, the “we,” in “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit,” plainly refers to both Jews and Gentiles.

redeemed us — *bought us off* from our former bondage ([Gal 4:5](#)), and “from the curse” under which all lie who trust to the law and the works of the law for justification. The Gentile Galatians, by putting themselves under the law, were involving themselves in the curse from which Christ has redeemed the Jews primarily, and through them the Gentiles. The ransom price He paid was His own precious blood ([1Pe 1:18](#), [1Pe 1:19](#); compare [Mat 20:28](#); [Act 20:28](#); [1Co 6:20](#); [1Co 7:23](#); [1Ti 2:6](#); [2Pe 2:1](#); [Rev 5:9](#)).

being made — Greek, “having become.”

a curse for us — Having become what we were, *in our behalf*, “a curse,” that we might cease to be a curse. Not merely *accursed* (in the concrete), but *a curse* in the abstract, *bearing the universal curse of*

the whole human race. So [2Co 5:21](#), “Sin for us,” not *sinful*, but bearing the whole sin of our race, regarded as *one* vast aggregate of sin. See Note there. “Anathema” means “set apart to God,” to His glory, but to the person’s own destruction. “Curse,” an execration.

written — ([Deu 21:23](#)). Christ’s bearing the *particular* curse of hanging on the tree, is a sample of the “general” curse which He representatively bore. Not that the Jews put to death malefactors by hanging; but *after* having put them to death otherwise, in order to brand them with peculiar ignominy, they *hung* the bodies on a tree, and such malefactors were accursed by the law (compare [Act 5:30](#); [Act 10:39](#)). God’s providence ordered it so that to fulfil the prophecy of the curse and other prophecies, Jesus should be crucified, and so *hang* on the tree, though that death was not a Jewish mode of execution. The Jews accordingly, in contempt, call Him Tolvi, “the *hanged* one,” and Christians, “worshippers of the hanged one”; and make it their great objection that He died the accursed death [Trypho, in *Justin Martyr*, p. 249] ([1Pe 2:24](#)). Hung between heaven and earth as though unworthy of either!

Galatians 3:14

The intent of “Christ becoming a curse for us”; “To the end that upon the Gentiles the blessing of Abraham (that is, *promised to Abraham*, namely, justification by faith) might come in Christ Jesus” (compare [Gal 3:8](#)).

that we might receive the promise of the Spirit — the promised Spirit ([Joe 2:28](#), [Joe 2:29](#); [Luk 24:49](#)). This clause follows not the clause immediately preceding (for *our receiving the Spirit* is not the result of the *blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles*), but “Christ hath redeemed us,” etc.

through faith — not by works. Here he resumes the thought in [Gal 3:2](#). “The Spirit from without, kindles within us some spark of faith Whereby we lay hold of Christ, and even of the Spirit Himself, that He may dwell within us” [Flacius].

Galatians 3:15

I speak after the manner of men — I take an illustration from a merely human transaction of everyday occurrence.

but a man’s covenant — whose purpose it is far less important to maintain.

if it be confirmed — when once it hath been ratified.

no man disannulleth — “none setteth aside,” not even the author himself, much less any second party. None does so who acts in common equity. Much less would the righteous God do so. *The law* is here, by personification, regarded as a second person, distinct from, and subsequent to, *the promise of God*. *The promise* is everlasting, and more peculiarly belongs to God. *The law* is regarded as something extraneous, afterwards introduced, exceptional and temporary ([Gal 3:17-19](#), [Gal 3:21-24](#)).

addeth — None addeth new conditions “making” the covenant “of none effect” ([Gal 3:17](#)). So legal Judaism could make no alteration in the fundamental relation between God and man, already established by the promises to Abraham; it could not add as a new condition the observance of the law, in which case the fulfillment of the promise would be attached to a condition impossible for man to perform. The “covenant” here is one of free grace, a *promise* afterwards carried into effect in the Gospel.

Galatians 3:16

This verse is parenthetical. The covenant of promise was not “spoken” (so *Greek* for “made”) to Abraham alone, but “to Abraham and his seed”; to the latter especially; and this means Christ (and that which is inseparable from Him, the *literal Israel*, and the *spiritual*, His body, the Church). Christ not having come when the law was given, the covenant could not have been then fulfilled, but awaited the coming of Him, the Seed, to whom it was spoken.

promises — plural, because the same promise was often repeated ([Gen 12:3](#), [Gen 12:7](#); [Gen 15:5](#), [Gen 15:18](#); [Gen 17:7](#); [Gen 22:18](#)), and because it involved many things; earthly blessings to the literal children of Abraham in Canaan, and spiritual and heavenly blessings to his spiritual children; but both promised to Christ, “the Seed” and representative Head of the literal and spiritual Israel alike. In the spiritual seed there is no distinction of Jew or *Greek*; but to the literal seed, the promises still in part remain to be fulfilled ([Rom 11:26](#)). The covenant was not made with “many” seeds (which if there had been, a pretext might exist for supposing there was one seed before the law, another under the law; and

that those sprung from one seed, say the Jewish, are admitted on different terms, and with a higher degree of acceptability, than those sprung from the Gentile seed), but with the one seed; therefore, the promise that in Him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” ([Gen 12:3](#)), joins in this one Seed, Christ, Jew and Gentile, as fellow heirs on the same terms of acceptability, namely, by grace through faith ([Rom 4:13](#)); not to some by promise, to others by the law, but to all alike, circumcised and uncircumcised, constituting but one seed in Christ ([Rom 4:16](#)). The law, on the other hand, contemplates the Jews and Gentiles as distinct seeds. God makes a covenant, but it is one of promise; whereas the law is a covenant of works. Whereas the law brings in a mediator, a third party ([Gal 3:19](#), [Gal 3:20](#)), God makes His covenant of promise with the one seed, Christ ([Gen 17:7](#)), and embraces others only as they are identified with, and represented by, Christ.

one ... Christ — not in the exclusive sense, the man Christ *Jesus*, but “Christ” (*Jesus* is not added, which would limit the meaning), including *His people* who are *part of Himself*, the Second Adam, and Head of redeemed humanity. [Gal 3:28](#), [Gal 3:29](#) prove this, “Ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus” (Jesus is added here as the person is indicated). “And *if* ye be Christ’s, ye are Abraham’s SEED, heirs according to *the promise*.”

Galatians 3:17

this I say — “this is what I mean,” by what I said in [Gal 3:15](#).

continued ... of God — “ratified by God” ([Gal 3:15](#)).

in Christ — rather, “unto Christ” (compare [Gal 3:16](#)). However, *Vulgate* and the old Italian versions translate as *English Version*. But the oldest manuscripts omit the words altogether.

the law which was — *Greek*, “which came into existence four hundred thirty years after” ([Exo 12:40](#), [Exo 12:41](#)). He does not, as in the case of “the covenant,” add “enacted by God” ([Joh 1:17](#)). The dispensation of “the promise” began with the call of Abraham from Ur into Canaan, and ended on the last night of his grandson Jacob’s sojourn in Canaan, the *land of promise*. The dispensation of the law, which engenders bondage, was beginning to draw on from the time of his entrance into Egypt, the land of bondage. It was to Christ in him, as in his grandfather Abraham, and his father Isaac, not to him or them as persons, the promise was spoken. On the day following the last repetition of the promise orally ([Gen 46:1-6](#)), at Beer-sheba, Israel passed into Egypt. It is from the end, not from the beginning of the dispensation of promise, that the interval of four hundred thirty years between it and the law is to be counted. At Beer-sheba, after the covenant with Abimelech, Abraham called on the everlasting God, and the well was confirmed to him and his seed as an everlasting possession. Here God appeared to Isaac. Here Jacob received the promise of the blessing, for which God had called Abraham out of Ur, repeated for the last time, on the last night of his sojourn in the land of promise.

cannot — *Greek*, “doth not disannul.”

make ... of none effect — The promise would become so, if the power of conferring the inheritance be transferred from it to the law ([Rom 4:14](#)).

Galatians 3:18

the inheritance — all the blessings to be inherited by Abraham’s literal and spiritual children, according to the promise made to him and to his Seed, Christ, justification and glorification ([Gal 4:7](#); [Rom 8:17](#); [1Co 6:9](#)).

but God, etc. — The *Greek* order requires rather, “But to Abraham it was by promise that God hath given it.” The conclusion is, *Therefore the inheritance is not of, or from the law* ([Rom 4:14](#)).

Galatians 3:19

“Wherefore then serveth the law?” as it is of no avail for justification, is it either useless, or contrary to the covenant of God? [Calvin].

added — to the original covenant of promise. This is not inconsistent with [Gal 3:15](#), “No man addeth thereto”; for there the kind of *addition* meant, and therefore denied, is one that would add *new conditions*, inconsistent with the grace of the covenant of promise. The law, though misunderstood by the Judaizers as doing so, was really added for a different purpose, namely, “because of (or as the *Greek*, ‘for the sake of’) the transgressions,” that is, to bring out into clearer view *the transgressions* of it ([Rom 7:7-9](#)); to make

men more fully conscious of their “sins,” by being perceived as *transgressions of the law*, and so to make them long for the promised Savior. This accords with [Gal 3:23](#), [Gal 3:24](#); [Rom 4:15](#). The meaning can hardly be “to check transgressions,” for the law rather stimulates the corrupt heart to disobey it ([Rom 5:20](#); [Rom 7:13](#)).

till the seed — *during the period up to the time when the seed came*. The law was a preparatory dispensation for the Jewish nation ([Rom 5:20](#); Greek, “the law came in *additionally* and *incidentally*”), intervening between the promise and its fulfillment in Christ.

come — (Compare “faith came,” [Gal 3:23](#)).

the promise — ([Rom 4:21](#)).

ordained — Greek, “constituted” or “disposed.”

by angels — as the *instrumental enactors* of the law [Alford] God delegated the law to angels as something rather alien to Him and severe ([Act 7:53](#); [Heb 2:2](#), [Heb 2:3](#); compare [Deu 33:2](#), “He came with ten thousands of saints,” that is, angels, [Psa 68:17](#)). He reserved “the promise” to Himself and dispensed it according to His own goodness.

in the hand of a mediator — namely, Moses. [Deu 5:5](#), “I stood *between* the Lord and you”: the very definition of a mediator. Hence the phrase often recurs, “By the hand of Moses.” In the giving of the law, the “angels” were representatives of God; Moses, as mediator, represented the people.

Galatians 3:20

“Now a mediator cannot be of one (but must be of *two* parties whom he mediates between); but God is one” (not two: owing to His essential *unity* not admitting of an intervening party between Him and those to be blessed; but as the ONE Sovereign, His own representative, giving the blessing *directly* by *promise* to Abraham, and, in its fulfillment, to Christ, “the Seed,” without new condition, and without a mediator such as the law had). The conclusion understood is, *Therefore a mediator cannot appertain to God*; and consequently, the law, with its inseparable appendage of a mediator, cannot be the normal way of dealing of God, the one, and unchangeable God, who dealt with Abraham by *direct* promise, as a sovereign, not as one forming a compact with another party, with conditions and a mediator attached thereto. God would bring man into immediate communion with Him, and not have man separated from Him by a mediator that keeps back from access, as Moses and the legal priesthood did ([Exo 19:12](#), [Exo 19:13](#), [Exo 19:17](#), [Exo 19:21-24](#); [Heb 12:19-24](#)). The law that thus interposed a mediator and conditions between man and God, was an exceptional state limited to the Jews, and parenthetically preparatory to the Gospel, God’s normal mode of dealing, as He dealt with Abraham, namely, *face to face directly*; by *promise* and *grace*, and not conditions; *to all nations united* by faith *in the one seed* ([Eph 2:14](#), [Eph 2:16](#), [Eph 2:18](#)), and not to one people to the exclusion and severance from the ONE common Father, of all other nations. It is no objection to this view, that the Gospel, too, has a mediator ([1Ti 2:5](#)). For Jesus is not a mediator separating the two parties in the covenant of promise or grace, as Moses did, but ONE in both nature and office with both *God* and *man* (compare “God in Christ,” [Gal 3:17](#)): representing the whole universal manhood ([1Co 15:22](#), [1Co 15:45](#), [1Co 15:47](#)), and also bearing in Him “all the fullness of the Godhead.” Even His mediatorial office is to cease when its purpose of reconciling all things to God shall have been accomplished ([1Co 15:24](#)); and God’s ONENESS ([Zec 14:9](#)), as “all in all,” shall be fully manifested. Compare [Joh 1:17](#), where the two mediators - Moses, the severing mediator of legal conditions, and Jesus, the uniting mediator of grace - are contrasted. The Jews began their worship by reciting the Schemah, opening thus, “Jehovah our God is ONE Jehovah”; which words their Rabbis (as Jarchius) interpret as teaching not only the unity of God, but the future *universality of His Kingdom* on earth ([Zep 3:9](#)). Paul ([Rom 3:30](#)) infers the same truth from the ONENESS of God (compare [Eph 4:4-6](#)). He, as being One, unites all believers, without distinction, to Himself ([Gal 3:8](#), [Gal 3:16](#), [Gal 3:28](#); [Eph 1:10](#); [Eph 2:14](#); compare [Heb 2:11](#)) in direct communion. The unity of God involves the unity of the people of God, and also His dealing directly without intervention of a mediator.

Galatians 3:21

“Is the *law* (which involves a mediator) against the promises of God (which are without a mediator, and *rest on God* alone and immediately)? God forbid.”

life — The law, as an externally prescribed rule, can never internally impart spiritual life to men naturally dead in sin, and change the disposition. If the law had been a law capable of giving *life*, “verily (in very reality, and not in the mere fancy of legalists) righteousness would have been by the law (for where life is, there righteousness, its *condition*, must also be).” But the law does not *pretend* to give life, and therefore not righteousness; so there is no opposition between the law and the promise. Righteousness can only come through the promise to Abraham, and through its fulfillment in the Gospel of grace.

Galatians 3:22

But — as the law cannot give life or righteousness [Alford]. Or the “But” means, So far is *righteousness* from being of the law, that the *knowledge of sin* is rather what comes of the law [Bengel].

the scripture — which began to be written after the time of the promise, at the time when the law was given. The *written* letter was needed SO as PERMANENTLY to convict man of disobedience to God’s command. Therefore he says, “the Scripture,” not the “Law.” Compare [Gal 3:8](#), “Scripture,” for “the God of the Scripture.”

concluded — “shut up,” under condemnation, as in a prison. Compare [Isa 24:22](#), “As prisoners gathered in the pit and shut up in the prison.” Beautifully contrasted with “the liberty wherewith Christ makes free,” which follows, [Gal 3:7](#), [Gal 3:9](#), [Gal 3:25](#), [Gal 3:26](#); [Gal 5:1](#); [Isa 61:1](#).

all — Greek neuter, “the universe of things”: the whole world, man, and all that appertains to him.

under sin — ([Rom 3:9](#), [Rom 3:19](#); [Rom 11:32](#)).

the promise — *the inheritance promised* ([Gal 3:18](#)).

by faith of Jesus Christ — that is which is by faith in Jesus Christ.

might be given — The emphasis is on “given”: that it might be a free *gift*; not something earned by the works of the law ([Rom 6:23](#)).

to them that believe — to them that have “the faith of (in) Jesus Christ” just spoken of.

Galatians 3:23

faith — namely, that just mentioned ([Gal 3:22](#)), of which Christ is the object.

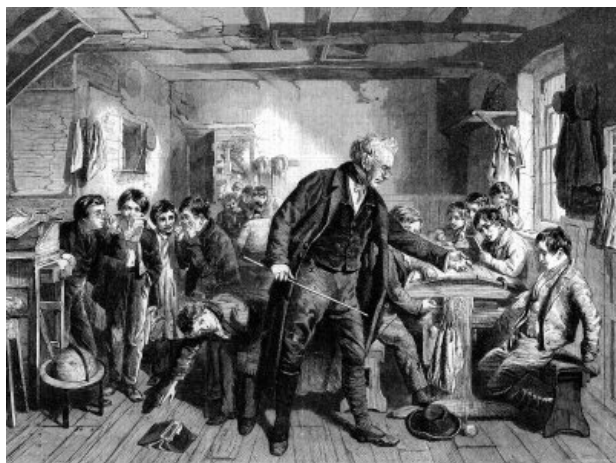
kept — Greek, “kept in ward”: the effect of the “shutting up” ([Gal 3:22](#); [Gal 4:2](#); [Rom 7:6](#)).

unto — “with a view to the faith,” etc. We were, in a manner, morally forced to it, so that there remained to us no refuge but faith. Compare the phrase, [Psa 78:50](#), *Margin*; [Psa 31:8](#).

which should afterwards, etc. — “which was afterwards to be revealed.”

Galatians 3:24

“So that the law *hath been* (that is, hath *turned out to be*) our schoolmaster (or “tutor,” literally, “pedagogue”: this term, among the Greeks, meant a faithful servant entrusted with the care of the boy from childhood to puberty, to keep him from evil, physical and moral, and accompany him to his amusements and studies) to guide us unto Christ,” with whom we are no longer “shut up” in bondage, but are freemen. “Children” (literally, *infants*) need such *tutoring* ([Gal 4:3](#)).



might be — rather, “that we *may* be justified by faith”; which we could not be till Christ, the object of faith, had come. Meanwhile the law, by outwardly checking the sinful propensity which was constantly giving fresh proof of its refractoriness - as thus the consciousness of the power of the sinful principle became more vivid, and hence the sense of need both of forgiveness of sin and freedom from its bondage was awakened - the law became a “schoolmaster to guide us unto Christ” [Neander]. The *moral* law shows us what we ought to do, and so we learn our inability to do it. In the *ceremonial* law we seek, by animal sacrifices, to answer for our not having done it, but find dead victims no satisfaction for the sins of living men, and that outward purifying will not cleanse the soul; and that therefore we need an infinitely better Sacrifice, the antitype of all the

legal sacrifices. Thus delivered up to the *judicial* law, we see how awful is the doom we deserve: thus the law at last leads us to Christ, with whom we find righteousness and peace. “*Sin, sin!*” is the word heard again and again in the Old Testament. Had it not there for centuries rung in the ear, and fastened on the conscience, the joyful sound, “grace for grace,” would not have been the watchword of the New Testament. This was the end of the whole system of sacrifices” [Tholuck].

Galatians 3:25

“But *now that* faith is come,” etc. Moses the lawgiver cannot bring us into the heavenly Canaan though he can bring us to the border of it. At that point he is superseded by Joshua, the type of Jesus, who leads the true Israel into their inheritance. The law leads us to Christ, and there its office ceases.

Galatians 3:26

children — *Greek*, “sons.”

by — *Greek*, “*through* faith.” “Ye all” (Jews and Gentiles alike) are no longer “children” requiring a *tutor*, but SONS emancipated and walking at liberty.

Galatians 3:27

baptized into Christ — ([Rom 6:3](#)).

have put on Christ — Ye *did*, in that very act of being baptized into Christ, *put on*, or clothe yourselves with, Christ: so the *Greek* expresses. Christ is to you the *toga virilis* (the Roman garment of the full-grown man, assumed when ceasing to be a child) [Bengel]. Gataker defines a Christian, “One who has put on Christ.” The argument is, By baptism ye have put on Christ; and therefore, He being the Son of God, ye become sons by adoption, by virtue of His Sonship by generation. This proves that baptism, *where it answers to its ideal*, is not a mere empty sign, but a means of spiritual transference from the state of legal condemnation to that of living union with Christ, and of sonship through Him in relation to God ([Rom 13:14](#)). Christ alone can, by baptizing with His Spirit, make the inward grace correspond to the outward sign. But as He promises the blessing in the faithful use of the means, the Church has rightly presumed, in charity, that such is the case, nothing appearing to the contrary.

Galatians 3:28

There is in this sonship by faith in Christ, no class privileged above another, as the Jews under the law had been above the Gentiles ([Rom 10:12](#); [1Co 12:13](#); [Col 3:11](#)).

bond nor free — Christ alike belongs to both by faith; whence he puts “bond” *before* “free.” Compare *Note*, see on [1Co 7:21](#), [1Co 7:22](#); see on [Eph 6:8](#).

neither male nor female — rather, as *Greek*, “there is *not* male *and* female.” There is no distinction into male and female. Difference of sex makes no difference in Christian privileges. But under the law the male sex had great privileges. Males alone had in their body circumcision, the sign of the covenant (contrast *baptism* applied to male and female alike); they alone were capable of being kings and priests,

whereas all of either sex are now “kings and priests unto God” ([Rev 1:6](#)); they had prior right to inheritances. In the resurrection the relation of the sexes shall cease ([Luk 20:35](#)).

one — Greek, “one man”; masculine, not neuter, namely “one new man” in Christ ([Eph 2:15](#)).

Galatians 3:29

and heirs — The oldest manuscripts omit “and.” Christ is “Abraham’s seed” ([Gal 3:16](#)): ye are “one in Christ” ([Gal 3:28](#)), and one with Christ, as having “put on Christ” ([Gal 3:27](#)); therefore YE are “Abraham’s seed,” which is tantamount to saying (whence the “and” is omitted), ye are “heirs according to the promise” (not “by the law,” [Gal 3:18](#)); for it was to Abraham’s seed that the inheritance was promised ([Gal 3:16](#)). Thus he arrives at the same truth which he set out with ([Gal 3:7](#)). But one new “seed” of a righteous succession could be found. One single faultless grain of human nature was found by God Himself, the source of a new and imperishable seed: “the seed” ([Psa 22:30](#)) who receive from Him a new nature and name ([Gen 3:15](#); [Isa 53:10](#), [Isa 53:11](#); [Joh 12:24](#)). In Him the lineal descent from David becomes extinct. He died without posterity. But He lives and shall reign on David’s throne. No one has a legal claim to sit upon it but Himself, He being the only living direct representative ([Eze 21:27](#)). His spiritual seed derive their birth from the travail of His soul, being born again of His word, which is the incorruptible seed ([Joh 1:12](#); [Rom 9:8](#); [1Pe 1:23](#)).

Galatians 4:1-7

[Gal 4:1-31](#). *The same subject continued: Illustration of our subjection to the Law only till Christ came, from the subjection of an heir to his guardian till he is of age. Peter’s good will to the Galatians should lead them to the same good will to him as they had at first shown. Their desire to be under the Law shown by the allegory of Isaac and Ishmael to be inconsistent with their Gospel liberty.*

The fact of God’s sending His Son to redeem us who were under the law ([Gal 4:4](#)), and sending the Spirit of His Son into our hearts ([Gal 4:6](#)), confirms the conclusion ([Gal 3:29](#)) that we are “heirs according to the promise.”

the heir — ([Gal 3:29](#)). It is not, as in earthly inheritances, the death of the father, but our Father’s sovereign will simply that makes us heirs.

child — Greek, “one under age.”

differeth nothing, etc. — that is, has no more freedom than a slave (so the Greek for “servant” means). He is not at his own disposal.

lord of all — by title and virtual ownership (compare [1Co 3:21](#), [1Co 3:22](#)).

Galatians 4:2

tutors and governors — rather, “guardians (of the person) and stewards (of the property).” Answering to “the law was our schoolmaster” or “tutor” ([Gal 3:24](#)).

until the time appointed of the father — in His eternal purposes ([Eph 1:9-11](#)). The Greek is a legal term, expressing a *time defined* by law, or testamentary disposition.

Galatians 4:3

we — the Jews primarily, and inclusively the Gentiles also. For the “we” in [Gal 4:5](#) plainly refers to *both* Jew and Gentile believers. The Jews in their bondage to the law of Moses, as the representative people of the world, include all mankind virtually amenable to God’s law ([Rom 2:14](#), [Rom 2:15](#); compare *Note*, see on [Gal 3:13](#); see on [Gal 3:23](#)). Even the Gentiles were under “bondage,” and in a state of discipline suitable to nonage, till Christ came as the Emancipator.

were in bondage — as “servants” ([Gal 4:1](#)).

under the elements — or “rudiments”; rudimentary religion teaching of a non-Christian character: *the elementary lessons of outward things* (literally, “of the [outward] world”); such as the legal ordinances mentioned, [Gal 4:10](#) ([Col 2:8](#), [Col 2:20](#)). Our childhood’s lessons [Conybeare and Howson]. Literally, The *letters* of the alphabet ([Heb 5:12](#)).

Galatians 4:4

the fulness of the time — namely, “the time appointed by the Father” ([Gal 4:2](#)). Compare *Note*, see on [Eph 1:10](#); [Luk 1:57](#); [Act 2:1](#); [Eze 5:2](#). “The Church has its own ages” [Bengel]. God does nothing prematurely, but, foreseeing the end from the beginning, waits till all is ripe for the execution of His purpose. Had Christ come directly after the fall, the enormity and deadly fruits of sin would not have been realized fully by man, so as to feel his desperate state and need of a Savior. Sin was fully developed. Man’s inability to save himself by obedience to the law, whether that of Moses, or that of conscience, was completely manifested; all the prophecies of various ages found their common center in *this* particular time: and Providence, by various arrangements in the social and political, as well as the moral world, had fully prepared the way for the coming Redeemer. God often permits physical evil long before he teaches the remedy. The smallpox had for long committed its ravages before inoculation, and then vaccination, was discovered. It was essential to the honor of God’s law to permit evil long before He revealed the full remedy. Compare “the set time” ([Psa 102:13](#)).

was come — Greek, “came.”

sent forth — Greek, “*sent forth out of heaven from Himself*” [Alford and Bengel]. The same verb is used of the Father’s sending forth the Spirit ([Gal 4:6](#)). So in [Act 7:12](#). Compare with this verse, [Joh 8:42](#); [Isa 48:16](#).

his — emphatical. “*His own Son*.” Not *by adoption*, as we are ([Gal 4:5](#)): nor merely His Son by the anointing of the Spirit which God sends into the heart ([Gal 4:6](#); [Joh 1:18](#)).

made of a woman — “made” is used as in [1Co 15:45](#), “The first man, Adam, *was made* a living soul,” Greek, “made to be (*born*) of a woman.” The expression implies a special interposition of God in His birth as man, namely, causing Him to be conceived by the Holy Ghost. So Estius.

made under the law — “made to be under the law.” Not merely as Grotius and Alford explain, “Born subject to the law *as a Jew*.” But “made” by His Father’s appointment, and His own free will, “subject to the law,” to keep it all, ceremonial and moral, perfectly for us, as the Representative Man, and to suffer and exhaust the full penalty of our whole race’s violation of it. This constitutes the significance of His circumcision, His being presented in the temple ([Luk 2:21](#), [Luk 2:22](#), [Luk 2:27](#); compare [Mat 5:17](#)), and His baptism by John, when He said ([Mat 3:15](#)), “Thus it becometh us to *fulfil all righteousness*.”

Galatians 4:5

To — Greek, “*That He might redeem*.”

them ... under the law — primarily the Jews: but as these were the representative people of the world, *the Gentiles*, too, are included in the redemption ([Gal 3:13](#)).

receive — The Greek implies the *suitableness* of the thing as long ago predestined by God. “Receive as something destined or due” ([Luk 23:41](#); [2Jo 1:8](#)). Herein God makes of sons of men sons of God, inasmuch as God made of the Son of God the Son of man [Augustine on [Psa 52:1-9](#)].

Galatians 4:6

because ye are sons — The gift of the Spirit of prayer is the consequence of our adoption. The Gentile Galatians might think, as the Jews were under the law before their adoption, that so they, too, must first be under the law. Paul, by anticipation, meets this objection by saying, YE ARE sons, therefore ye need not be as children ([Gal 4:1](#)) under the tutorship of the law, as being already in the free state of “sons” of God by faith in Christ ([Gal 3:26](#)), no longer in your nonage (as “children,” [Gal 4:1](#)). The Spirit of God’s only Begotten Son in your hearts, sent from, and leading you to cry to, the Father, attests your sonship by adoption: for the Spirit is the “earnest of your inheritance” ([Rom 8:15](#), [Rom 8:16](#); [Eph 1:13](#)). “It is because ye are sons that God sent forth” (the Greek requires this translation, not “*hath* sent forth”) into OUR (so the oldest manuscripts read for “your,” in *English Version*) hearts the Spirit of His son, crying, “Abba, Father” ([Joh 1:12](#)). As in [Gal 4:5](#) he changed from “them,” the third person, to “we,” the first person, so here he changes from “ye,” the second person, to “our,” the first person: this he does to identify their case as Gentiles, with his own and that of his believing fellow countrymen, as Jews. In another point of view, though not the immediate one intended by the context, this verse expresses, “Because ye *are* sons (already in God’s electing purpose of love), God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into

your hearts,” etc.: God thus, by sending His Spirit in due time, actually conferring that sonship which He already regarded as a present reality (“are”) because of His purpose, even before it was actually fulfilled. So [Heb 2:13](#), where “the children” are spoken of as existing in His purpose, before their actual existence.

the Spirit of his Son — By faith ye are one with the Son, so that what is His is yours; His Sonship ensures your sonship; His Spirit ensures for you a share in the same. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” ([Rom 8:9](#)). Moreover, as the Spirit of God proceeds from God the Father, so the Spirit of the Son proceeds from the Son: so that the Holy Ghost, as the Creed says, “proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” The Father was not *begotten*: the Son is *begotten* of the Father; the Holy Ghost *proceeding* from the Father and the Son.

crying — Here the SPIRIT is regarded as the *agent* in praying, and the believer as *His organ*. In [Rom 8:15](#), “The Spirit of adoption” is said to be that whereby WE cry, “Abba, Father”; but in [Rom 8:26](#), “The SPIRIT ITSELF maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The believers’ prayer is His prayer: hence arises its acceptability with God.

Abba, Father — The *Hebrew* says, “Abba” (a *Hebrew* term), the *Greek*, “Father” (“Pater,” a *Greek* term in the original), both united together in one Sonship and one cry of faith, “Abba, Father.” So “Even so (‘Nai,’ *Greek*) Amen (*Hebrew*),” both meaning the same ([Rev 1:7](#)). Christ’s own former cry is the believers’ cry, “Abba, Father” ([Mar 14:36](#)).

Galatians 4:7

Wherefore — Conclusion inferred from [Gal 4:4-6](#).

thou — individualizing and applying the truth to each. Such an individual appropriation of this comforting truth God grants in answer to them who cry, “Abba, Father.”

heir of God through Christ — The oldest manuscripts read, “an heir through God.” This combines on behalf of man, the whole before-mentioned agency, of THE TRINITY: the Father sent His Son and the Spirit; the Son has freed us from the law; the Spirit has completed our sonship. Thus the redeemed are heirs THROUGH the Triune God, not through the law, nor through fleshly descent [Windischmann in Alford]; ([Gal 3:18](#) confirms this).

heir — confirming [Gal 3:29](#); compare [Rom 8:17](#).