

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

"Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22:12

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"COMMENTS ON GALATIANS 3 - No. 8." (Page 518)

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"BUT before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."
Verse 23.

It has been abundantly proved that "under the law" indicates, in general, a state of sin and consequently of condemnation. See the comments on Rom.6:14; Gal.4:4,5,21; 5:18; and Romans 7. The idea of bondage is everywhere connected with sin. It is a cruel master. Paul says: "The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." In the verse before us, we have the strongest expression on this point that occurs in the Bible. Take earthly laws as an illustration of the fact. When they are violated, the offender is seized as soon as possible, and cast into prison. He is "shut up" to await either the execution of the penalty or a pardon. Of course in earthly affairs miscarriages of justice often take place. Sometimes a culprit is not apprehended, and very often the guilty escape without either sentence or pardon. But from the law of God there is no escape. There is a standing sentence of death on all who violate it, and consequently as soon as a man sins, he brings himself under its curse. He is "condemned already." Moreover, although sentence may not be executed speedily, God's Government does not, like human governments, need detectives to ferret out the criminals. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Prov. 15:3.

As in human governments the criminal is cast into prison as soon as he is detected, so violators of God's law are at once "shut up." As soon as they transgress the law, they are indicted and condemned, and there is no possibility of escape from the threatened penalty. Yes, there is just one way of escape. "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ" will make the man stand free before God. The sinner, as is described by Paul in Rom. 7:14-24, may strive with all his might to keep the law, and to get rid of the body of death that is fastened to him. But how can the guilty one help himself when he is "shut up" in prison, "in bondage," and securely chained to a body of death? All his struggles are fruitless. He makes an effort to escape in this direction, but finds himself confronted, by the prison wall; then he makes an effort on the other side, and there the massive wall opposes an effectual barrier to his progress. He is absolutely "shut up" to the faith which may afterwards be revealed as the only means of escape from present guilt, and from the wrath to come.

Peter carries out the same idea when he calls the wicked antediluvians "the spirits in prison," and says that Christ, by the Spirit, went and preached to them. 1 Peter 3:18-20. If they had listened to this preaching, they might have been released from prison, for it is the mission of Christ "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Isa. 61:1.

Take notice that in every case of just imprisonment it is the law that seizes the criminal, shuts him up, and keeps him confined until his trial and execution. The sheriff, jailer, and executioner are only agents of the law. It is the strong arm of the law that gives power to the prison walls and bolts. But for the violated law, they could have no power to confine a man. So the law is in reality the jailer to every criminal. This idea is carried out in the verse under consideration. The New Version makes it emphatic by saying, "But before faith came, we were kept *in ward*

under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." The addition of the words "in ward" is not unwarranted. The Greek is *sugkleismenos*, which carries the idea of confinement, from *kleis*, a key. Alford says on the expression, "were kept in ward": "Not simply *kept*, as authorized version, but as Chrysostom says, *as it were in a fortress*." And this agrees strikingly with Luther's version, which reads: "*Wurden wir tinter dem gesetzte ferwahret and ferschlossen*." "We were under the law, guarded and imprisoned." The word *ferschlossen* means "locked up," from *schloss*, a lock, a castle, a fortress. All this agrees with the known office of any law,—to confine within prison walls those who violate it.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3:24.

The word "schoolmaster" does not convey to us the idea of the original. The Greek is (*paidagogos*), pedagogue. The *paidagogos* was a slave who attended the children on their way to school, beating them if they were inclined to play truant. He also had charge of them out of school, having the general duty of correcting their manners. We have come to use the word pedagogue as synonymous with school-teacher, but in reality we have nothing which corresponds to the ancient *paidagogos*. In the New Version the word is rendered "tutor," the first definition of which is, "One who guards, protects, watches over, or has the care of another." The word occurs in but one other place in the New Testament, in 1 Cor. 4:15, where in King James's Version it is rendered "instructor." "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Here the same idea is conveyed as in Gal. 5:24, 25. The Corinthians might have many *tutors*, many who would lay down the law to them, and show them their errors, but they had not many, who, like Paul, would preach "Christ, and him crucified," and with the tenderness of a father win them to faith in Christ. The old meaning of "pedagogue" still attaches to the word "tutor," for it is very common to speak of "tutoring" some person, the idea being that of disciplining, of correcting with authority.

This idea is still further carried out in Luther's translation, where the Greek word *paidagogos* is rendered *zuchtmeister*, which means "a master of a house of correction;" "a task-master;" "a jailer." Before faith came we were kept in prison, under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed; wherefore the law was our master in that house of correction, to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The reader will notice that the idea that the law acts as a jailer to sinners does not conflict with the idea that it also acts as a tutor, or pedagogue. It acts as pedagogue by virtue of its office as jailer. As jailer it shuts us up in a stronghold from which we cannot escape. Now the more galling this imprisonment is made, the more our desire to escape is increased; and since there is no means of escape except through faith in Jesus Christ, it follows that the more of a jailer we feel the law to be, the more of a pedagogue it becomes, forcing us to flee for refuge to the hope set before us.

This office the law now has, and it has no other. It cannot pardon; it can only point out our sin. It is this which, directed by the Spirit of God, convicts of sin. Stung by his awakened conscience, the guilty one seeks peace and rest, but the law relentlessly charges him with his sin. All that it will do is to deepen conviction, and thus add to the load that weighs down the sinner. Finally, when he loses confidence in himself, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am," he is forced to cast himself at the feet of Jesus, saying, "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner." This is the only avenue of escape, and it is one that never fails. Thus the law literally drives the sinner to Christ, by shutting up every other way of freedom from guilt. And when the sinner has come to Christ, he learns from the one whose life is but the embodiment of the righteousness of the law. He is thus exhorted to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18. Christ says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Matt. 11:29. He is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), that is, the law in its perfection. In Christ he may perform good works, because he walks at liberty. As the justified one abides in Christ and Christ in him (John 15:4), he is enabled finally to grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3:25-27.

The best comment on the expression, "after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster," is found in Rom. 8:1-4. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Or this: "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Rom. 6:14, 15.

Still another comment on Gal. 3:22-25, and a parallel passage is found in Rom.3:20-25: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Not only may the above text be applied the same as Gal.3:20-25, but it must be applied to the same thing, for the argument in each place is exactly the same.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Jesus Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:27-29.

This closes the chapter, and the argument. In the fourth chapter, an exposition of which has been given, the apostle goes over the ground in another way, to bring out additional points. There, as here, Christ is the focal point. Baptism is for the remission of sins. We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, and by that act we "put on Christ." And if we are Christ's, which honor we attain to, only by the exercise of faith, then we are children of faithful Abraham, and with him are heirs of the promise. In this way, and in this way alone, can we be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

W.