

## Study 7

### Galatians 3:19-29

1. The nature of the Law was that it was conditional on obedience whilst the Covenant was an unconditional provision by God to Abraham. The Judaisers claimed precedence as the law was given later. What was Paul saying about the relationship between the Law and the covenant?

Paul argued that the covenant given to Abraham takes precedence over the Law because it was established first and unconditionally. The Law, introduced 430 years later, did not nullify the covenant but served as a temporary measure to reveal sin and point people toward faith in Christ, who ultimately fulfills the covenantal promises.

2. If salvation was by faith all along what was the purpose of the Mosaic Law given 430 years after the Abrahamic covenant? Look at Gal 3:19 and what was Paul saying about the role of the Law if it was not to provide an alternative path to salvation?

According to Galatians 3:19, the Mosaic Law was given “because of transgressions”—not as an alternative path to salvation but to reveal sin, define its boundaries, and increase awareness of humanity’s need for a Savior. Paul explains that the Law acted as a temporary guardian (Gal 3:24) or prison (Gal 3:22-23), restraining sin and pointing people toward Christ, the true fulfillment of the covenantal promises. Salvation was always by faith, and the Law’s role was to prepare people for the coming of Christ by highlighting their inability to achieve righteousness on their own.

3. Look at *Galatians 3:22 (ESV): 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.* Paul uses another metaphor here to describe the role of the law, and this metaphor is now the “prison.” How does this use of the prison imagery further illustrate the role of the law, and how does it facilitate faith in Christ?

Paul’s imagery of **prison** in Galatians 3:22 emphasizes how the Law confined all people under the power of sin, showing them their inability to achieve righteousness on their own. Just as prisoners are locked up with no way to free themselves, humanity is trapped under sin’s dominion, with the Law making sin’s presence and consequences even clearer. This imprisonment was not meant to be permanent but served to **drive people toward faith in Christ**, the only means of true freedom. By exposing sin’s grip, the Law prepared people to recognize their need for a Savior, leading them to receive **the promise of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.**

4. In illustrating the role of the law, Paul switches to another metaphor: the law as a guardian for a child. How did the Law, in its civil, sacrificial, and moral

components, actually act as a guardian for Israel, pointing towards the need for Christ when he eventually came?

Paul's metaphor of the Law as a **guardian** (Galatians 3:24) illustrates its role in guiding and disciplining Israel until Christ came. In ancient times, a **guardian** (Greek: *paidagōgos*) was a tutor or custodian responsible for overseeing a child's behavior and ensuring their proper upbringing. Similarly, the Law functioned in three key ways:

1. **Civil Law** – It maintained order in Israel's society, distinguishing them from surrounding nations and preserving them as a people through whom the Messiah would come.
2. **Sacrificial Law** – It provided a system of sacrifices that reminded Israel of their sinfulness and their need for atonement, foreshadowing Christ's ultimate sacrifice.
3. **Moral Law** – It revealed God's holy standards, making clear humanity's inability to attain righteousness on their own and pointing to the necessity of a Savior.

By acting as a **temporary custodian**, the Law disciplined Israel, exposed sin, and **created an awareness of the need for redemption**, ultimately leading people to faith in Christ, who fulfilled the Law's purpose.

5. a) Why has the coming of Jesus removed all barriers between people of different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, socioeconomic classes, and genders?  
Christianity is unique in this perspective, more so than other religions. For example, in Islam, there is a need to read the Koran in Arabic and assimilate one's culture into its expression.

Jesus' coming removed all barriers between people because **salvation is based on faith in Him, not on ethnicity, culture, or social status** (Galatians 3:28). Unlike religions that tie spiritual identity to language, race, or cultural practices, Christianity teaches that **all believers are united in Christ**, regardless of their background. Paul emphasizes that through Christ, distinctions such as Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female no longer define one's standing before God. This radical inclusivity is unique because it means that **salvation is universally accessible**—not bound to a particular culture, language, or societal structure. The gospel transforms identity, making all believers part of God's family, and transcending human divisions.

By living out these principles, the church becomes a true reflection of the **oneness in Christ** that Paul describes in Galatians 3:28. This provides concrete proof to world at large that desperately want unity and peace which all too often eludes them even as they try to enact laws, make trade agreements and try to forge unity and alliances between nations but all ultimately break down because of the fundamentally shaky basis of unity. The world's unity is based on mutual shared values, benefits or need for security but true oneness can only come forged by the Spirit of God and enabled by the cross of Jesus that really provided the concrete basis to tear down all those walls that divide us. He provides a new community forged out of His love and transformed by it

which is the only way sinful humans can ever find oneness.

b) How can your church reflect this groundbreaking spiritual truth that we are all one in Christ?

The church can reflect this truth by:

1. **Welcoming Diversity** – Encouraging a multicultural community where people of different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds worship and serve together.
2. **Preaching Unity in Christ** – Teaching that all believers share an equal status in God's kingdom and emphasizing love and reconciliation over cultural or racial divisions.
3. **Inclusive Worship and Ministry** – Providing opportunities for people from all backgrounds to contribute, incorporating diverse expressions of faith, and ensuring leadership reflects the unity of the body of Christ.
4. **Social Outreach and Justice** – Actively breaking down barriers by engaging in ministries that serve the marginalized, advocating for justice, and demonstrating Christ's love to all.

6. a) Why is it important for the church to be multi-ethnic and what were the mistakes that prior Western missionaries had made in their missions to Asian nations?

### **The Importance of a Multi-Ethnic Church**

A multi-ethnic church reflects the universal nature of the gospel and God's vision for His people. In Revelation 7:9, John describes a great multitude "**from every nation, tribe, people, and language**" worshiping before God, showing that **Christianity is not bound to one ethnicity or culture**. A church that embraces diversity mirrors this heavenly reality, demonstrates unity in Christ, and breaks down racial and cultural barriers that often divide people.

### **Mistakes of Western Missionaries in Asia**

Many Western missionaries, despite their good intentions, **tied Christianity to Western culture** rather than presenting it as a faith that transcends cultures. Some mistakes included:

1. **Forcing Western Traditions** – Imposing European languages, clothing, and customs rather than allowing Christianity to take root in local cultural expressions.
2. **Disregarding Indigenous Beliefs** – Viewing all native traditions as pagan instead of discerning which aspects could be redeemed and used to glorify God.
3. **Cultural Superiority** – Treating Western culture as superior to Asian traditions, which led to resistance and made Christianity seem foreign.

b) What is the danger of a particular culture being associated with Christianity? Why is it important for every local church to adapt biblical truths and express them in their own culture? What is the danger in this process? What are the advantages?

## The Danger of Associating Christianity with a Specific Culture

When Christianity is linked too closely to a particular culture, it creates **barriers to the gospel**. People may reject Christianity **not because of Jesus, but because they see it as a foreign or colonial religion**. This association also risks **confusing cultural norms with biblical truth**, leading to legalism or exclusion.

## Contextualizing Christianity in Every Culture

Every local church must **express biblical truths within its cultural context** so that the gospel becomes relevant to its people. This involves using indigenous music, language, customs, and traditions to **communicate Christian truths without compromising biblical principles**.

## The Dangers of Contextualization

The biggest risk is **syncretism**, where biblical faith is blended with unbiblical local beliefs, leading to theological distortions. If not carefully guided by Scripture, churches may compromise core doctrines to fit cultural norms.

## The Advantages of Contextualization

1. **Authenticity** – People see Christianity as something for them, not a foreign import.
2. **Greater Acceptance** – The gospel is received more openly when it speaks to people in their own language and traditions.
3. **Faith Flourishes Locally** – Indigenous leadership develops, making Christianity self-sustaining rather than dependent on foreign influence.

A multi-ethnic church and culturally adapted faith ensure that Christianity remains **truly global, uniting all people in Christ while honoring the beauty of diverse cultures**.

7. Discussion Question. Can a Chinese Malaysian Christian celebrate Chinese New Year? What are the practices that in the light of Scripture will be helpful to reflect biblical values?

- Loh Sang
- Ang Pows
- Wishing someone Kong He Fatt Choy
- Gift of mandarin oranges
- Used of firecrackers
- Visitation to relatives

How can we reconfigure these practices to have a more spiritual bent for the witness of the gospel?

### **Case History**

Lawrence Thing attended a church where LGBTQ people were openly welcomed. He was willing to be open-minded as many of the members were young people and professionals and very well-educated. The pastor said that it was based on *Galatians 3:28 (ESV) 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.*

He said that this was obvious proof that there were no longer any gender differences in the Christian faith. Hence if there were no more gender differences then there should be no problem with same-sex unions. This is proof that we should embrace all LGBTQ people in the church and accept their sexual activity without shame.

Look at the context of Galatians 3:23-29 and determine if the context of the argument that Paul is making here will support what the pastor is saying.

### **Takeaway**

**The law was given to reveal sin and point people toward faith in Christ, acting as a temporary guardian until Jesus fulfilled God's covenantal promises. Salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, not by obeying the law, and believers are united as God's children, free from the law's bondage, bringing spiritual maturity and true freedom.**