**God Has Done a New Thing**

Based on [Galatians 3:23-29](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ga3.23-29)

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Circumcision and Name of Jesus

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It is a New Year. What it will bring, only God knows. We know that someday God will make all things new (Rev. 21:5). The book of Revelation describes that there will be on the last day a new heaven and a new earth. The old will pass away, and the holy city, new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. We can scarcely imagine what life will be like in that day…no sin, no death, no devil. We shall see God face to face and worship Forever in eternal happiness.

But the renewal of all creation on the last day is not the only innovation of God since the beginning. When Jesus came, he brought with him a New Covenant, a New Testament in his blood, and we can scarcely imagine what it would have been like before He came. **But St. Paul knows. He lived in the world as one of God’s people both under the old covenant and the new, and much of his writing of Scripture is a rejoicing in the New Life he and all believers are given now that the New Covenant is here.** The central teaching from our Galatians text is that, because faith has come, God’s people are in a new situation. Because faith has come, all people are one in Christ, Jesus.

Before Christ came, God’s people were held captive under the law, imprisoned, under the Law’s Guardianship. Scripture means here that God’s people were once like children who needed adult supervision, a Guardian.

God’s People, the Jews were once under a guardian of ceremonies and civil laws. Just as a child needs to be kept from bad influences, so too did God’s people before Christ came. They had to be taught the need for atonement, so God commanded certain regular sacrifices of bulls and goats. They needed to be taught that their work is all for nothing if they don’t rest in the Lord and trust His provision, so he prescribed a Sabbath day. **They needed to be taught that even if your pure, you can defile yourself and make yourself unclean so God commanded a distinction of meats and called some food unclean, and he distinguished certain people in this way Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free.** And in order to teach that the wages of sin is death, most sins required a punishment of death.

These Laws were Good and necessary at the time, but they are a form of restraint and guardianship. Parents make certain laws for their children, so that they are preserved until they reach maturity. **Curfews, and boundaries. Don’t talk to strangers. Don’t drink alcohol. No adult themed movies.**  Learn your letters and the history of the world and where you come from, even if you can’t understand the value at the time. And if you break these rules you need to be disciplined, even though adults, guardians can refuse to observe these rules with impunity.

“The Law was a guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.” These Old Laws “**Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch**” (Col. 2:21)…before Christ came, these were necessary to keep God’s people safe and prepare them for the day when redemption would come. But these rules were only shadows of what has not come; the substance belongs to Christ.

“Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.” We are no longer under the ceremonies, sacrifices, and civil law of Israel. Why were there sacrifices in the OT? To point to the once for all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Now that he is come, we don’t need the signs, we have the substance. **Why was there a Sabbath day, to point to the Christ who would come as himself the Lord of the Sabbath and the one in whom we have rest.** Why was there a distinction of meats, to show that his sacrifice makes all foods clean. Why was there a need to punish transgression with death; to point to the punishment we all deserve on account of our sin, that Jesus suffered on the cross in our place. These laws, were signs pointing to the faith to come. **And now that faith has come, now that we believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified, died, buried, raised and ascended, we don’t need a guardian, or a schoolmaster to teach us elementary things.** We have the real deal. And just as it would be silly to continue to advertize an event that’s already taken place, so to it would be absurd to continue to sacrifice, to punish, to circumcise, to distinguish persons when Christ has made all things new, and all are one in Him. **One Lord, one faith, one baptism.**

“**In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.** ” The sign that you had received the Covenant and were one of God’s people before Christ came, was obedience to the Law of Moses. And the central sign of this was circumcision. But women only shared in circumcision through a man, slaves only through their master, gentile only through a Jew. But Jesus, from the very beginning of his life, kept the Law perfectly and led the perfect life on behalf of all who believe in him. He was circumcised on the eighth day, the first shedding of his blood for all humanity.

“**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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**.” Circumcision was old, baptism is new. And baptism is available to all equally. The central issue dealt with in the book of Galatians is whether, now that Jesus has come, whether outsiders need to come to Jesus through the Old Covenant, especially things like being circumcised before you can be baptized. Some were teaching this and Paul says they miss the whole point. There are no barriers to being adopted into the new covenant through faith.

And so baptism is the great equalizer. Christ has come, faith has come, and humanity has reached maturity, not because we have grown in worthiness ourselves, but because the full plan of salvation has been revealed. **There are no adult themes about atonement and salvation we cannot handle. There is no need for a guardian, the Law, because Christ has been revealed, and he has accomplished all things.** And any person of any nationality, of any social standing, of any sex, of any color, of any intellectual caliber, of any age can receive Christ directly through the waters of Holy Baptism.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on—literally “been clothed with” Christ. **It is sad that some teach a baby need’s to grow into Christ’s clothing before he can be given to them.** The whole point is that there is no need for a guardian, the creation is prepared to receive the new creation through the washing of renewal and rebirth of the Holy Spirit, whom God has poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So now that we’ve reached adulthood and no longer have a guardian, is there no law for us. We are baptized can we now go indulge in the flesh, watch X rated movies, get drunk and high, curse and swear, lie, cheat and steal, that we can strike our parents, disobey the government? **By no means! We have been given the Holy Spirit, and his fruits are kindness, gentleness, self control which help us walk in accord with God’s Commands.** But the ceremonies and civil laws of Israel have passed away. They were useful as a guardian, but now are obsolete. Christ has come and, he has been given the Name that is above all names: Jesus, the one who saves his people from their sins. And in baptism, we have been given his name, adopted into his family we are all one in Him, and heirs according to promise.

In Christ you are a new creation. Happy New Year.