

Word Study **Schoolmaster**

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We read in the Authorised Version: **“Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”**

(Galatians 3:24-25). “Schoolmaster” is a translation of the Greek word *paidagogos*, hence our English word pedagogue. *Paidagogos* has been translated “instructor”, “slave”, “tutor”, “tutor to discipline”, “strict governess”, “custodian”, “attendant”, “guide”, “wards in discipline”, “tutor-slave”, etc., Are all of these translations accurate?

The role of the ‘schoolmaster’

The *paidagogos* was not the instructor of the child. He had another role to fulfil. He was the slave, who exercised a general supervision over the child and was responsible for his moral and physical well being. In ancient Greece, a boy was usually committed to a *paidagogos* at the age of seven. The boy left him when he attained the age of puberty. The duty of the *paidagogos* was to guard the child from evil; accompany him to school; guard him out of doors on all occasions; take care of his personal safety; and keep him from bad company. William Barclay has written: “He must see that the boy walked modestly with downcast head in the streets; he must see that he gave place to older people and was becomingly silent in their presence; he must teach him to be well mannered at table and to wear his clothes with grace. He had to teach him all the Greek meant by *eukosmia*, good manners, good deportment, pleasantness of life”. “He was really a mixture of nurse, footman, chaperon and tutor”. (K.J. Freeman). I know a lot of schoolchildren who could do with the likes of him today.

The importance of slavery to the ancient Greek and Roman worlds should not be underestimated. There were many kinds of slaves, including the pedagogues. The pedagogues were probably better placed than most because they were “white-collar” slaves. However, all slaves in Roman times were regarded as chattels, things inventoried, for example, with oxen and wagons. Slaves could be given, let, sold, exchanged or seized for debt. The lives of all slaves were in the power of their masters. The power was absolute without legal or moral restraint. Consequently, the maxim of slaves was: “Love one another; love robbery, love licentiousness; hate your masters; and never tell the truth”. Thankfully, some slaves were treated well and eventually freed.

Christianity, undoubtedly, overthrew slavery in the end without creating economic chaos. One writer has commented: "This was done by altering the attitude of men toward one another until the worth and the dignity of every individual was known and respected". Another writer put it this way: "From the day that it became known that every man bears the image of God within, human slavery was doomed".

Law leads to Christ

Brother Wardrop of Motherwell often said: "The Law diagnosed the disease, but Jesus provided the remedy". The Law of Moses had a purpose – to bring us to Christ. It could not justify itself, because it was a law, a written code. W. Carl Ketcherside has written; "So long as man is in the flesh, in his human nature, he cannot be justified by such a written code, regardless of its origin. The weakness is not in the code, but in the flesh". If man could have been saved by perfect adherence to a law then there would have been no need for Jesus to enter the world and die on a cross at Calvary for the sins of the world. The teaching of the Bible is very clear: we are not justified by law, but by faith in Christ Jesus, who was the fulfilment of the law.

So the Law had its part to play in God's plan of redemption. It was perfect for its purpose (a perfect God does not give an imperfect law). It was given to lead us to Christ. Now, the Law has been superseded. Now, we are no longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). Now, we are justified, sanctified and saved by Christ Jesus, our heavenly master. The trouble is that some Christians think that Jesus is another "schoolmaster". In other words, they think that the Christian system is simply another system of law and not grace. Legalism has no place in Christianity. The righteousness of God is not based upon legal conformity. Truly, the legalistically minded are trying to live BC lives in an AD world.

Our hope now lies in conformity to Jesus and not in conformity to a code. But what of Christ's commandments? We do not love Christ because we keep His commandments, but we keep His commandments because we love Christ. In Christ, we have attained a position of maturity. That maturity means freedom that no Jew ever experienced under the Law. It is a great paradox, I know, but true freedom is found in enslavement to Jesus. We are not our own, we are His. How then could any Christian be lazy or idle? Our service to our heavenly Master should be a daily, disciplined, loving service – and it should be to His honour and glory. Jesus, of course, knows all about service. His whole life was one of service. He is our supreme example in all things, and He is our example in service. He once said to His disciples: **"You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the willing slave of all – like the Son of Man; He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give up His life as a ransom for many."** (Matthew 20:25 –28, N.E.B.). Are we all willing to give up our lives for Him?