

# Galatians Chapter 3 v 23 - Chapter 4 v 20

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[ 0 : 00 ] The chapter 3 comes to explain various things about what's going to happen in chapter 4.

And right at the beginning, which is entitled The Children of God, if you've got the New International Version, says this, Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

So the law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who are baptised into Christ, who clothe yourselves with Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. And just before we leave that, let's just look at what that promise to Abraham was.

[ 1 : 11 ] Because in Genesis chapter 15 verses 4 and 5 it says this, Now that section tells us that we have faith.

And yet we are prisoners in custody. It's what it says in those verses that we read. And we are prisoners under the law.

And the law was necessary because it was there to guide us away from sin and into right paths. As an illustration of this, children need to be guided to lead them into good habits.

Let to themselves, they might do something unknowingly that might be dangerous for them. And their parent might have to stop them doing something that might injure them or others because they're still children who don't understand the dangers.

And what this passage is telling us is that Christians can be like that. And clearly the Galatians were coming into this category. That's what concerned Paul.

[ 2 : 36 ] At the start of chapter 4, Paul tries to explain what the things that were said at the end of chapter 3 were so that people can understand better.

He says this, And of course, when we think of coming of age in our society, it means someone who's legally become an adult.

A time when they're old enough to vote. It also talks about the time when someone matures emotionally or in some other way. And finally, in their careers maybe, is the time when someone starts to become successful and they're said to have come of age in whatever profession they chose to pick.

Now usually in Europe, that age is between 17 and 21. And of course in Britain, currently it's at 18. In the Jewish race, it actually happens at 13 years of age in the Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

In this explanation that Paul's giving here, he introduces this word slave. And if there's a title to what I'm going to be talking about tonight, it's about slaves.

[ 4 : 27 ] It's about being saved or salvation. And it's about sons. So three S's. When we think of a slave, it's got connotations that are very negative.

However, in biblical times, a slave was somewhat different to what we imagine it to be today. Most Hebrew slaves became so because of debts. And they owed money to people and they couldn't look after themselves as it were.

So they sold themselves into slavery. It wasn't that they were taken as slaves. They sold themselves into slavery. And in fact, the slave owners could be punished for mistreating their slaves.

And in any case, the slaves had to be freed after seven years of service. The Jews were therefore very much more compassionate towards slaves.

The slave, it's true, had to obey and serve his master. And Paul is telling the Galatians that children have to obey and serve their father and mother until they become adults.

[ 5 : 37 ] Though they're under the law. Nevertheless, they're still heirs who will one day inherit their father's possessions and all their things that they own.

Paul expresses this issue because he tells the Galatians that they're turning back to their ways that they previously had, where they were influenced by all sorts of things.

And they asked them in verse nine, Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? This was all the things in this world and other gods that were being proclaimed by other religions.

And they were previously bound up by them. And Paul is worried that they are going back to these things and considering them more than what they learned from him.

He reminded them in the fourth verse of the message that he preached to them previously when he preached salvation through Christ. What he says is this, When the time has fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

[ 6 : 48 ] Because you are his sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts. The spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but God's child.

And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. This is what he's already told them. This is something that they should know.

And of course, this was something that they would think of. Because when Paul was talking about the word Abba, of course, in those days, as many people know, it was a very close family term, probably closest to the word we choose to use, which is daddy.

So this was a very close relationship between a son and his father. And these verses that I've just read tell of the path that the Saviour took into this world.

He was born of a woman. He came to be someone who was human as we are. He was born under the law. In other words, he was having to obey all the various laws, both in the family that he was born into, but also into the nation he was born into.

[ 8 : 03 ] But that verse also tells us that he did this to redeem us, so that we might be adopted sons of God. He says this in verse 7, So you're no longer a slave, but God's child.

And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. So we're not a slave any longer. We've been taken out of slavery.

And these were the words that Paul was saying to these Galatians. He was reminding them of what they should already have known. And rather than growing in their faith, they were actually being distracted from it by other forces, either in society or in other religions.

And that's what he's really concerned about, what he's referring to when he said these words.

Formally, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you're turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be in Slybeather all over again?

[ 9 : 16 ] You're observing special days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you that somehow I wasted my efforts on you. Notice in those explanations that Paul gives, that the slave was unable to do anything to escape their situation.

But the son was unable to do anything until he became an adult. So essentially, he was in the same position.

No, everything was from God to us. Just look at the list of things that that salvation, that freedom from slavery and made sonship possible was given.

Listen, I've picked out just a few verses, going through them without looking up each one. I'll just read them to you very quickly. All of these are from God, nothing that we've done.

It says, Christ came that we might be justified by faith. He said, in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. We've been baptized into Christ.

[ 10 : 27 ] We've clothed ourselves with Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you're Abraham's seed. And we read about that earlier. God sent his son to redeem those under the law.

That was a specific reason he came, to free them from slavery to the law. God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts. You're God's child.

God has made you also an heir. You're known by God. And finally, until Christ is formed in you.

That sort of explanation in science is known as a proof by exhaustion.

You've gone through all the various things that point to that thing. So many that you've exhausted every possibility. And those explanations that Paul gave to the Galatians in these words were basically saying to them, look, there is no other thing other than what I've already told you. That none of this is anything that you've done or can do. It's all of God. And it's been given to you by his grace. So he's basically saying there's no element or argument that could contradict the ideas that the salvation is spoken about here and the sonship that's spoken of here is entirely the work of God himself.

[ 11 : 59 ] And note too, that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were all intrinsically involved in our salvation. Having explained their position in Christ, Paul speaks to them of his fears for them when he says, I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you.

You did me no wrong. And even though my illness is a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.

Where then is your blessing for me now? I can testify that if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Paul was ill when he went to see them for the first time. And it was because he was ill that he was able to stay there and preach the gospel to them. But they welcomed him.

But that term that they just used, that he used in describing them, that they could tear out their eyes, that was a commonly used phrase used by Jews at that time.

[ 13 : 12 ] It seems rather gory. But the equivalent that we might say in this day and age, amongst many others, might be, I'll give you the shirt off my back.

And that phrase really conveyed the love and the reverence that the Galatians had for Paul on his first visit to them. But unfortunately, as these people had drifted away and been, as it were, guided by things other than the true gospel, then they'd fallen into a state where they felt that their love for Paul and his message was gradually ebbing away.

And Paul warns them, he says this, those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good.

What they want is to alienate you from us so that you may have a zeal for them.

It's fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I'm with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. How I wish I could be with you now and change my tone because I'm perplexed about you. Paul just couldn't understand it, how having heard the message and clearly turned to Christ, that they were now just drifting.

[ 14 : 37 ] They weren't moving forward in their faith and they were listening to other people and other religions and the world in general. This was something that he says he was in the pains of childbirth about, a really painful experience that Paul was going through, just thinking about these people falling away.

Later on in Galatians 5, in this same book, Paul lists the attributes of a mature Christian and obviously he must have come to that later as he was trying to get across his message in a different way to these Galatians.

This is what he says, it's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

That's what he says at the outset of this chapter. That was what Paul was concerned with, that they would go back into the slavery of the world or other religions.

And then he reminds them of what their faith in Christ brings. He says this, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

[ 16 : 01 ] These were all things that Paul was looking for in them as Galatians. And similarly, when Paul was writing to Timothy, although Timothy was in a complete different situation, just picking one or two things that Paul said to Timothy, you can see the similarity that he was putting forward, even with Timothy, and which supports what he'd already said to the Galatians.

Says this, the Spirit clearly says that in later times, some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God

created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with thanksgiving because it's consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales. Rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labour and strive, because we put our hope in the living God who is the saviour of all people and especially those who believe.

[ 17 : 41 ] Command and teach these things. And then he says, Be diligent in these matters. Give yourself wholly to them so that everyone may see your progress.

Watch your life and doctrine closely. This was his message to the Galatians. He expanded it so that they understood what he first said.

He encourages them to ignore these other distractions into other things of this world. He longs for them to grow in their faith. In fact, he says in verse 19 that we read, He wants them to do this until Christ is formed in you.

And we know that as Christians grow in their faith, that's because they grow closer and closer to the likeness of Christ. He says that in many other parts of the New Testament.

This is an amazing thing that Christ can be formed in us as Christians. And in this, we know, and this is the point that he's finishing this particular section in chapter 4, because we find out that when this happens, it's because we are his sons.

[ 19 : 06 ] It says in verse 6, because you are his sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts. It's no wonder that Paul is encouraging these Galatians to have that disciplined approach to go back to the first gospel message that they heard and that he preached where they found their first love in Christ.

because now that they have been taken away from slavery, now that they've been given the salvation that freed them from that slavery, and now that they are the sons of God that we read in this passage, then it says the Holy Spirit is the spirit of his son in our hearts.

no wonder the expectation is that he can now wait confident that the Lord will do his work until Christ is formed in you.

It's a message for every believer, not just the Galatians, and all of us need to learn it. Let's just close this section of our service as we say a prayer.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore.

[ 20 : 55 ] Amen. And we're going to now finish our service by singing our last hymn which is My Faith Has Found a Resting Place.

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