

Galatians 3:23-4:7

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 December 2025

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] In many ways that is the theme of Christmas. In many ways that is the theme of this section in Galatians 4 that those who are outside the family have been brought into the family.

Galatians has told us about remarkable privileges that are ours if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That if we are in Christ we have been justified. It's a big word isn't it?

We have been declared right with God and we have been forgiven, acquitted of all our sins and we've been given the perfect, spotless, beautiful life of Jesus Christ.

We are justified. Then we're told we have new life by God's grace. If you're a Christian you are a new creature. If you are united to Christ you've been given new life.

If you are a Christian, if you are united to Christ you've been given the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives within you and dwells within you. He's always with you. If you are in Christ you've been made free.

[1 : 09] You are no longer a slave to sin. You're no longer in captivity. You've been freed by Jesus Christ. You are no longer under the bondage of the law.

You've been free from God's law. It's quite a list isn't it? But the greatest privilege comes this morning. The privilege of adoption.

That when you are united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith you become a child of God. You become a son of God. You come into the family of God. Now and we need to do a little bit of work before we get to the Christmas passage.

Can you look with me at verses 23 to 25. We looked at it two weeks ago. And can you look there who Paul is speaking to. The pronoun in verses 23 to 25 is we.

He's including himself as a Jewish man. He's part of that. He says we speaking to his fellow Jews. Because he was a Jew. But notice in verse 26 the pronoun changes.

[2 : 15] It is you. Verse 26. If you forget everything else I say this morning. Remember verse 26. For in Christ Jesus. You are all sons of God.

Through faith. And he says you. Because he wants his largely non-Jewish. His Gentile audience. To know where they fit in.

He says you who are not part of the ancient people of God. Because you put your faith in Christ. Because you've come to Christ. And you've received the sign of baptism. You have become sons of God.

This blessing. Is yours. Just as much as it is the Jews. And that is because in Jesus Christ. The distinction between Jew and Gentile matters very little.

Look at verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free.

[3 : 21] There is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. Now that verse I think gets misused an awful lot. I get it quoted to me quite often.

But Paul is not saying. In Jesus Christ's church. All those distinctions are just obliterated. He's not saying that. He doesn't think that once you become a Christian.

You cease to be a slave. Or you cease to be a man. Or you cease to be a woman. Or you cease to have. Your own racial background. That you've always had.

In other parts of Paul's writing. Paul specifically addresses those groups of people. And he gives them particular instructions. In their particular circumstances.

So he's not saying that those distinctions don't matter at all. But the point he's making is this wonderful point. That when it comes to being part of God's family. God makes no distinction.

[4 : 19] You can be a child of God. Irrespective of your sex. Irrespective of your race. Irrespective of your occupation.

In Christ all are equal. Equally included. Equally blessed. Equal in hope. Verse 9 he presses this.

Verse 29 he says. And if you are Christ. Then you are Abraham's offspring. As. According to the promise. That is an astonishing thing to say.

To a non-Jewish audience. To a Gentile. You. Are Abraham's seed. The promises made to the patriarch Abraham.

They are for you. You are part of the family of Abraham. Father Abraham. Abraham. Had many sons. And many sons.

[5 : 19] Had father Abraham. And I am one of them. And so are you. So let's all praise the Lord. Amen. Amen. And so. If you are.

You don't know anything about. Israel. You don't know anything. About. The patriarchs. You don't know anything. About the old testament. But you have put your faith. In Jesus Christ. You are as much part of the people.

Of God. As Abraham was. The inheritance. Of the Jewish nation. Is now your inheritance. And so at the start of chapter 4. Paul takes a step back.

And notice verses 1 to 5. The pronouns change again. They go back to we. He's got the Jewish Christians in mind. And he uses an illustration. He says.

Imagine there's a large house. There's a master of the house. And the master of the house. Has got a son. And the master has got a slave. And then he's also got a guardian.

[6 : 13] There's four people. There's the master. There's the son. There's the slave. And then there's the guardian. Who looks after the son. Who's to direct the son.

And discipline the son. The guardian is in a different category from the slave. The son. Well one day he's going to inherit the whole lot. The slave.

He inherits nothing. And yet he says. While the son is still a child. He's placed under the watchful eye of this guardian. This trustee.

And when it comes to the day to day life of this child. There's actually very little difference. Between the son and the slave. While he's little. Both are told to do.

What to do by someone else. Both will be disciplined. If they don't comply. Neither are free. To give orders. Neither are free.

[7 : 09] Neither the son is free. Neither is the slave free. To do what they like. And I think the point of the illustration is this. It is to say. Before Jesus Christ came. The Jewish people are under the law.

It's like they're in their spiritual infancy. They stood one day to inherit the whole estate. That was the promise. But they weren't free. They were just like the slaves.

The law. Their guardian. It was like a babysitter. Like a teacher. Like a stern guardian. Until Christ came. Israel was the heir. The son.

And they had the promise. But while an infant. They were barely different from a slave. But now verse 3. Christ has come. The law.

Was preparing the way. But now. Through the entry. Of God's own son into the world. Jesus. They have become.

[8 : 08] The son. Jesus. Was made. Like the Jews. So that the Jews. Would be made like Jesus. They become.

Sons of the father. There's something new. Going on here. There is a new reality. That is dawning. In the old testament.

When they prayed. They didn't pray. Our father in heaven. This has stretched my mind. Over the last couple of days. The people of Israel.

As a whole. Corporately. They were called. The son of God. The king. In Israel. Sometimes was called. The son of God. In old testament.

Writings. It is made reference. Today. You have become. My son. That was true. Corporately. It was true of the king. But individual. Israelites.

[9 : 05] Would not have thought. Of God. As their father. They would not have thought. Of fellow Israelites. As their brothers and sisters.

This is new. This is not how. It has been. Infancy. And adult. Slavery.

And sonship. But now. They can cry. Abba. Father. They can say. Our father in heaven. How has this happened? Well. Happy Christmas.

Verse 4. It's happened. Because. When the fullness of time. Had come. God sent forth his son. Born of a woman. Born under the law. Because.

At a certain point. In history. In the fullness of time. A baby was born. Verse 4. When the time. Had fully come. God sent his son. Look at the time.

[10:02] Of his birth. Literally. When the time. Had reached its fullness. It's the word you use. For filling up a bottle. So. The bottle gets to its capacity.

And nothing more. Can go into the bottle. It's like. Are you getting to lift. At the hospital. And it says. The maximum number. Allowed in this lift. Is 25. You look at the lift.

There's room. For about four people in it. That's the word. In the fullness of time. There's nothing more. That can be added. It's the perfect content. And Paul is saying. When God had put everything.

Into history. Up to this point. To prepare for the birth. Of Jesus Christ. When the times. Had reached their fullness. When God has done everything. And has left nothing out.

And left nothing undone. In the preparation. For the coming of Christ. And you see that. Don't you? In all the various pieces. Of the jigsaw. In the infancy narratives. That we'll read tonight.

[10:59] God set it up perfectly. If you look at the time. When Jesus was born. At both the Roman. And the Greek civilizations. In which people have lived.

They contributed. To that time. Rome geographically. And politically. Had made the world one. All roads. Lead to Rome.

It had. Produced. A highway. For the gospel. Of Jesus Christ. To go out. All over the ancient world. The Greek language. Was the common means. Of communication. At just. The right time.

Greek culture. And religion. Roman religion. Was in a. Terminal decline.

And terminal emptiness. And vacuousness. That people were crying out. In a sense of despair. And the gospel came. Into that. Good news.

[11:53] Of great joy. For all the people. Paul. But Paul is speaking. About something. Much deeper than that. He's speaking. About the sovereign. Lord of all history.

And so the event. Events. Of which we read. In Bethlehem. And the surrounding. Countryside. All those events. Took place. And that moment.

Time struck. God's time. Meant that God. Had left nothing. Undone. In all of history. The Lord Jesus Christ. That he who.

Came. From. Before the foundation. Of the world. Had been preparing. For this moment. That God. Had planned. And purposed. From all eternity. For the coming. Of his son. He'd been working.

Amongst his ancient people. And preparing them. And discipling them. And patiently. Dealing with them. And in the fullness. Of days. Out of Zion. There would come. Good news. That a virgin. Would conceive.

[12:51] And bear a son. And it's this. That Paul is referring to. When he says. In the fullness of time. God sent forth. His son. He's saying.

That God has left. Nothing undone. To prepare for this. The second thing we see. Is the identity. Of this baby. Who is it. That brings us.

Into the family. And. The thing that God. Focuses on. Is the identity. Of the baby. Because that's what matters. More than anything else. So look at. Galatians 4. Verse 4.

He gives us. Two answers. To who the baby is. In the manger. First of all. He says. He is God's son. When the time had fully come.

God sent his son. And he is secondly. Mary's child. God's son. Mary's child. Those two descriptions.

[13:50] Those two things. Tell you. What you most need to know. About the baby. That he is both. Perfectly God. And fully man. And that is what makes him.

Perfectly qualified. To fulfill his mission. God sent his son. It's the same word we use for apostle. Apostle means sent one.

God came. Christ came. As God's apostle. Hebrews tells us that he is the apostle and high priest of our profession. He came sent by God into the world.

And an apostle is one who fulfills a mission. And what Christ. What enabled Jesus to fulfill his mission. For which his father sent him.

It was that he was perfectly God. And perfectly man. Look how that displays itself. It was only God who could accomplish our salvation.

[14:52] Only God could accomplish our salvation. That's true isn't it? From its planning in eternity. To its execution on Calvary.

And its consummation at the end of time. In his coming again. From beginning to end. Only God can accomplish what we need. Within the general context of this verse. Paul is speaking about this dreadful disaster that's happened to the Galatians. Do you remember? They were going back to a place. They were trying to produce a salvation of their own. They thought it was about law keeping. And he is emphasizing to them and to us. That it's only God can accomplish salvation. And if you think that the Galatian problem was just a problem. For the New Testament times. We know that it's not. But the common conception today is that we're somehow acceptable to God. Whoever he is.

[15 : 55] By doing our best. And if you do your best. And you try your hardest. God will never keep you out of glory. And that is never far from our hearts. Even if we've been professing as a Christian for years.

It's deadly. Somebody says to you. Are you a Christian? He said well I hope so. Will you go to heaven when you die?

Well I'm trying. What is a Christian? Well somebody who's kind. Somebody who does their best. What is Paul saying? Paul is saying God sent forth his son.

God. That is that only God can save you. Only God can deal. With the needs of humanity. And when he says God sent forth his son. It's that God the creator. Who made all things. Has now become God the redeemer.

[16 : 58] He who in the manger lies. He who built the starry skies. That is who he is. The baby in the manger is not someone you can manipulate.

He is the Lord of glory. Who has come down to be the redeemer of his people. Born in order to save us. To enter into our predicament.

And in our place he has become one of us. He had to represent us. He took the place of us. He took the place of our judgment.

And in order to do that he had to become a man. Like us. And that's why he's called not only the son of God. But the son of Mary. Fully God and fully man. And do you notice he's not just a man. He's a perfect man. Notice what Paul says. When the time would fully come. God sent forth his son. Born of a woman. Born under the law. That means many things. And it's got many implications.

[18 : 00] But one of the things it means is that the Lord Jesus Christ. Perfectly submitted himself to God's law. That he obeyed every last detail of it. That law which I have broken.

And I have transgressed. And that law which was good. But it's become the instrument of my judgment. And the Lord Jesus Christ kept that law perfectly.

In the perfection of his obedience. He lived not only as a man. But as a perfect man. And when the moment came. For sin to be atoned for. He could atone for it.

He could deal with sin. Because he had no sin of his own. And therefore the baby in the manger. Was the God made perfect man.

For our salvation. His divinity and his humanity. But what's the reason he was born? What is the reason he came?

[18 : 59] Well it's crystal clear in the text isn't it? When the time had fully come. God sent forth his son. Born of a woman. Born under the law. To redeem those under the law. That we might receive adoption. So can you see this baby does two things.

First of all he redeems. And then he adopts. As we think about the baby. This Christmas. Why did he come? What is the purpose of these cries from the baby?

What is the reason behind the angels breaking into the night sky? He came to redeem those under the law. What does that mean? Well it means that men and women and boys and girls.

Who thought that they could climb the ladder of the law. And somehow reach God. And keep the commandments. It means that.

It shows us that that is utterly futile. John Carson wrote this. If God had perceived that our greatest need was economic. He would have sent an economist. If he perceived that our greatest need was entertainment.

[20 : 01] He would have sent us a comedian or an artist. If God had perceived that our greatest need was political stability. He would have sent us a politician. If he perceived that our greatest need was health.

He would have sent us a doctor. But he perceived that our greatest need involved our sin. Our alienation from him. Our profound rebellion. Our death. And so he sent us a saviour. And so you

don't need a lecture.

You need a saviour. A rescuer. Who will deal with your rebellion. And your tendency to failure. And so those who are under the judgment of the law of God.

Paul says in the fullness of time. God sent forth his son. Born of a woman. To redeem those under the law. And what does it mean to be under the law? It means to be under the curse and judgment of God.

Because the scripture says. Is that cursed is everyone. Who does not continue in these commandments. And so how does Christ redeem us. From the curse of the law. Well you don't need to look very far.

[21 : 03] Look at chapter 3 in verse 13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. By becoming a curse for us. For it is written. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. He became.

He came. Perfect God. And perfect man. Recognizing that there is no other way. In which that curse of God. Could be poured out.

Except that it was poured out on him. In order that we might be freed from God's law. From the law's curse. The Lord Jesus related to God's law.

In lots of different ways. He fulfilled it in his own life. He lived it out in perfect obedience. And he bore the judgment of that broken law. On himself.

On Calvary. He became a baby. He was helpless. But the Bible tells us he became poor. He who was rich beyond all telling became poor.

[22 : 06] He had to borrow a coin. For an illustration. He had no place to lay his head. And yet he'd made the universe. And not only did he become poor. And become man.

He became a curse for us. And that means that the very curse of God. Was laid on him at Calvary. But he came not only to redeem. But he came to adopt.

Look at verse 5. He came to redeem those under the law. So that we might receive adoption as sons. He takes us from that place.

Where we are about to be banished. From God's presence. And he brings us into the glorious privilege of his children. Chapter 3 verse 26.

His sons and daughters who have access to him. And call him father. And so Christ was born to bear our judgment. And yet wonderfully brings us all the privileges of being sons and daughters of God.

[23 : 07] And this helps us hugely. That what God is doing. He is gathering his sons to him.

I hope you're not upset by that language. That God has sons. It doesn't say that God has daughters. We are all God's sons.

Whether we're male or female. And that is because. Do you remember the son was the heir? In the same way. That we are all a bride of Christ. If we're a guy. There's no offence in being that. We are all a bride of Christ.

We are all adopted as God's sons and God's heirs. And this helps us hugely with all our insecurities. Imagine you are in court tomorrow.

And you know that you are guilty. You know that you are guilty of a very severe crime. Let's say. And the judge in the doc says. I'm actually I'm going to acquit you.

[24 : 14] I'm going to declare you not guilty. But more than that. I want you to come home with me. Because you're homeless. And I want you to live with my family.

And we will look after you every day for the rest of your life. You see. To be adopted. Is even more wonderful than to be justified. Justification is a glorious thing.

The church in history has really rejoiced in it. But adoption is a more wonderful thing. It's an incredible thing. To be cleared not guilty. To have your sin forgiven.

To be credited with the righteousness of Christ. But adoption is far greater. Because justification deals with our first need. Which is to be acquitted. By the judge of the universe.

But to be adopted gives us a new status. A new identity. From which we are to live. I think I need to say this tonight. Fathers are difficult.

[25 : 12] And I say that as a father. I say that with my father watching on the YouTube. And fathers are difficult. And for many of you this Christmas. Family is both wonderful.

But really really hard work. And we do not understand God the father. By reference to our own fathers. But actually we seek to understand our fathers.

And our fatherhood. In the light of God's perfect fatherhood. That is the right way round. That even our own father's failings. Bring us to the point of appreciating.

The perfection of God's love for us. And then the final outcome. That he touches on in verse 6. Because you are sons of God.

God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts. Who calls out Abba Father. And again there are multitudes of things we could look at. But let me point this to you. The glorious outcome of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 15] Coming to Bethlehem. For people like ourselves. Who gladly embrace him. And trust him. And receive him. Is that Christ too.

Is going to be born in Bethlehem. By the Holy Spirit. But he's also going to be born in us. And the place where Jesus Christ dwells now.

Is not only at the right hand of the father in glory. But also in the life of the humblest believer. God sent his son. God sent his spirit.

These verses are gloriously Trinitarian. And why did he send his spirit? In order that Christ who came to be with us. And die for us.

Might dwell in us. And that is why he sent his spirit. And the glorious reality. The distinctive reality for the Christian.

[27 : 15] Is that this Christ. The Lord of the ages. Is the saviour of sinners. Perfect God. And perfect man. Lives in me.

By his Holy Spirit. So that as we come to the Lord's table. This morning. We look up to the Lord God. Of heaven and earth. The sovereign creator.

And redeemer. And we call him. Our father. Let's pray.