

Q15. Share with a friend what language you use in your regular prayers to God. How do your words reflect the status of being a child of God? How do your words in prayer indicate an intimacy between you and God that comes via the Spirit?

Exercise: Write a prayer that gives thanks for your freedom to live as a child of God in words that reflect a respect for God and yet an intimacy with God.

Going Further—An illustration from Scripture Galatians 4:21-31

READ Genesis 16:1-16

God promised Abraham that he would heal Sarah's infertility, and give them a son of their own, despite their old age. Impatient for a child, Sarah gave her husband a slave girl, Hagar, to breed from; Ishmael was born but was not to carry the promise. Instead, the miracle child, Isaac, was to be the promise-bearer. Paul uses this story figuratively to show how law-keeping is slavery and faith in Christ is freedom.

READ John 1:12-13

We, like Isaac, are the children of the promise— of supernatural birth, not merely of human will.

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#4 GET WHAT YOU HOPE FOR Galatians 3:26-4:7

**Galatians-
Freedom in
Christ**

Introduction

Gal 3:22-25

"...the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." (NIV)

Recap

In our previous section we were addressed by an astonished apostle. "You foolish Galatians" opened chapter 3. Paul was flabbergasted that those who had received the free gift of grace could so easily be seduced to reduce the Gospel's power by adding to faith alone a whole range of conditions. The Judaizers or "Law-keepers" insisted upon adherence to rules and regulations required of Jews in order for Gentiles to have a legitimate inclusion into the blessings promised to Abraham. Paul clearly laid out in chapter 3:1-24 that faith in Christ alone is all that is required. More than this, he claims that to seek to uphold the Law of Moses as a qualification for our status with God makes a nonsense of their experience (3:5); contradicts the Scriptures (3:6-9); fails to comprehend the sufficiency and centrality of the death of Christ (3:14); and is illogical in the light of Hebrew history (3:15-18). Paul shows that the Law had been given as a "prison guard", a "school teacher" and "child-minder" until the coming of the age of Christ and the Spirit (3:19-24). *"So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."* Having clearly established that faith, not Law, is the way to justification before God (because of Christ), Paul now turns to tell us what the outcomes of faith are.

Discussion Questions for recap:

- Q1. Martin Luther (16th Century reformer) said: “The establishment of the Law is the abolishment of the Gospel.” In the light of Galatians ch. 3, what might he mean?
- Q2. Comparing those who are “under the law” to those who are “in Christ”, John Stott says “everybody belongs to one category or the other. One is in “prison” the other is “free”. What does Galatians ch. 3 say about this?

John Stott likens the Galatians' backsliding into law-keeping to a child saying "Father, I would rather be your slave than your child."

The results of faith in Christ– Gal. 3:25-4:2

Discuss with a friend: What do others recognize about you that likens you to your parents/siblings?

1. “Sons” of God 3:26

In the ancient world it was common for a slave-tutor to be put in charge of the son and heir in a wealthy family. The slave would train and teach and have discipline over the child. When the young man came of age he would

slaves into sons.’ In ancient Roman families a wealthy childless man could take into his family a slave youth who could be looked upon legally as the son and heir with full rights to the estate. Perhaps this image is in mind for Paul as he writes to the Galatians.

READ Gal. 1:4, 3:13

Note Jesus qualifications for being our redeemer from Gal. 3:4

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Q13. What are the significances of these qualifications?

Q14. What would be the deficiencies of a redeemer without any one of these qualifications?

7. The Spirit indwelling presence

6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

God ‘sent’ his Spirit; he ‘sent’ his Son in to the world and ‘sent’ the Spirit into our hearts.

‘Abba’ is an Aramaic term of intimate relationship from child to father. Jesus himself used this term when at prayer. Christ achieves for us the status of ‘sons’ and the Spirit gives us the experience and assurance of sonship.



5. “Sons” and inheritors/heirs, not slaves 4:1,2

What follows is a summary statement telling us that the promise of God is now ours to behold by faith. We are not slaves, but “sons”; and as such we are inheritors of God’s ‘estate’. Forgiveness, peace, eternal life, a new ‘family’, wholeness– all these and more come to us by faith because of Christ.

Q11. Discuss– what change of relationship would you expect between a slave and an estate owner and that of the child of an estate owner?

- ⇒ Difference in conversation?
- ⇒ Difference in physical behaviour?
- ⇒ Difference in attitude?
- ⇒ Difference in the way time is spent together?

Q12. Share with a friend when and why you have been most aware that you are a child of God? What has changed in your relating to God in the light of this awareness?

God’s redeeming work– Gal. 4:3-7

6. Christ our redeemer

- 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,
- 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights (adoption) of sons.

John Stott comments: “God’s purpose was both to ‘redeem’ (set free) and to ‘adopt’; not just to rescue from slavery, but to make

come into his inheritance. At that point the positions would be reversed. The slave would then come under the command of the heir. Paul teaches that the Law was to restrain and teach God’s people, not to save or justify. For those who put their faith in Christ and receive a new status, the law is no longer in charge. People of faith are like the sons and heirs in Paul’s illustration. The Law applied to the Old Testament people of God; but faith was always the means of justification.



READ Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 1:12,13; 1 John 3:1-3

- Q3. What are the differences between the old and new covenants?
- Q4. What gets a person into the family of God? Who makes it possible?
- Q5. What hope accompanies the new status of being in God’s family??

2. Baptized = “clothed” with Christ 3:27

Baptism signifies the union with Christ that faith makes possible (it is not thing itself that makes the union). By faith inwardly (vs. 26) and baptism outwardly (vs. 27) we have assurance that we are “sons” of God.

READ Colossians 3:8-17

- Q. 6 In Galatians, “Putting on Christ” means wearing the righteousness of Christ and being justified. Building on that idea, Paul speaks of “putting off” the old garments and “putting on” the new in Colossians 3. In Roman society, when a child came of age, he took off the garments of a child and put on the toga of the adult citizen. Perhaps Paul had this image in mind. He is saying, in the same way,

in baptism the believer in Christ removes the garments of the old life—its habits, its addictions, its attitudes—and replaces those garments by putting on His attitudes, His love, His service. What are the old and what are the new in this equation? List them:

OLD– Col. 3:1-9	NEW– Col. 3:10-15

In baptism we publicly declare our new status as sons and daughters of God and we exhibit that status through changes in our lives. The inward reality of faith is symbolised in the outward sign of baptism by water. So baptism is a drama. It tells all that the old is gone; the new has come; the old clothes are gone, the new ones are put on. And now, as a true child of God, with the indwelling Spirit of God, the believer lives a new life with ever increasing “family likeness”.

3. Equality in our freedom in Christ 3:28

(includes removal of the barrier between Jew and Gentile)

The NEB version says “You are all one person in Christ Jesus”. The

normal earthly distinctions that divide and disempower are no longer in charge for Christians; it’s not that they do not exist, but they no longer matter. The promise to Abraham had all the world in its sights; and the picture of the future in Revelation envisages people from every race, color and language in the same fellowship.

- Q7. Given that differences and distinctions do exist, how will verse 28 affect your relationships in the church?

- Q8. What revolutionary changes might the Gospel bring to issues in today’s society in relation to:
 - ⇒ Race

 - ⇒ Rank

 - ⇒ Gender

4. True “sons” of Abraham

Paul states that we not only belong to God’s family by faith, and to one another as brothers and sisters and co-heirs, but also as sons of Abraham. This may seem curious, especially to non-Jewish people.

READ Hebrews chapter 11

- Q9. What difference does it make to be included in the historical succession of faith, including those listed in Heb. 11?

- Q10. To those who view life as meaningless, disconnected and lacking in a hope and a future, what do the assertions of Gal. 3:25-29 offer?