

“No Longer A Slave”

Christian Liberty

Galatians 4:1-7

Richard Jenkins

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Dick: Well, good morning. Can everybody hear me?

Men: Good morning.

Dick: It’s great to be here. I was thinking on the way down that I feel a little bit like, at this time of year in baseball, the pitcher who gets called from triple A to fill in for the starter.

Men: Amen.

Dick: So I’m at PNC Park now. I’ll do my job and then go back to Indi. If you’re not a Pirates fan, you might have missed that analogy. *(Laughter.)* Don, are you going to take us to the throne of grace with a hymn? *Music.)*

Bow with me, please. Gracious God and heavenly Father, we come before You today as Your sons, with grateful hearts. Lord, I thank You for this day and for these men that have come out to hear Your word opened and taught. I pray, Lord, that You would grant me the strength and the wisdom, the power of Your Holy Spirit, to do that. I pray for each one of us, that Your Holy Spirit might fill us and illumine us, and that You might anoint this time as a special time to hear Your word, to understand better what You have to say to us through this portion of Your word today, for it is Your word to us for our lives, for our strengthening in Christ. And so we look forward to what You have for us, what Your Holy Spirit has for us. And we pray and ask all of this and look forward to this in Christ’s name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Participant: Dick, could you turn the volume up?

Second Participant: This isn't amplified. You have to speak up. *(Laughter.)*

Dick: What’s this?

Men: This is to record.”

Dick: Oh, okay. All right. Well, please turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter four. And this morning we’re going to be studying the first seven verses. I don’t have a real loud voice. So if you have trouble in the back, I’ll do my best. But there are some seats up this way if you want to move. I could move, but there’s a line here. I’m not sure what happens if I cross it. I’d better stay on it. *(Laughter.)*

Galatians chapter 4, verses 1-7. I’m reading from the NIV. It’s the 1984 version of the NIV. If you have the 2011 version, you’ll notice that there are some differences—some good, some not so good. I haven’t evolved enough to get the new NIV yet. I can’t quite get around the gender neutral piece of that. But that’s just me. But there are some good changes in the translation as well. Galatians chapter 4, verses 1-7.

The apostle Paul writes, “*What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.*”

“No Longer A Slave”

“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

Here is one of those places where the better translation would be *“that we might receive adoption as sons,”* which is probably what most of your translations say.

“Because you are 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 a son. And since you are a Son, God has made you also an heir.”

And because it’s just about two pages ahead, I’d also like you to look at Ephesians chapter 1. I’m going to read starting with verse 3 through verse 5.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the pleasure of His will.”

This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Dick: I’d like to start us off on two tracks, and then hopefully bring them together. The first track is that of the doctrine of adoption. And if you have your handout, you can see that I’ve structured this particular talk or lecture, or whatever you want to call it, according to that basic theme of adoption. We’re going to be looking at our situation before adoption. We’re going to be looking at the ground of our adoption, the basis for it, and also what I’m calling our adoption papers, our assurance of adoption, that we are sons of God.

But I also want to expound this Scripture, a very important passage, and expound it as it is written by the apostle Paul, so we kind of get the whole general idea of what Paul is saying here and why he’s saying it.

If you’ve been coming to this study for any length of time—I don’t know how long ago you started Galatians. But I know it was probably at least spring or so. I’m sure you know the occasion for which Paul wrote Galatians. Paul and Barnabas founded the churches in the region of Galatia, the Roman province of Galatia on their first missionary journey. You read about it in Acts chapters thirteen and fourteen. And they established churches in cities like Perga and Pisidian Antioch, and Lystra and Derbe and Iconium, all in that region.

And they went around and they strengthened the churches. They started out in the synagogues, preaching to the Jews from the Old Testament. And when the Jews became jealous and kicked them out, they went to the Gentiles. And many Gentiles were converted to Christ. And they established these churches. And when the missionary journey was over, Paul and Barnabas went back to Antioch and Syria, which was their home base, their home church.

And not long after returning home, they got word that in these churches in Galatia they had been followed by another group of men, another group of teachers—really false teachers!—who were telling them that the Gentiles, in order to be Christians, in order to be fully in line with the gospel, they had to become Jews first. The men had to become circumcised and they had to obey the law of Moses. And of course Paul did not take

“No Longer A Slave”

kindly to that. And you know the tone of the epistle, especially in those first couple verses.

And then, as you’ve been for the past several weeks in chapter three, as you know Paul has been giving a very reasoned logical argument from the Old Testament. In chapter three he basically covered two thousand years of Old Testament Biblical history from Abraham to Moses to Christ. And all of that to show that he’s comparing the promise and the law, the promise which was given to Abraham.

And so he says that the promise includes the Gentiles. He says back in chapter 3 verse 14 that He *“redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”* So the promise to Abraham is for the Gentiles.

And the law as added later. The law had its purpose. And he goes into the purposes of the law. But you don’t go back to Moses in order to get to Christ. The fulfillment of the promise was Jesus Christ.

And then he reaches the climax of this in the passage you guys looked at last week—verses 26-29, where he says, *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* There is adoption. And notice *all*—Jew/Gentile, male/female, slave/free. You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. How do we become sons of God? Not naturally, not through physical birth. We become sons of God through adoption. That’s where adoption comes in.

And those verses, 26-29, are sort of a crescendo, a grand climax that Paul brings us to. He says, *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”* And notice how Christ-centered these few verses are. *“Faith in Christ Jesus.”* Our adoption is from our union with Christ. If you are a believer this morning, you are in Christ. You’re in union with Christ. And all of the blessings of salvation come to us from our union with Christ, including sonship through faith in Jesus Christ.

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Then he says in verse 29, *“And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

Well, that’s kind of a grand climax. I imagine that the guys who did all the chapter and verse divisions in the English Bible said, “Okay. That’s like finishing on a high note. Let’s break the chapter off here, because I’m sure that whatever comes after this is a new thought.”

Well actually, it’s not. Our passage for this morning, chapter 4 verses 1-7, is actually a continuation of that, all right? And as I study this, it seems like that when Paul said at the end of chapter 3 verse 29 that you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise, that word *heirs* may have triggered something in his mind, a further thought.

And of course it’s all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But I say that because, at the end of our passage in verse 7, it’s the same thing. He ends with the same thought about an heir. *“You are no longer a slave but a son. And since you are a son, God has made you an heir.”* So we’re heirs.

“No Longer A Slave”

And it is that which triggered something in his mind. This is a crude analogy. It’s like Trump going off the teleprompter, you know? *(Laughter.)* The teleprompter says that Hilary wants to repeal the Second Amendment. Well, maybe you Second Amendment guys can do something about that though. Just kidding! Believe me, just kidding! *(Laughter.)*

You know, Paul is making a fuss about being heirs, and it’s like he has this thought. In speaking of heirs, he says in verse 1, “*What I’m saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.*”

That’s kind of interesting here. Why does he say that? He comes here and he has an analogy here of a child, of a minor who hasn’t come of age yet. It’s a situation in many cultures. We can all relate to the Jewish *bar mitzvah*, where a son becomes a man at age thirteen, I think it is. Many cultures even today have coming of age ceremonies which mark that progression from childhood to manhood, from being a minor to an adult. We have them, but they’re kind of informal.

Some of you guys are as old as me. Back in my day, getting your driver’s license at age sixteen was kind of a rite of passage—informally, anyway. You were kind of becoming a man. I think most of them were associated with independence. You’re eighteen. Now you can vote. You couldn’t drink at eighteen. I don’t know if you can now. Not that I did. *(Laughter.)* But you’re eighteen. You can register for the draft. When you’re twenty-one, now you’re a full grown adult. Today I think that’s kind of more now like thirty when you’re a full grown adult. *(Laughter.)* You’re living in your parents’ basement at twenty-nine or thirty.

But that’s the analogy Paul drives here. A child has not reached full age. He owns the whole estate. He’s the heir. He can walk around the father’s estate and say, “This is all mine.” But it’s really not his. It’s all under guardianship. There’s a trustee. And the trustee tells him what to do. He has no control over anything.

Some of you know that my wife and I have a daughter Jamie who has Down’s Syndrome. She’s mentally handicapped. She’s an adult and Mom and Dad are getting older. Sooner or later Mom and Dad aren’t going to be around anymore. So one of the things we had to do in the last couple years is to set up a trust, because a person who is disabled like that is not able to own property by law. So once Mom and Dad are gone, everything has to be placed into a trust. And there has to be a guardian or a trustee who handles that wealth for her and makes sure she’s taken care of. So it’s not even something that’s hard to relate to.

And that was the situation in the Greco-Roman world that Paul is referring to. And he uses this analogy of a child or a minor who is under guardianship. Even though he owns the whole estate and he’s the lord of the manor, he’s under guardianship. So Paul says that he is no different from a slave.

Now there are a couple things here, First of all, you probably know this. You’re a Biblically literate group. But just to make sure that we’re all on the same page, in the ancient world, in the world that Paul is writing to, there are two things. Only sons could be heirs. Women did not inherit anything. Now I’d have to quit saying that if this were a

“No Longer A Slave”

mixed group. But since we’re all guys, I don’t have to worry about it. I’d worry about darts being thrown at me. But that’s just the way it was. Only sons could inherit.

If a man didn’t have sons, then one of the things he could do is adopt someone as a son. In fact, back then, talking about adoption now, people didn’t adopt for the reasons we adopt today. Maybe some of you were adopted or have adopted children. We adopt children who perhaps don’t have parents or come from a disadvantaged situation, and we’re able to bring them into a home. You see adoption for that reason. You see adoption today for people and couples who can’t have a child of their own. And so they adopt. And that’s a wonderful thing.

But in the world of the New Testament where Paul was writing, that’s not why they adopted. They adopted for one reason—to get an heir, to have an heir. And you adopted a boy, because only men could inherit. It’s important to understand that this principle lies behind all this.

And then he says that this minor who hasn’t come of age because he’s under a trustee, he’s really no different from a slave. And here’s where the slave analogy comes in.

Slaves were commonplace in the Greco-Roman world. There’s no doubt that many of the Galatian Christians were slaves. They knew all about what it meant to be a slave.

And so slavery in the New Testament provided a valuable metaphor and Paul used it. And one of the other things I want to make a point of here is that Paul, when he talks about being a slave, isn’t using slavery the way that he uses it in Romans. If you’re familiar with Romans chapter six, Paul uses the analogy of slavery. He says that *“our old self was crucified with Christ so that we shall no longer be slaves of sin.”*

Now that analogy is really easy to get—slaves of sin. And he goes on in Romans 6:18 to say that we’ve been set free from sin *“and have become slaves of righteousness.”* So in Romans chapter six, the slavery analogy there is that we go from slavery to sin to slaves of righteousness in Christ, *“because our old self was crucified with Christ.”* In our union with Christ we’re no longer slaves of sin. We’ve been freed from that slavery, freed from that bondage. And now we’re slaves of righteousness.

That’s really easy to understand. But that’s not how Paul is using slavery here as an example in Galatians chapter four. He’s got a different angle to it.

Some commentators and expositors understand this as Paul talking about slavery to the law. And that makes a little bit of sense, because back in chapter three Paul had been talking about the law, using some negative images. Interact with me a little bit. Paul here in chapter three used two analogies about the law. What were they? What does the law do?

Participant: It’s like a tutor.

Dick: A tutor or a pedagogue, a taskmaster, which is a little more of a sensitive word. It’s a harsh taskmaster who cracked you on the knuckles if you didn’t do what you were supposed to do. That’s what the law was.

Participant: That’s a nun. *(Laughter.)*

Dick: Yes. The law was a nun.

Participant: Or a mother.

Dick: A what?

“No Longer A Slave”

Participant: A mother.

Dick: I thought you said “Muslim.” (*Laughter.*) What was the other one from chapter three?

Participant: It was a guardian?

Dick: Same idea. The law held us prisoner. It was like a prison warden, right? It took us into custody. So in chapter three we have those two analogies. The law locks us up. It takes us into custody. It keeps us prisoner. It’s like a taskmaster who keeps us in line and makes sure that we’re paying attention and doing what we’re supposed to do.

So many commentators just say, “Okay. Well Paul just thought of a third one. He’s throwing that in here. He says that the law is also like a trustee or a guardian.” Until we grow up, it doesn’t allow us to have all that is ours by inheritance.

I don’t think that’s what Paul is saying here. I don’t think that’s what Paul is doing here. That might be right, but I just don’t think so.

And notice what he says there in those first two verses. He owns the whole estate, but he is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by the father. So there’s a point when he will move from being a minor, from being a child, to being a full son who inherits everything. But that time has been set by the father. And that comes in later when Paul talks about what God did.

Now why does Paul say this? Well in verse three, he applies the illustration to us. He says, “*So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.*” This is what he is getting at. He draws this picture of the child who is an heir, but is subject to guardianship and so is no different than a slave. He says that is how we were.

Again, many commentators and many expositors say, “Well, Paul is talking about that is how we were under the law.” He’s talking about the Jews and that’s how we were under the law. He says that we were in slavery.

In slavery to what? To the law? Again, I don’t think so, because what does Paul say? He doesn’t say in verse three that we were in slavery under the basic principles of the law. If that’s what he meant, why didn’t he just say that? He has been talking about the law for all of chapter three. But he says that we were in slavery to the basic principles of the world.

What does that mean? Well, I did a little word study here. And I don’t want to get too deep into the weeds because I want to keep moving here. But the Greek word that Paul uses here is *stoicheia*. It’s on your handout. And that word in the Greek has basically three different meanings, and we see some of them in the New Testament. The *stoicheia* could be the fundamental components of the cosmos—earth, air, fire, water, the sun, the moon, the stars—the components of the cosmos.

Peter uses it this way in 2 Peter 3:10 and 12. He talks about the elements, the *stoicheia*, being destroyed by fire. The elements, the *stoicheia*, will melt with the heat. A pretty terrifying picture there.

It’s also used to talk about the essential principles of an area of study—the basic things, the freshman courses, the 101 courses that you take your freshman year in college, the kindergarten courses you start out with, the ABC’s. As a Christian, they’re the basic

“No Longer A Slave”

Christian discipleship classes you take, or the basic Christian discipleship books that you read starting out. It's kind of the fundamentals, the elementary. There's that word *element* in elementary principles.

The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 5:12 uses *stoicheia* that way. He says, “*You need someone to teach you the elementary truths*”—*stoicheia*—“*of God's word all over again.*” He's talking about how you should be mature. You should be on solid food. You're still drinking baby formula. You need somebody to go back and teach you those basic elementary things about God's word all over again because you haven't grown. You haven't matured.

Then the third use is the elemental spiritual forces of the world. And that seems to fit with what Paul says. Not to get into the next part of the study, but just to tie it in, because it's there, verses 8-11 in chapter four of Galatians. Paul talks about it there, too. He says, “*Formerly, 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 are turning back to those weak and miserable principles of the world? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?*” Yes?

Participant: Also, when he says that they were in bondage under the elements of the world, is it sin here that is in some way related to that?

Dick: Yes, I think so. I think that third definition is the one that fits with verses 8-11 of Galatians 4 and brings in a spiritual nature to it. For instance John talks about “*Love not the world-- .. the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.*” I think that this is what Paul is talking about here.

Yes, he has been talking about the law to the Christians who were Jews. But to the Gentiles—and remember, that's the target of the Judaizers; those are the ones who have been misled—the Gentiles come out of paganism, not out of Judaism. And they come out of pagan religions that worship gods that are not gods—idolatry. I think this is what Paul has in mind here, these elemental spiritual forces of the world. Yes?

Participant: I guess I was looking for you to unpack that last one because I can gather it from Romans, where it says that we're enslaved to sin and we become slaves to righteousness. This is something a little different. I'm just trying to think of examples of that. I know you've been trying to do that with that third *stoicheia*.

Dick: Yes. Well your timing is almost perfect, because I was going to ask you guys the same question, because if this is where we were before Christ, we were slaves to these elemental spiritual forces of the world. And notice what he says here in verses 8-11. He says that they were weak and they were miserable. Other translations say “*beggarly.*” They were weak; they had no power to redeem us. They were beggarly or miserable. They had no wealth in which to bless us, as one commentator wrote. Are people today who are without Christ slaves in that sense? Yes?

Participant: I think that it's that general revelation has been corrupted by the Fall. And so you have the rise of religions, philosophies, social values. These are the things that I think he is referring to, the power of these things. In focusing, you can't avoid them. Everybody's got them. But they have no power to redeem. Actually, all they do is

“No Longer A Slave”

damn you. So it's the religions that were around, the philosophies that were around, and the cultural values.

Dick: Yes, and I think they're still around. They're modern now, but they're still there. And that's what I want us to think about here as far as the *stoicheia* today.

Some of you are going to offices today. You're around people who are not believers, they are not followers of Christ. Are they enslaved to the spiritual forces of this world? They don't think they are, but they are. They're seeking self-salvation. They're seeking salvation through happiness. I saw another hand. Dick?

Dick 2: I think John's statement of the broad issue is absolutely fair. I was taking it down further and thinking that a lot of times we think, well, we're citizens of the greatest country in the world—the United States. No, we're citizens of heaven, of God. And we reduce it down to something that the world has made in terms of political systems, etc., and allow them to be the force and the guidance as opposed to God's word.

Participant:

To live above with saints we love,

Oh, won't that be the glory!

But here below with saints we know,

Now that's a different story. (*Laughter.*)

Second Participant: I don't know about that.

Participant: In historic Christendom, where is the Christian?

Dick: Okay. Thank you. Sig?

Sig: One thing I notice about our culture is this. I only notice it on Thursday nights when I'm trying to go to sleep because I have to get up early for the Bible study. And my wife likes to listen to the talk shows, like Stephen Colbert or the Late Night Show when I'm trying to sleep. And all I hear is the audio, right? But I hear these guests of his, and they go on and on about themselves, about their lives, about the newest movie they're in, or whatever. And just hearing the audio, it sounds so empty. I'm sure the visual part makes it more exciting. It's colorful and bright and they're gorgeous. But just to hear them talk about it, I feel like it's empty. There's this self-absorbed thing going on. And they're all excited about it. And I'm thinking, Yes. We want to emulate them and to be like them because they're on TV or something, and they have wealth. And just to hear it, it's like there's nothing there. There really isn't. You take away their movies, and what do they have?

Dick: Right.

Sig: You take away their appearance on a talk show and what is there? So my point is that if He took that away from us, what do we have? Hopefully, we have Christ. That's our foundation, you know?

Dick: I don't think we stop and think enough about how enslaved the world really is without Christ. I made a list of some things that I've heard other people say, and so forth. It's not all original. But seeking after material wealth, pleasure, success, trying to prolong our lives, joining the health clubs, believing that we can righteously save the earth and somehow save ourselves, buying into causes and movements. We try to find salvation in nations, in politics.

“No Longer A Slave”

In a way, when you think about it, politics is a form of slavery. Attack world problems, systemic racism, oppression, discrimination—thinking we can save ourselves, seeking happiness. We create images of ourselves online, almost distinct from ourselves. Younger people do this anyway; I don’t. But I think you get it. You create a whole other image of yourself online that is greater than what you really are. I mean, it’s almost a little weird when you think about it.

I mean, think about this. How much time do we spend all day looking at images sent to us over screens? We live our lives looking at screens of one sort or another. We can’t tear ourselves away from them long enough to actually watch where we’re driving sometimes. We have to make laws about it because we’re watching images to come over a screen. Somebody looking from the outside might say, “These people! What are they worshipping? What is this god that comes to them in a screen?”

So I think there are all kinds of applications of this. And we can carry it on, but time is leaking and I have to go back to it. And I don’t want to leave Don with the best part of the passage. (*Laughter.*) So I’m going to go ahead, because we haven’t even gotten to the best part yet, verses 4 and 5.

Now remember the analogy. The child hasn’t come of age till the time set by the father. He’s no different from a slave. That’s how we were, says Paul. But—and there’s one of those *buts* in Scripture—and it’s really one of those “but God” passages. There’s a phrase in between, because he says, “*But when the time had fully come*”—in the fullness of time, at just the right time. Your translation may put it in any one of those numbers of ways.

But the time set by the Father came. It came two thousand years ago. He sovereignly set that time. And it was the right time. And when that time came, God initiated toward us. He moved toward us when the time had fully come.

Do you ever wonder why it was that time? Do you ever think about what if Jesus had waited till today to come? Just think. He could be on Twitter. He could have Facebook. We have satellite communications. The Sermon on the Mount could be immediately followed by everybody in the world. Wouldn’t that be great?

But that wasn’t the right time. I was thinking. Why not earlier? Why do we have those four hundred years of silence, where God never said a word to anybody for four hundred years until John the Baptist came on the scene? Why wait for the Roman Empire? What was wrong with the Persian Empire?

But this was the time. And with 20/20 hindsight, anyway, we can see why it was the right time in many ways, how God set the table. You had the Greek culture—Hellenism, the Greek language. There was a common world language. You had culture. You had an intellectual infrastructure with Greek thought. You had categories that could be used to explain the gospel, just like Paul is doing here in these first couple of verses. You have that.

You have the Roman Empire. You have what was called the Pox Romana, the Roman peace. Basically, it was open borders. You could travel from country to country, across the borders. No problem, because it was all governed by Rome. They built roads. Armies had to travel on something. There were roads. There were ways of transportation. There

“No Longer A Slave”

was a transportation infrastructure. And you could safely go from one country to another, just like you go from Pennsylvania to Ohio, or from Mexico to Texas. *(Laughter.)* Still awake? *(Laughter.)*

And then of course the Jewish Diaspora. You had Jews spread all over the Empire, synagogues in every city. And so as Paul and Silas and Barnabas and others go with the gospel, they can go right into the synagogues and preach Christ from the Old Testament, and then from there to the Gentiles.

So, you know, we can see that it was the right time in many ways. God truly had set the table when the time had fully come. God saves and God takes the initiative. He does it at the appointed time, even in our lives.

We can apply this to our own lives. It was at a particular time that God took the initiative and came to you and called you to Himself and adopted you as a son at just the right time. It might have been early in life, it might have been later in life. You may not know why. But He did. And it was at the right time for you.

Participant: Amen.

Dick: “At just the right time.” It reminds me of Romans 5:6. Jay, I’ll put you on the spot. Jay?

Jay: Yes?

Dick: I’ll put you on the spot. What does Paul say in Romans 5:6 about just the right time? At just the right time, what happened?

Jay: At just the right time, what happened?

Dick: “*At just the right time, while we were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*” Right? That’s a familiar verse.

I put Jay on the spot because he’s leading a Bible study in Romans 5.

Participant: It was to test whether Jay was saved or not. *(Laughter.)*

Jay: Did I pass? *(Laughter.)*

Participant: By the grace of God. *(Laughter.)*

Dick: By grace, yes. You didn’t earn it by works; only by grace. *(Laughter.)* All right. That was bad of me to do that. I apologize, Jay.

Jay: I was actually in Matthew. Right now, when you did that, I was thinking about Matthew five. That’s where my mind was at that time.

Dick: Okay.

Jay: But anyway, thank you for that.

Dick: All right. “*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.*” Why doesn’t he say, “born of a virgin?” Maybe the Apostles’ Creed hadn’t been written yet? That was it. Born of a woman? I don’t know. Could it be that he had a passage from Genesis in mind?

Participant: Genesis 3:15.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15, ESV. “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*”

Dick: Yes. The Seed of the woman. It makes sense. “Born of a woman.” “*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman.*”

“No Longer A Slave”

Here we delve into two great doctrines regarding the Person of Christ, who He was. First we see here the *Incarnation*.

Participant: Amen.

Dick: God sent His Son, which points to the fact that the Son already existed. Where did He send Him from? He sent Him from heaven. This is God the Son. This is the second Person of the Trinity who has been sent from heaven to become flesh, to become born of a woman—the Incarnation. So we have His pre-incarnate existence as the second Person of the Trinity as the eternal Son of God.

We don't have time, but there are some great passages in John. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We have beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

And the *hypostatic union*. I bet you've heard that before with Bruce. It has to do with His Deity and His humanity. We say that Jesus is the God-Man. Well, you could say that Jesus is the God-Man and not really understand or actually mean it in the correct way. A lot of people say, “Yes, Jesus is the God-Man.” And if you really unpack what they actually mean by that, they are actually believing a heresy. They just don't know it.

But what it means is that Jesus had a full divine nature. He was fully God and He was fully man—two natures in one Person. It's kind of the flip side of the Trinity. With the Trinity you have one Nature in three Persons, one divine Nature in three Persons. Here you have one Person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature—not divided, not intermingled, but joined in what they call the *hypostatic union*.

It took a few centuries for the church fathers to get this worked out, and there were a lot of heresies regarding the Person of Christ. And it wasn't until Chalcedon in 451 and the formula of Chalcedon which actually ironed out this whole relationship between Christ's Deity and His humanity. And we see this here just in these verses. *“God sent forth His Son”*—pre-existent, fully God—*“born of a woman”*, fully man. **Participant:** On December 25, 1 A.D., right?

Dick: Yes. Thank you. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Zero A.D.

Dick: And He had to be fully God and He had to be fully man so He could be the Mediator that we need. The great passage that goes along with this is 1 Timothy 2:5 and 6. *“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men.”* And notice what he says. *“The testimony given in its proper time.”* Here we have that again. Only One who is fully God and fully man can be the Mediator that we need.

He must be God in order to represent us before God the Father. He must be God in order to absorb the full wrath of God on the cross. Only a Mediator who is fully God can pay the infinite price for our redemption.

And he must be fully man. He must be fully man in order to identify with us. As the writer of Hebrews says, He was like us in every way, yet without sin. He must be fully man in order to live a perfectly righteous life. And He must be fully man in order to die as

“No Longer A Slave”

our substitute. Both sides were necessary—fully God and fully man—so that He could be our Mediator.

I think this quote from John R. W. Stott on your handout says it. “If he had not been man, He could not have redeemed men. If He had not been a righteous man, He could not have redeemed unrighteous men. If He had not been God’s Son, He could not have redeemed men for God or made them sons of God.” I think that’s well stated.

Then Paul says, “*At just the right time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.*” And here we have two great doctrines regarding the work of Christ—His *active obedience* and His *passive obedience*. If we’re going to understand the gospel, those are two other terms that we need to understand.

His *active obedience*. Paul says that He was born under law. He was born a Jew. He was born under law. He was born with the duty to obey the Mosaic law. He was born with the responsibility to keep the law.

We see that even in His infancy. When Mary and Joseph took Him to be circumcised on the eighth day He was keeping the law. When He went to John the Baptist to be baptized and John said, “I can’t baptize you. I’m baptizing people to wash away their sins. You’re sinless. Why are you being baptized?”

What did Jesus say? It’s necessary. Why? “*To fulfill all righteousness.*” Because Jesus had to perfectly keep every bit of the law. Even though He was without sin, He submitted to baptism to keep the law. He perfectly obeyed the law. He was perfectly righteous. He was the Lamb without blemish. That was His active obedience.

His *passive obedience* is His work on the cross. Paul says, “*to redeem those under the law.*” The great redeeming act of Christ was on the cross, where He paid that infinite price for our salvation. He redeemed us from slavery to sin and the devil.

And we need both. We need the active obedience of Christ and we need the passive obedience of Christ on the cross. Both are important. Unfortunately for most Christians in most churches, all you hear about is His passive obedience.

Participant: Amen.

Dick: You rarely hear the other. And that’s as much a part of the gospel. You have half a gospel if you don’t understand Christ’s active obedience and the importance of it.

Simply said, Christ not only died in our place, but He lived in our place. The life He lived is as important as the death He died.

Participant: Amen.

Dick: His obedience to the law is what is imputed to us in justification by faith. When we are justified by faith, there is a righteousness that is imputed to us. Where does that righteousness come from? Did God just whip it up? No! It’s the righteousness that Christ accomplished in His active obedience. And that is the righteousness that is applied to you and that is applied to me when we are justified by faith. It’s credited to our accounts.

I’m not making this up. Paul says in Romans 5:19 that “*just as through the disobedience of the one man*”, talking about Adam, “*many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man, Jesus Christ, the many will be made righteous.*” And you are the many, if you are in Christ this morning.

“No Longer A Slave”

And probably no passage brings together the active and passive obedience of Christ better than 2 Corinthians 5:21. *“God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.”* That’s half of it. The other half? *“So that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

It’s not our righteousness. It’s not like when we were saved, God wipes the slate clean and your sins are forgiven. You now have a blank slate, and then we start writing our own righteous acts on that slate. That’s Christianity to a lot of people. That’s because they don’t have the full gospel. They don’t understand Christ’s active obedience. They don’t understand the righteousness that’s credited to your accounts, that is put on your slate. That slate is clean. There is a righteousness that is put on your slate, but it’s not your righteousness.

As one preacher put it so aptly, “Ultimately, you are saved by works. But it is not your works. It’s Christ’s works.” It’s His active obedience.

So are you going to heaven? How are you going to get there? You’re going to have to have your sins taken away. That’s part of it. But you’re also going to have to have a righteousness added. And that comes through the perfect obedience of Christ. We’re saved by His sinless life and His substitutionary death. Both of those are in view here in Galatians chapter four.

“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 the full rights as sons.”

Now that’s what the old NIV says. I see why they translated it that way, because they are going back to verses 1 and 2. Paul is talking about being like a slave. You’re no different than a slave because you don’t have full rights. But the actual word there, the actual translation, literally, is *“that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

And so that brings us to the final point. And I’ll have to do it quickly because the time has fully come. But for those who can stay, I appreciate you hanging in.

Let’s talk about our *adoption papers*—the last two verses. *“Because you are 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 a son. And since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.”*

I put a quote there in your handout from the movie “Twelve Years a Slave.” The main character in the movie is named Solomon Northrop. He’s a free man. He lives in Saratoga, NY. He plays the fiddle. He’s quite a good musician.

Some evildoer guys come around and say, “Hey, you know, why don’t you come to Washington, D.C. and play there? You’ll make a lot of money.”

So he goes with them to Washington, D.C. And it was all a ruse to drug him, kidnap him. And they took him to the South, to New Orleans, and sold him into slavery. And for twelve years—and the movie depicts this—for twelve years he goes from being a free man to being a slave.

And at one point, in the one quote from the movie, he says,-- I believe this was spoken to someone who was selling him as a slave. He says, “I am Solomon Northrop. I am a free man, a resident of Saratoga, New York, a resident also with my wife and children who are equally free. I have papers.”

“No Longer A Slave”

We have papers for our adoption as sons. Our papers are the Holy Spirit, who has been sent into our hearts. Notice that there is a double sending here. *“God sent forth His son into the world, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive adoption as sons.”* And then as adopted sons, God sends Someone again. He sends the third Person of the Trinity. He sends His Spirit into our hearts. And that Spirit *“bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God.”* We have papers.

The Spirit cries out, “Abba! Father!”, a mixture of the Aramaic intimate term for father—Father, dear Father, and the Greek *pater*, noting the intimacy that we have as sons of God.

I don’t know how your relationship with your father was, or if you’re a father, your relationship with your son. It could be good, it could be bad. Maybe you never knew your father. Maybe you’re estranged from your son. But with God, because the Holy Spirit has been sent into our hearts, we have the most intimate relationship that there is in the universe. God is our Father. You are sons. And the Spirit bears witness.

You’re no longer a slave, but a son. And because you’re a son, God has made you also an heir.

It’s hard not to notice the similarity to Romans 8:15-17, where Paul writes, *“For you did not receive a spirit of bondage again to fear. But you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”*

And finally, a quote from John Stott again. “Thus God’s purpose was not only to secure our sonship by His Son, but to assure us of it by His Spirit. He sent His Son that we might have the status of sonship. And He sent His Spirit that we might have an experience of it. This comes through the affectionate, confidential intimacy of our access to God in prayer, in which we find ourselves assuming the attitude and using the language not of slaves, but of sons.” Well put, I think.

Well, let’s close in prayer. I appreciate your attention.

Father, we come before You today as Your sons, with hearts just overflowing with praise and worship and almost disbelief at what You have done for us in Christ—how at just the right time You took the initiative toward us and You saved us, that You chose us. You redeemed us. You imputed to us the perfect righteousness of Your Son Jesus Christ, so that we might be adopted as sons, and heirs of all the blessings of salvation that we experience now, and that we have an inheritance stored up for us in heaven that yet awaits us as Your children. We can’t express, our words can’t express the gratitude that we feel. Bless each of these men now as we part to our daily lives and our places of work. And, Spirit of God, apply this word to our hearts and our lives, that it might live in us, that it might grow in us, and that it might produce the fruit of Your Spirit in us each day in all that we say and all that we do for your glory. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen. (*Applause.*)