

Faith: Trusting, Walking, Living

A Study in Ruth & Galatians

Galatians 3:23—4:11

Read Galatians 3:21—4:11.

1. What degraded position was humanity in before Christ came? (And what degraded position were we all in before we came to faith in Christ?)
3:22a

3:23

3:24a (compare 4:2)

4:3 (Note: The “basic principles of the world” may refer to the attempt to be saved through the law or to pagan idol-worship¹; either way, these “principles” are opposed to the true means of salvation through faith in Christ.)

4:8
2. How did the law imprison us? (3:10, 23)
3. What is the intent of the law? (3:24)
4. List the facts we learn in 4:4–5a about God’s plan for redemption.
5. Philip Ryken says, “Jesus was born a Jew and therefore he was bound to obey God’s law in its entirety. He was ‘born under the law’ (Gal. 4:4). ... [He] kept the whole law for his people.”² How did Jesus redeem those under the law? (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18)
6. Once we are “in Christ” (3:28), what is our new status? (3:26, 29; 4:7)
7. What, then, is our relationship to others who enjoy this status?

¹Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/luther/luther_galatians.html (accessed August 2, 2010).

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005), 161.

8. As a result of this shared status among believers, what human distinctions does Paul say can no longer be used to classify people as high or low, insider or outsider? (3:28a)

Why? (3:28b)

Make your own list of qualities you tend to use to divide and “rank” people:

In Christ there is neither _____ nor _____,
_____ nor _____, _____ nor _____.

9. What sacrament accompanies our adoption into God’s family? (3:27)

What does it signify about our connection to Christ? (Rom. 6:3–5)

10. As “sons,”³ we are also heirs with “full rights” (4:5). What are some of these rights? (3:25 and 5:1; 4:6; Rom. 8:17)

11. What role does the Holy Spirit play in our relationship with God?

a. 4:6; Rom. 8:15–16

b. Rom. 8:26–27

c. Eph. 1:13–14

12. Paul has been speaking of the rights and inheritance that believers have as free sons of God. How does he then describe the things the Galatians are embracing? (4:9)

13. What are the Galatians doing that shows they are turning to law-keeping? (4:10; compare Col. 2:16–17)

14. With what sobering statement does Paul conclude this passage?

15. Consider the following quotation from N. T. Wright⁴:

But the heart of the passage, and perhaps its central thrust for Christians today, is the call to find true freedom in knowing and being known by the true God. The life of devotion and worship, gazing in adoration at the true God whose character and actions we can never study enough, sets us free from the rule of other gods – but the other gods will continually whisper to us that we might actually prefer being enslaved to them again. It's easier to rule your life by the old line-up of options: racial or tribal identity, geographical or territorial loyalty, the demands of money, sex and power. It's much harder to follow the God revealed in Jesus and the Spirit, and to learn true freedom, true humanness, in the fellowship of other followers. But, as Paul will go on to say, there really is no alternative. God has acted; we have tasted the effect of that action. If we go back now, we are denying not only ourselves and our Christian experience, but God himself.

³In Biblical times inheritance always passed from father to son. So now in Christ, men and women alike are “sons” and heirs.

⁴N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians & Thessalonians* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2002), 51.