

True Freedom 7

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Preacher: Roy Davidson

[0 : 00] We'll keep the passage in front of you there, Galatians chapter 4 and the outlines there for you to see what's going on. There are hard copies for those who might like to read along and you can always download them from our website or Elvanto later on during the week as well if you want to get them later on to try and recap things.

But one of the great problems in our world today is identity. I mean who am I is the big question. Who do I want to be known as? What do people think I'm like and what identity do I want to have?

What I'm desiring to project who I am, discover who I am then leads to great uncertainty, that kind of stuff and insecurity. Wanting to please others and for fear of being rejected by those we want to please and so sometimes we put on a facade of being someone for the sake of others and that'll only lead me into slavery to try to impress others all the time by being someone who I'm not.

So the question is who do you think you are? So if you know who you are, you really know who you are, then you'll have confidence to be who you are.

Which is why it's important to know who you are. If you are a child of God, right, and know you're a child of God, then you'll be confident in your own skin.

[1 : 25] And more than that, we'll not be rattled by the strange doctrines and things that blow our way and blow through churches and generations and come and go.

Some Christians will expect all kinds of things to happen. There's all kinds of various things going on around today.

They'll say that you can have this kind of experience, you can have this kind of prosperity, you can have this kind of therapy, therapeutic gospel, feel well all the time, expect all kinds of health.

Just if you join our particular kind of Christianity or if you do this kind of thing, you'll be right. Which then brings us back to the book of Galatians.

And as Stuart said, you've got to get the whole picture. Being a follower of Jesus, it's all about faith from first to last. Faith in the promises of God from beginning to end.

[2 : 26] That's what it means to be a Christian. And Paul has corrected Peter for getting things wrong about Christian fellowship. And Paul's corrected the Galatians about their foolishness, their muddled headness about salvation.

And he assures them that they began by faith. You can see it back in chapter 3 verse 2. They didn't receive the Holy Spirit of God because of works, but they received the Holy Spirit of God because they believed, they trusted the promises of God.

And so they are sons of Abraham. That is the same kind of people as Abraham. Those who are justified, those who are declared right with God by faith.

You see it in chapter 3 verse 7. I'll read it out to you, chapter 3 verse 7. Know then it's those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. Now, what faith means is trust, rely, depend.

That's what faith means. It isn't about the quantity of my trust, right? It's about the reliability of what I trust in.

[3 : 36] The thing that I trust in. That's what matters. So we're trusting in a faithful, good, glorious God. And then he gives four examples to try and nail this home.

And it all points to Christ and him sacrificed for our sins. So the first one he gave last week, we saw that covenants can't be changed.

You make a covenant, you can't change it, you don't change it. Once it's been ratified, sealed, signed, you can't change it. See chapter 3 verse 15.

To give a human example, the promise is prior to the covenant, the contract. You don't change the first one once you've put it in place. What came first is primary.

It's always been by faith, right? And then we see that the law is a guardian. The second thing he talks about it, the law is a guardian. It has a good purpose to restrain sin, constrain sin, and lead people, lead the world to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 46] And so then all those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ are part of God's family, part of Abraham's family by faith. Which then brings us to today's passage, right?

And we see the third and fourth examples of why justification by faith in the promises of God is the way it goes, not by law. So we see that the sons are heirs, verses 4, 1 to 7.

And then we see the example of Hagar and Sarah in chapter 4, verse 21 to 31. So let's have a look at the sons are heirs to try and nail this.

It's interesting, there's a lot of air time given to this. A lot of air time. Like it's two whole chapters given to this. So it's got to be important, hasn't it?

Got to be important. If there's two whole chapters given to it, God wants us to hear it and not forget it. Because our normal nature is to get this wrong.

[5 : 43] So, third reason that's always been of fire faith is that sons are heirs. Bottom line, you are a son, don't throw it away.

So, how about sons are heirs, verses 1 to 8. I mean that the heir, as long as he's a child, is no different from a slave, though he's the owner of everything.

Now friends, all Christians, male and female, are sons. It's not about gender. It's about status.

Okay? A son is an owner. A slave is owned. A son is prized.

A slave has a price. A son is an heir. A slave is part of the inheritance. The problem is that God's sons, his people, actually became slaves.

[6 : 59] Now, what do I mean by that? The sons became slaves. Slaves to sin and death at the fall. In the beginning, Adam and Eve, God's sons.

But at the fall, people became slaves to their sin, their passion, desires. And they think it's freedom to rebel against God, but fail to see what it is, a slavery.

And are kicked out of the garden and have become slaves to sin. And then, at one level, children are similar to slaves.

You see, that's in the passage there. While they're children, they're under a guardian. So, God called a people to himself through Abraham, the Jewish nation. And they are his sons.

He is their father, but they are children. In the Old Testament, they are children under the guardian of the law. We saw that last week in the start.

[8 : 00] Until. That word until comes up a number of times, doesn't it? In these passages. Children are similar to slaves. And children are enslaved for a time.

Now, the complication with this passage is this. What's it mean to be enslaved by the elementary principles of the world? See it there? In the same way, we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

Basic elements of the world. The stoicheic elements of the world. The chemist amongst us. You know, you've got to... I know Mr Gentleman loves this. Stoicheic chemistry. He'll just be thinking, fantastic.

That's where the word comes from. It's the transcendent powers that are in control over the elements of this world. The elemental spirits and so the philosophies of the world. And Paul says that we...

Notice a we. That is, Jews and Gentiles were enslaved to these principles. For a time. For a time.

[9 : 08] Enslaved to the dark forces of the sin in the world. The forces of evil brought about by Satan. But... God's son...

Makes us God's sons. See the reign of the evil of sin and death and slavery and sin comes to an end when... Right?

Verse 4. But... When the fullness of time had come... God sent forth his son... Born of a woman... Born under the law...

To redeem those... Who were under the law. So he might receive adoption... As sons. In God the Father's sovereign timing...

When the time was right... When everything was laid out... And the things could be understood... And places are put in place... And he sends his son... Born of a woman... So a real human being...

[10 : 08] Right? Born under the guardianship... Of the law... A Jew... What to do? To redeem those...

Who were under the law... Both Jews... Who were living under the regime of law... And the Gentiles... Who were condemned by the law... Now redeem is the idea of...

Paying back... That's the idea of redeem... Right? You pay the price for someone... You pay the price for something... And you buy it back... Jesus... Paid the price for us... By his sacrificial death...

And in doing so... God's son... The Lord Jesus... Makes it possible for you and me... To be adopted... As his sons...

Both Jews and Gentiles... Are sons of God... Not children... Not children... Not slaves... But sons... And so also...

[11 : 04] Heirs... Heirs... Of the promises made to Abraham... That we will be blessed... Yeah? Being God's children is a good thing...

That we'll be part of a great nation... Of God's saved people... That we'll live in a land... The place that God's promised... A heavenly home... Ultimately... Paul's trying to tell them...

That is who you are... Galatians... That is... Who we are... St. Lucia Bible Church member... A son... And heir...

Of the promises... Of God... Made possible by faith... In the sacrificial death of Jesus... That's who we are... Heirs...

Sons... Of God... Which means you're part of a big family... Which means you've... Got forgiveness of sins... Which means... We are right with God... Which means... God will never leave us...

[12 : 03] Nor forsake us... Which means that... You don't need to please anybody else... Around the place... Other than be true to... Not yourself... True to God...

And you see then... That... This gives rise to Paul's perplexion... That's a new word in the English dictionary... Just so you know... Perplexion...

Not a real word... But... I like it... So I'll put it down there for you... He is greatly concerned... In verses 8 to 12... Don't go back to being a slave again...

Don't be fooled into being something you are not... You were once slaves to the idols of the world... The gods in this world... Which are not gods...

Which was the age-old problem for the Jews as well... Idolatry is nothing but slavery... Now let me tell you...

[12 : 58] These gods are the world's surrender today... They really are... The gods of power... The gods of money... The gods of pleasure... The gods of sex... The gods of me... The gods will hold me in their grip...

And they will enslave me... Enslave you... They'll suck the life out... And spit you out as an empty shell... If you worship and give your life to them...

Christians are rescued... From the worship of the gods of this world... But Paul is concerned for the Galatian believers... That they're going to give up on their faith...

In Jesus Christ alone... And go back to slavery... Giving up on their faith... But... But... They're not... Necessarily going to go back...

To pagan idolatry... He's seeing... But... Going back... To... Judaism... They've been rescued out of idols...

[13 : 57] Worship... Brought into the family of God... And now he's concerned... They're going to go back... To Judaism... Observing days... And months...

And seasons... And years... And notice clearly here... He's going back to religious practices... Of Jewish special holy days...

And months... And seasons... He's actually saying... That what you're doing... Is going back to the stoicheia... The basic elementary principles... Of the world...

Religious humdrum... Doesn't save anybody... And Paul fears...

That if they do that... Then his labour amongst them... Was in vain... There in verse 11... I'm afraid... I may have laboured over you...

[14 : 50] In vain... So he's greatly concerned... But we see this great love... In verses 13 to 20... Paul wants them to become like him...

Now in what way... Right... Brothers I entreat you... Become as I am... In what way... Does he want them to become like him... As a missionary...

As a godly follower of Jesus... 1 Corinthians chapter 12... Follow my example... As I follow Christ... Maybe... But what does the text say...

The text says... Just like he has become... Like them... Now in what way...

Has Paul become like them... Think about it with me... Not... Becoming a slave to the law again...

[15 : 49] No... But by becoming someone... Who was free from the law... He become like them... In order to win them to Jesus...

To the Jew... He became a Jew... To the Gentile... He became a Gentile... So as to win... He was free... From worrying about... What people thought about him... The gospel meant...

That he become... Just... He could be just like them... Someone who is... Saved by faith alone... Someone who is... One in Christ...

He is free from slavery... The law... Just as they are... He... And he uses Christian freedom... To become... A Gentile... For their sake... It's 1 Corinthians chapter 9...

Verse 2... Following... To the Jew... I became as a Jew... 1 Corinthians chapter 9... Verse 20... Sorry... To the Jew... I became a Jew... In order to win the Jews...

[16 : 43] To those under the law... I became under the law... Though not myself... Being under the law... That I might win those under the law... To those outside the law... I become as one outside the law...

Not the being outside the law of God... But under the law of Christ... That I might win those outside the law... To the weak... I became weak... And I might win the weak... I become all things to all people... That by all means... I might save some...

I do it all for the sake of the gospel... That I may share with them in his blessings... He becomes like them... Free... From the constraints... Of Judaism... Because you become one...

In Christ Jesus... He's just like them... And they received the gospel... With great joy... Right? With great joy... With great blessedness...

See there in verse 15... But this... Blessedness seems to become dull... Where's it gone? Verse 15... What then has become of your blessedness?

[17 : 38] I testify to you that if possible... You would have gouged out your eyes... And given them to me... If they are followers of Jesus... They should be the most...

Joyful people... In the world... The most... Glass half full... People... Of the world... There's something amiss...

They had loved him coming... They were ready to... Pluck out their eyes... For him... That's saying something... Isn't it? He brought them the best thing...

The greatest news... That anyone could ever bring them... The greatest joy... That anyone could ever receive... Forgiveness of sins... Rescue from the wrath of God... Certainty of being...

Living with him forever... In glory... Eternal life... Guaranteed... That is the... That is the message... The best news you could ever hear... Isn't it? Surely...

[18 : 37] Verse 16... Have I then become your enemy... By telling you the truth... He hasn't become their enemy...

By telling them their folly... In wanting to follow false brothers... Back to Judaism... That's the they... See verse 17...

They make much of you... But for no good purpose... We read about it in chapter 2... He hasn't become the enemy... By telling them the truth... The truth is what we need to hear...

Time and time and time again... John chapter 8... Verse 32... The truth we are told... Sets us free... That's what sets us free... The truth is the person...

The Lord Jesus... The truth is the message... About the person... The Lord Jesus... That Jesus is Lord and Saviour... He reigns... He rules... He saves... He doesn't want them to go back...

[19 : 34] To law keeping... And dead Judaism... Once having come to faith in Christ... That will suck the joy out of them... Doing stuff... Just because you have to...

That will suck the life out of them... The gospel out of them... There are plenty of pseudo-Christian variations... On the theme still today... Now as an aside...

This is an aside... Right? But I know you listen to asides... More than anything else... If a Christian pastor... Tells you something from God's Word... Which is true... There's the thing...

If a Christian pastor... Tells you something from God's Word... Which is true... That you don't like hearing... That causes you to be... Offended in some way...

That challenges what you're doing... How do you respond? How do I respond? How should you respond? How should you receive...

[20 : 33] That Christian pastor? Brothers and sisters... I am not looking for people to tell me... That that was a good sermon on Sunday morning...

I am not looking for that... I am not looking for that... I am not looking for that... I do not particularly care... Well I do...

But I do... But I don't... What I do care about... Is whether what I say is true... Yeah... What I do care about is whether people hear God's Word and God's Spirit works in us to bring about repentance where required, hope where needed, healing and joy and blessedness.

That's what I'm trying to do. To bring about a love for God and His Word and a hatred for sin and rejection and rebellion against His Word.

For obedience is better than sacrifice and rebellion is like idolatry. For they, verse 17, are the false brothers who would bring you into slavery.

[22 : 04] So in chapter 2, verse 4, they are the people who are not the brothers in Christ at all, but they're of doing... They have no good purpose, right?

It's of no good purpose. Have a look at what they're doing. They make much of you, but for no good purpose. What they're doing is shutting out the Galatians, excluding them from the Christian family, unless you add law to it, right?

Excluding them by rebuilding the very division that the Gospel breaks down. That's what they're doing. By putting them under the law, it will actually shut them out of Christianity.

And Jesus had a word for these people. Woe. Matthew 22, verse 15. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you travel across the sea and land to make a single proselytite.

That's a convert to Judaism. And when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourself. Woe to you. It's good to have people think well of you.

[23 : 15] Yeah, that's good. I'd rather people think well of me than bad of me. But for a good purpose. Yeah? Like seeing Christ form in me.

Whether people are noticing or not. And Paul's true love for them is evident. He's in great pain. And so concerned to see them standing firm in Christ.

And so he gives them the fourth illustration. Hagar and Sarah. Verse 21 to 31. Now, he's saying to these guys, if you understand the law, right, the Old Testament, particularly the first five books of the Old Testament, the Torah, and Genesis the first of those books, right, do you not get what the Old Testament says?

Now, my suspicion, I might be wrong, right, is it is now speaking to the Jewish background believers in Galatia. That's my suspicion. See, if you understand what's going on with Hagar and Sarah, you will know that being a son of God has always been according to the promises of God, if you understand the Old Testament.

Now, at UniChurch, you're welcome to come anytime. In fact, it would be lovely if all of you came to UniChurch on a Sunday night, 4.30, down at the Global Change Building. We're working our way through Genesis.

[24 : 45] We just had a look at this passage recently. So you can dig up the tape and listen to it. Great sermon. Anyway, if you understand what's going on with Hagar and Sarah, you will know that being a son of God has always been according to the promises of God.

Jewish history is decisive. Now, there's lots of allegory. He's saying this can be understood allegorically, right? Now, verse 24, this may be interpreted allegorically.

Now, what's going on here? Well, it goes like this. The story is, Abraham had two sons. See there, verse 22. Ishmael and Isaac.

Abraham, right? Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac, well, and Ishmael are different.

Ishmael was born of the slave woman, Isaac was born of the slave woman, Hagar. She was Sarah's slave, the concubine of Abraham. Isaac was born of the free woman, Sarah, Abraham's wife, who couldn't have kids.

[26 : 02] The son of the slave, the son of the slave, Hagar, was born how all children are born.

Just as night follows day, husband and wife, man and woman, woman gets pregnant, child comes. The problem was, Hagar wasn't Abraham's wife, she was Sarah's slave.

And they plotted a working out, a plan to try and somehow help God along by having a kid. Didn't help much at all, really. The son of the free woman, Sarah, right, was born in an almost miraculous way.

I mean, she's 90 years old when Isaac is born. The son of the free woman, Isaac, was born according to the promise.

God promised Abraham and Sarah, you're going to have a son. He says you're going to have a son. It's by your offspring the world's going to be blessed. You're going to have a son, Abraham. He goes, I don't know. But the son is born.

[27 : 14] Against the odds, Isaac comes. Now what does God show us by this? You've got Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac.

What does it mean? Well the Old Testament is explained by the New Testament. That's how you understand the Old Testament all the way. You understand the Old Testament by the New Testament. And the New Testament explains it for us in verse 25.

Each woman represents a covenant. The slave woman, Hagar, the covenant of Mount Sinai from where the law comes. And so the children of slavery.

Hagar represents Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism. And all those of her children are under law, are slaves. But the Jerusalem above, right, the heavenly kingdom of God, right, the place where all God's people are sons gathered in Christ, well, that is free.

It's those who are in the eternal kingdom of Jerusalem are those blessed to be saved. And that is not according to the law, not by observing the promise, but, sorry, the law, but by promise.

[28 : 33] So verse 28, you brothers, like Isaac, are children by promise. He's saying, you and I have been born according to promise.

Not by law, but by miracle. And it's free. And you are now part of this family of God.

Just like Ishmael was born according to the flesh under law and persecuted Isaac, the one born according to the promise by faith. So even now, you Galatians, hear this, are having the same thing done to you, verse 29.

Ishmael laughed, mocked, those under law, the Jewish authorities, laughed at Jesus when he was born, at the son of Jesus, the son born of the promise.

They laughed and mocked at him when he was on the cross. Those who came with another gospel of Galatia mocked those there who had been born again by trusting the promises of God and in the crucified Jesus Christ alone.

[29 : 51] And so it goes on today. There are those in places of religious authority who will laugh mock, scorn at those who are trusting in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus alone to be right with God.

But still today the Christians in Galatia were being mocked and ridiculed by those who'd come to lay upon them other things.

But what does the scripture say, verse 30? Cast out the slave woman and her son. There's no place for law keeping to bring about the inheritance of the heirs.

If there was it would no longer be according to promise and the promise that was given to Abraham. So we who trust the promises of God need to understand who we are.

We are not children of the slave woman of the law. That's not who we are. We are children, we are sons, we are heirs of the free woman of the promise. And so verse 5, chapter 5 verse 1, for freedom Christ has set us free.

[31 : 03] Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. The kids are learning that verse. Next week we're going to spend a lot of time looking at this freedom. But for now we need to be who we are.

You and I who trust in the promises of God are sons of the promise. We are sons of God. We are heirs of the promises of God.

Please remember that when you're tempted to look for someone or something more to add, to try and do, to try and please God. Don't go near it.

Remember that when you're tempted to look for something else to give meaning, significance, hope, security, joy, blessedness to your life in your relationship with God?

We already have it. We already have it as we trust in the promises of God. We must never turn to the gods of this age for hope, finances, money, pleasure, hedonism, the gods of this world.

[32 : 14] We must never turn back to the rules and regulations of creating Christianity with two classes of believer, those who do, do, do and those who believe, believe, believe. We are be who we are.

Children of God relaxing in the identity of being one of his blessed sons, being confident in being our true self, rightly pressing on in the faith until Christ is finally and perfectly formed in us.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, only you can do this by your powerful spirit that raised Jesus from the dead being at work in us.

We ask in your mercy that you help us to be your people, be confident of who we are in Christ, that we would never turn, forsake, rebel against you. Help us to keep pressing on in the blessedness of being your sons and heirs.

And we do look forward to that day of being gathered with all the saints in glory, singing your praises and please you want us to model that in our day-to-day life, these days, now.

[33 : 41] We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.