

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 65:1-9

**“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’<sup>2</sup> All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—<sup>3</sup> a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick;<sup>4</sup> who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of unclean meat;<sup>5</sup> who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’ Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day.<sup>6</sup> “See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps—<sup>7</sup> both your sins and the sins of your fathers,” says the LORD. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”<sup>8</sup> This is what the LORD says: “As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and men say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is yet some good in it,’ so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all.<sup>9</sup> I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live.**

**65:1–66:24** The grand conclusion to chs. 58–66, as well as to chs. 40–66 and to the whole book. (CSB)

**65:1** | – The Lord replies to Isaiah’s petition (63:15–64:12). (TLSB)

Isaiah interceded for all of Israel, just as earlier Moses pleaded for the entire nation (Ex 32:11–13). In both situations though, only part of the community is saved (Ex 32:27–28; Is 65:8). (CC)

“I *allowed* [tolerated, permitted] myself to be sought; ... I *allowed* myself to be found.” The perfect verbs “express facts which have formerly taken place, and are still of constant recurrence, and hence are matters of common experience. (CC)

The main gist of Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 [ET 63:7–64:12]) is this: where is God in all of this (see 63:11)? Yahweh now speaks and states his perspective. He is not the one who has been absent without leave. The apostates are the ones who have abandoned the relationship and broken the covenant. (CC)

Is 65:1–2a functions to introduce a major thrust of chapters 65–66, the idolaters’ negligence toward the prophetic Word, a theme reinforced in 65:12; 66:4 (cf. 65:24). Yahweh’s agonizing question is this: where are my people? This lament is anticipated in 50:2 with angst: “Why, when I came, was there no one? [Why, when] I called, was there no one answering?” (cf. 59:1, 16; 63:5). Yahweh is appalled, so he throws the ball back into the apostates’ court. They are the ones responsible for the relationship’s demise. He has been present all along, making himself

available; it is this group that has walked out. Yahweh's eagerness for intimacy has been repeatedly ignored. The problem, then, is not divine silence; it is human unresponsiveness. Isaiah's use of "all of us" in his lament (אֲנִי וְכָל־עַמִּי, 64:5, 7, 8 [ET 64:6, 8, 9]) is not an accurate assessment of the whole community. "Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (Rom 9:6). (CC)

But God's grace will not be thwarted! If his people reject him he will turn to the Gentiles, whom he has already invited (Is 56:1–8; cf. Acts 13:46; Rom 10:20–21). "Had He waited until He had been sought after, there would never have been a revelation of God's grace." Yahweh initiates the relationship. Taking the first step, he says, "Here I am. Here I am" (Is 65:1). The roles of servant and master are reversed as Yahweh seeks to serve his people (cf. Phil 2:6–8). (CC)

But there is more irony. Yahweh is willing—even determined—to be found by those who do *not* seek him (Lk 14:21–23). And this is always the way of divine grace. When God appeared to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3), Moses (Ex 3:1–14), and even Isaiah (chapter 6), these men were not looking for him. People seek God because he first seeks them (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). (CC)

Paul was grieved that more of his kinsmen did not embrace Jesus as their Savior (e.g., Rom 9:1–3), while many Gentiles were responsive to the Gospel (e.g., Rom 9:30). Why was this happening? Israel had the adoption, glory, covenants, Torah, divine service, promises, and patriarchs (Rom 9:4–5). From their human lineage came "the Christ ... who is God over all, blessed forever" (Rom 9:5). As the apostle looked for answers to this dilemma, he turned to Is 65:1–2. The problem for Israel was not a lack of revelation or an insufficient amount of God's grace. At the root of the issue was rebellion. "I hold my hands outstretched all day to a stubborn people" (65:2). The "insiders" missed the free gift of eternal life, while the "outsiders" cast themselves upon the Savior's mercy (Is 65:1; cf. Jn 1:11–12; Acts 13:46). Paul then quotes from Is 65:1–2 in Rom 10:20–21, applying Is 65:1 to Gentiles and Is 65:2 to apostate Israel. (CC)

The use of "seek" (שׁוֹרֵץ) in Is 65:1 and 65:10 forms an *inclusio* around Yahweh's action of "taking out of the Gentiles a people for his name" (Acts 15:14; cf. Is 56:1–8). The contrite attitude and grace-induced action of the Gentiles are what contrast them with Israel's apostates. Each group has a radically different end (65:13–16). (CC)

Yahweh also implores *us* to seek him while he may be found (55:6), for "now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2; cf. Is 49:8). "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (Ps 95:7–8; see Heb 3:7–4:7). (CC)

*did not ask ... did not seek.* The Lord now proceeds to answer Isaiah's prayer. Israel failed to stay close to the Lord, though they sought him in a superficial way (see 55:6; 58:2 and notes). (CSB)

*did not call on my name.* See 64:7. (CSB)

God chose Israel. They had no merit or worthiness that attracted Him to them. (TLSB)

*Here am I.* See 58:9. (CSB)

That is, “I will offer Myself to the Gentiles by the Word of the Gospel, so that I may be their God. Here I am, here I am, I want to be yours.” These are excellent words of consolation for the Gentiles, as they are extremely harsh threats for the Jews. God wants to be the God of the Gentiles as one who has not been sought. (Luther)

Indicating that the Lord is “a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). Isaiah answers the Lord’s call with the same eagerness (Is 6:8) (TLSB)

**65:2-7** Syncretistic worship (57:3–13a; 65:3–5; 66:3, 17) exists alongside orthodox faith, so Yahweh decides that the faithful and the idolaters can no longer live side by side (cf. Rom 16:17). Yet his decision to sever the remnant from the apostates is introduced gradually. Instead of beginning with an abrupt rupture, Is 65:2–7 announces judgment upon the evildoers, who are addressed in the third person through 65:6. Then Yahweh becomes more direct as he speaks to them via second person plural suffixes (“your”) in the first part of 65:7. He will not pardon those who have jettisoned the faith; rather, he will repay the idolatrous faction in full (65:6–7). (CC)

**65:2** In Is 65:1 Yahweh portrays converted Gentiles. Now he tells us about the Israelite renegades. His use of “a ... people” (אֵל) is revealing. They are no longer “my people” (40:1; 63:8) or “his people” (63:11) or even, as in Isaiah’s lament, “your [Yahweh’s] people” (63:14). The idolaters are diminished to the status of “a ... people” because the term “my people” is reserved exclusively for the faithful (65:10, 19). (CC)

Yahweh’s hands are spread out in love. These are no ordinary hands! With them, he created the heavens and the earth (Is 45:12; Pss 8:7 [ET 8:6]; 19:2 [ET 19:1]), and these same hands will recreate Zion (Is 60:21) because he has engraved his people upon his hands (49:16). God the Son allowed Roman soldiers to inflict his hands with the pain of their nails (Ps 22:17 [ET 22:16]; cf. Jn 20:19–20). In contrast, our hands are stained with blood (Is 59:3) and filled with violence (59:6). It is foolish, therefore, not to entrust ourselves and our times into God’s loving hands (Ps 31:6, 16 [ET 31:5, 15]). “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (James 4:8). (CC)

I HAVE HELD OUT MY HANDS – ESV has “spread out my hands.” God’s strong arms are now spread in patient appeal. (TLSB)

*obstinate people.* See 1:2; 30:1, 9 and notes. (CSB)

When Israel turned a deaf ear to the Lord’s repeated calls to faithfulness, they, the chosen people, sank to the level of the heathen, who likewise did not seek Him. (TLSB)

*imaginings.*† See 59:7 and note; Ro 10:20–21. (CSB)

They were walking after their own devices. (Leupold)

**65:3-4** Through four participles describing activities connected with necromancy, the apostates’ evil plans are described in 65:3–4. These rituals are further explained in 57:3–13a; 66:3, 17, which show us that the fallen human heart is deeply pagan. (CC)

The apostate kings Manasseh (2 Ki 21:18) and Amon (2 Ki 21:26) were buried in gardens, and this may indicate their obsession with foreign gods, which were worshiped in such places. “Burning incense upon the bricks” (Is 65:3) is likewise noted in Jer 44:17–25, where the rite is directed to the queen of heaven, who is to be identified with Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess (cf. Jer 7:16–19). Yahweh never authorized brick altars. The images of false gods and worshiped animals could be inscribed on bricks, just as they could be on carved stones, which Yahweh prohibited for his altars (see the third textual note on 65:3). (CC)

“Sitting in the tombs” (Is 65:4) is probably an attempt to consult the dead (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9–13; 1 Sam 28:3; Is 8:19; 57:9). The classic OT example is Saul’s encounter with the witch at Endor, who apparently was able to gain an audience with the spirit of dead Samuel (1 Samuel 28). The Gerasene demoniac also fits this profile (e.g., Lk 8:27–30). (CC)

Sacrificing pigs, especially in chthonic contexts, was practiced in the ancient Near East. Heider believes that Is 65:4 references a meal shared with the dead, something like a funerary feast. The fact that Isaiah does not go into explicit detail should be interpreted as meaning that people were so thoroughly aware of these rites that further definition was not needed. Indeed, those unacquainted should not be informed lest they be tempted to imitate the rites. The apostates revel in what Yahweh declared unclean: the dead, the demonic, and unclean food. Such occult arts breed elitism and pride as people attempt to turn what is evil into good (cf. 5:20–21; 28:15; 30:9–11). (CC)

**65:3** *provoke me*. By worshiping idols (see Jdg 2:12–13). (CSB)

*to my very face*. Defiantly (cf. 3:8–9). (CSB)

*gardens*. See 1:29 and note. (CSB)

Isaiah lashes out at pagan rites and forms of divination of which Israel was guilty from the days of their fathers. (TLSB)

The cults planted delightful gardens in honor of certain deities that were reputed to love such homage. (Leupold)

*burning incense*. As when worshiping the Queen of Heaven (see Jer 44:17–19). (CSB)

**65:4** *sit among the graves*. Perhaps to consult the dead (see 8:19 and note; 57:9; Dt 18:11). (CSB)

Engaging in occult forms of divination such as consulting the dead (cf 8:19). (TLSB)

*flesh of pigs*. Considered ceremonially unclean (see 66:3, 17; Lev 11:7–8). (CSB)

**65:5** “I am too holy for you.” How disturbing is this? A person enmeshed in idolatry of the most vile sort (65:3–4) promotes himself as a holy person of the highest order! This is the kind of spiritual blindness Isaiah describes throughout his book (e.g., 42:7, 16, 18, 19; 43:8; 56:10). (CC)

The root of the human problem is that we are unable to recognize we have a problem. “The heart is more depraved than anything; it is incurably sick. Who can understand it?” (Jer 17:9). Self-deceived, we go about deceiving others. Every manmade religion comes down to a mechanism for people to exalt themselves while placating a non-god and excluding others through elitism and sanctimonious legalism. Israel’s sacrifices were to be sweet-smelling to Yahweh (e.g., Lev 1:9, 17; 2:2, 9, 12). However, “all day” long their spiritual charades provoke him to anger (Is 65:5). This “holier than thou” attitude is smoke in Yahweh’s nostrils. He cannot tolerate even a whiff of this hypocrisy that has become so dull to divine delights (cf. Amos 5:21–23). (CC)

*I am too sacred for you.* Those who engage in pagan rituals believe they are superior to others (cf. the attitude of the Pharisees in Mt 9:11; Lk 7:39; 18:9–12). (CSB)

They arrogantly regard themselves charged with supernatural forces that could prove hurtful to the uninitiated. (TLSB)

**SMOKE IN MY NOSTRILS** – Israel’s vanity (and likely burnt offerings to idols) was an irritation to God that turned His face from them. (TLSB)

**65:6-7** In ending his lament, Isaiah asks Yahweh, “How can you be silent and afflict us forever?” (64:11 [ET 64:12]). Yahweh responds by saying, “I will not be silent” (65:6), and, breaking his silence, he announces that the apostates will have hell to pay, literally (cf. 66:24). It is written in his book. (CC)

Isaiah does not elaborate the specific written document lying open before God, but in all likelihood he refers to a scroll that keeps a complete record of sinners’ evil actions (Rev 20:12; cf. Mal 3:16; Dan 7:10). These iniquities lead to divine redress in a most personal way, “upon/into their lap” (Is 65:6, 7; cf. Ps 79:12; Lk 6:38). Yahweh vows to punish the iniquities of the apostates and of their fathers “together,” for the sons have perpetuated their fathers’ sins. “This, in effect, means that the amnesty announced in 40:2 is revoked for those who have opened the old wounds by continued pagan worship.” (CC)

**65:6** *not keep silent.* The answer to 64:12. (CSB)

To declare that God will not remain inactive. Leupold)

*pay back.* See 59:18 and note. (CSB)

The Hebrew idiom has it that evil will repay them in their bosom, for which again we might say: “into their very lap” the entire unholy mess is to be deposited. (Leupold)

**65:7** *burned sacrifices on the mountains.* Offered to Baal on the high places (see 57:7; Hos 2:13). (CSB)

*defied me.* See Eze 20:27–28. (CSB)

Israel prided had themselves on being renegades and this amounted to a reviling of God upon the hills. (Leupold)

**65:8-10** The promise of a remnant is based on the Lord’s everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:7; cf. 3:29). He will never nullify this promise. Therefore, though judgment may come, it is intended to remove those who claim to be members but are not (cf. 15:2, 6) and to purify those who are true members (cf. Heb. 12:7-11). (TLSB)

**65:8** A new section begins here and runs through 65:16. However it is connected with what precedes as Yahweh continues responding to Isaiah’s lament in 63:7–64:11 (ET 63:7–64:12). By means of the criteria Yahweh sets forth in 65:1, 10b, he only calls those who seek him “my servants” (cf. 54:17; 56:6; 63:17) and “my people” (cf. 56:7; 60:21). Yahweh illustrates the remnant motif by means of a grape cluster (65:8). The divine “blessing” (65:8) is to be found in his elect servants, whom he has first sought out (65:1) and who then respond in faith by seeking him (65:9–10). They alone are the ones who will inherit and possess (65:9) the ancient promises of “blessing” (65:16). (CC)

Is 65:8–16 expounds this antithesis between the seeking remnant and the apathetic apostates. While 65:2–7 focuses upon the idolatrous faction, 65:8–10 clarifies Yahweh’s plans to deliver those who are his servants through faith. Is 65:11–16 then shifts back and forth, from grace for the faithful to judgment upon unbelievers. The two groups have vastly different outcomes (65:15–16). (CC)

When divine judgment strikes the community, it will not be indiscriminate (65:8). Yahweh will spare the remnant of believers, who are accounted righteous by the righteous, justifying Servant (53:11; see the third textual note on 62:1). Abraham’s query to Yahweh is pertinent here: “Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Gen 18:23). Yahweh’s answer is no. “If Yahweh of armies had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah” (Is 1:9). New life comes from what is discarded as hopeless and dead. A shoot will burst forth from Jesse’s burned-out stump (6:13; 11:1a). Indeed, “a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (11:1b). These promises of a Davidic Messiah imply a messianic community as well. (CC)

*In this way, 65:8 is the interpretive key to Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 [ET 63:7–64:12]) as well as to chapters 56–66.* Not everyone in the community is guilty of the sins cited in, e.g., 56:9–12; 57:3–13a; 58:1–5; 59:1–15a; 65:2–7. God preserves a remnant chosen by grace (cf. Rom 11:5–7). (CC)

While Is 63:17 could be interpreted to imply that all Israelites are “servants,” 65:8 clarifies the issue. Only those who refuse to participate in pagan rites and social sins belong to Yahweh. This clarification becomes even more apparent in 65:13–16, where divine judgment and salvation segregate the servants from the self-servers. The good grapes are spared (cf. 27:2–6), while the bad grapes are culled for judgment. While Isaiah’s Song of the Vineyard depicts wholesale

destruction (5:1–7), there are some good grapes after all. The entire cluster is not condemned. There will be a remnant comprised of the Servant’s “offspring” who embrace the gift of righteousness by faith (54:17). Only these humble and contrite “servants” (65:8; see also, e.g., 57:15; 66:2, 5) will inherit the kingdom (cf. 65:17–25). Regardless of outward appearances (e.g., Ps 73:1–16), Yahweh will take them to glory (Ps 73:24), for he is their strength and their portion forever and ever (Ps 73:26). The first will become last and the last first (cf. Is 60:22; Mt 19:30; 20:16), but all servants will receive the same reward (Mt 20:8–12) because of the Master’s generosity (Mt 20:15). (CC)

The remnant motif is prominent in Isaiah 1–39 (e.g., 4:2–3; 7:3; 10:22–23; 11:11–16; 37:31–32) and appears again in 46:3. The prophet even names one of his children “a remnant shall return” (7:3). Not only will Yahweh spare a remnant (65:8), but these people will also become beneficiaries of his glorious promises in chapters 60–62 and be called “the oaks of righteousness” (61:3), as well as the “holy people” and “Yahweh’s redeemed ones” (62:12). (CC)

An overview of the biblical theme of the remnant begins with the fall when Yahweh preserved Adam and Eve after they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3). He also kept Noah and his family from the worldwide deluge (Genesis 6–9; 1 Pet 3:18–21). The Jacob narrative connects Yahweh’s promise of a remnant with the covenantal promises to Abraham and Isaac (e.g., Gen 32:10 [ET 32:9]). Joseph continues the motif when he forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery: “God sent me before you to preserve for you *a remnant* [תְּשׁוּרָתִי] on earth and to keep alive for you a great group of survivors” (Gen 45:7; cf. Gen 50:20). The prophet Elijah thought that he was the sole remnant in his time, but Yahweh pledged: “Yet I will *cause to remain* [Hiphil of תְּשׁוּרָתִי] seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that do not bow to Baal” (1 Ki 19:18). (CC)

These promises are based upon God’s first Gospel promise (Gen 3:15), amplified in his everlasting covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:7; Gal 3:29), which will never be nullified (Mt 16:18). As the Elect Stone (1 Pet 2:4–8), Christ promises that all baptized believers are numbered among the “elect race,” the “people of God” (1 Pet 2:9–10), the “remnant of mankind” (Acts 15:17). Judgment removes those who claim to be members but are not (cf. Jn 15:2, 6) while also purifying those who are true believers (cf. Heb 12:7–11). A remnant from among all the nations, saved by grace through faith, will one day gather before the Lamb to give thanks to him forever (Revelation 7). (CC)

*cluster of grapes.* Israel was a vineyard that had produced bad grapes (5:2, 4, 7). (CSB)

**DO NOT DESTROY IT** – The owner of the vineyard is told not to discard an entire cluster of grapes if some of them are dried or rotten, because there are enough good ones left to produce excellent wine. In the same way, the Lord will not cast out the whole nation because there will be faithful servants in its midst. (TLSB)

*servants.* See vv. 9, 13–15; 54:17 and note. Here the Lord’s servants are equivalent to the remnant (see 1:9 and note). (CSB)

Responding to Isaiah, God says that only “my servants” will eat, drink, rejoice, and be blessed (Is 65:8, 9, 13–16). They alone are the heirs of the ancient promises, the children of God, and members of the household of faith. (CC)

**65:9** The movement from Is 65:8 to 65:9 is from preservation to inheritance. When placed together, these words in 65:9—“Jacob,” “offspring,” “one inheriting,” “my mountains,” “they will possess it,” and “they will dwell there”—point to Yahweh’s promises of land for the patriarchs (e.g., Gen 13:14–15; 15:18–21; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12), a gift that is frequently reiterated in Isaiah 40–66 (e.g., 49:8; 54:3; 58:12; 60:21; 61:4). But this will be no ordinary land; it will be the new heavens and new earth (65:17–25). (CC)

With great rejoicing (35:10; 51:11; 65:14a), the offspring of Jacob will come from distant places (43:5–6; 60:4–5) to their eternal homeland. To depict the greatness of the throng, Isaiah suggests that there will not be enough room for the crowded multitude (49:20; 54:2–3). These promises point to a restored Eden (51:3), indeed a renewed heaven and earth (65:17–25; 66:22). The remnant may rest assured that God’s promise of the land is for them, forever. (CC)

Is 65:9 envisions Yahweh returning the remnant to the land, thus restoring covenant blessings to the faithful drawn from both the North and the South (Jacob and Judah). These believers are the Suffering Servant’s offspring (Is 53:10; 59:21) who will inherit God’s kingdom, centered in the new Zion (Isaiah 60–62). They are synonymous with Zion’s children (cf. 54:1–3) and are mentioned frequently in chapters 40–66 (e.g., 44:3–5; 49:19–21; 60:4–9, 21–22). Because Jacob’s “offspring” (65:9) will include Gentiles (see 56:1–8; 65:1), this vision is already fulfilled now (via proleptic eschatology) in the present Christian church, where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you all are one in Christ Jesus. If you are of Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28–29). (CC)

*descendants.* See Jer 31:36. (CSB)

He promised that a remnant of the people would be saved. (PBC)

*Jacob ... Judah.* The northern and southern kingdoms respectively. (CSB)

*possess my mountains.* See 49:8; 60:21 and notes. “Mountains” refers to the whole land, since so much of it was hilly (see Jdg 1:9; Eze 6:2–3). (CSB)

*chosen people.* See 41:8–9 and note. (CSB)

*inherit.* See 57:13 and note. (CSB)

EPISTLE – Galatians 3:23-4:7

<sup>23</sup> **Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.** <sup>24</sup> **So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we**



**might be justified by faith.** <sup>25</sup> **Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.**

**3:23** *Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the Law, imprisoned until this coming faith should be revealed.* In 1 Cor 9:20 Paul contrasts people who are “under the Law” (ὕπὸ νόμου) with those in 1 Cor 9:21 who are “without the Law” (ἄνομος). Although Paul considers the gentiles a Law to themselves in Rom 2:12–16, he nevertheless contrasts those who have the Law (ἐν νόμῳ, Rom 2:12) with those who do not (τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα, Rom 2:14). If Paul uses the phrase “under the Law” (ὕπὸ νόμου, Gal 3:23) for specifically Jewish existence (as in 1 Cor 9:20), then Gal 3:23 would be describing *Jews* imprisoned and guarded under the Law. For some interpreters, then, the Jews’ release from the disciplinarian brings about a result that “you ... *all*” (Gal 3:26, 28) now enjoy. In short, gentile participation in Abraham’s heritage (3:29) would be dependent upon the priority of the Jews in God’s saving plan. This approach, however, is not the only viable reading of these verses. (CC)

Paul clearly conveys in 3:22 a *universal* situation: “Scripture imprisoned everything under sin.” Again, the “everything,” literally, “all things” (τὰ πάντα; neuter) locked up “under sin” could be translated as “all *people*” but may possibly even include Moses’ Law. The connections between 3:23 and the prior verse suggest that the universal dimension of 3:22 *continues* in 3:23. First, Paul repeats the verb “imprison” or “hem in” (συγκλείω) from 3:22 as a passive participle in 3:23. Second, the apostle has more to say about “faith,” featured prominently at both the beginning and the end of 3:23. The doubled emphasis in 3:23 on faith encloses or bookends the doubled emphasis on the Law’s imprisonment. (CC)

Despite these connections with 3:22, those who advocate the Jews’ priority in God’s salvation have maintained that 3:23 represents a *shift* in focus from the entire world under sin (3:22) to the specific plight of “we” Jews “under the Law.” Paul would shift yet again from “we” Jews in 3:23–25 to “you” gentiles in 3:26 in order to emphasize that all people, whether Jews or gentiles, may be incorporated into Christ. Nevertheless, a universalizing emphasis on all people may also be clear in 3:23 with the phrase “under the Law.” (CC)

A few interpreters have understood “under the Law” in 3:23 as shorthand for the fuller phrase “under the curse of the Law,” a concept that Paul introduces in 3:10. Paul uses “under the Law” in 1 Cor 9:20–21, however, with no connotation of a curse but as a way of distinguishing Jews from gentiles who are *not* under the Law. Since gentiles are not *ordinarily* “under the Law,” the phrase is not likely, *of itself*, shorthand for the fuller phrase “under the curse of the Law.” Nevertheless, in 3:23–25 Paul describes existence “under the Law” as oppressive, a description that is explicable in view of Paul’s negative comments about the Law earlier in 3:10. (CC)

To recap the logic of 3:10: the rival teachers drew upon Deuteronomy to explain to the Galatians that the Law curses everyone who does not obey all that it commands. That would include the Galatian Christians too, even though they are gentiles. In other words, for the logic to work, *even as gentiles* they are subject to the Law’s curse for disobedience. In order to avoid the awful curse, the Galatians should adopt the path of Law observance to complement their faith in the promised Messiah. Not surprisingly, then, Paul describes the Galatians in 4:21 as *desiring* to be “under the Law.” Paul reasons in 3:10, instead, that to *adopt* the path of Law observance is to fall

under its curse for disobedience. As those desirous to obey the Mosaic Law, such reasoning would be rhetorically potent. The apostle can then recall that potent reasoning in 3:23 with the oppressive phrase “under the Law.” (CC)

In other words, the unfolding logic *within the letter itself* should be the primary clue to 3:23–25. The apostle is likely assuming his earlier reasoning in 3:10–13. The rival teachers have placed the Galatians in a position where two paths stand before them. The path of the Law is oppressive and entails a curse from which there is no other escape. The saving work of Christ is the only path that brings blessing. If Paul is reasoning along these lines, then 3:23, while certainly applicable to Jews “under the Law,” *should not be limited* to the Jewish people. Likewise, a restriction of the first person plural verb in 3:25 to the Jews is unlikely: “Since faith has come, *we are* no longer under a custodian.” The Galatian gentiles were seeking to return to a situation under a custodian. Paul turns to the *real* means of salvation in 3:26–29. Such an interpretation of 3:23–25 has the advantage of consistency with the universal plight of Jews and gentiles in 3:13–14 and 4:3–7 and avoids the problems associated with a Jewish priority model. (CC)

Paul is gradually focusing more emphatically on the Galatians themselves as he shifts from third person description in 3:22 to the first person in 3:23–25 to the second person in 3:26–29. The “for” (γάρ) at the beginning of 3:26 *builds* on the logic of the prior verse. “We” are freed by faith from an existence under a custodian (3:25), “for” (explanatory) through faith “you” are *all* sons of God. The explanation of 3:26 is more naturally related to 3:25 if the referents of “we” and “you” remain the same. *Even the gentiles* are enjoying a release from the plight “under the Law” (3:23). (CC)

The verb φρουρέω means to “protect” or, alternately, to “guard (from escaping)” or “hold in custody” (Phil 4:7; 1 Pet 1:5). The agent at work behind the passive verb “we were held in custody” (ἐφρουρούμεθα) probably remains “the Scripture” from 3:22. The verb may bear either the negative sense of a soldier or jailer preventing an escape or the positive sense of a parent protecting a child. In either case, the sense of restriction is unavoidable. Perhaps Paul is using the associated participle “imprisoned” (συγκλειόμενοι), with the sense that the Law separates Israel from the outside, gentile world. “Imprison” (συγκλείω), however, usually refers negatively to being enclosed, besieged, or shut up under the *enemy’s* hand (LXX Jer 21:4; Ps 77:62 [MT/ET 78:62]; 1 Macc 4:31; 5:5; 15:25). The notion of being “under” an enemy’s hand points away from the Law’s boundary-maintaining function in favor of the Law as an oppressive, cosmic power. Paul speaks similarly of the Law in Rom 6:15; 7:1–6. To be shut up “under the Law” (Gal 3:23) is also to be “under sin” (3:22) because the Law offers no help against sin (note the parallel expressions). Sin foils the “best attempts to find liberation from the curse of the law by means of the law.” (CC)

The confinement of the Law is limited to the time before “this faith” (3:23) came. Paul refers to the “coming” of “the/this faith” twice in this verse (πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν; εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν) and again in 3:25. The definite article (“the/this”) appears to be anaphoric and refers to the previous use of the term “faith” in the disputed phrase “faith in/of Christ” in 3:22 (BDF § 252). “Faith” in 3:23 refers to Jesus Christ, whether as the object of believing trust or as the subject of faithfulness. Paul speaks of *Christ’s* being revealed in 1:16 and 3:19. Paul therefore modulates in 3:24 to “until *Christ*” (εἰς Χριστόν). Faith, Jesus Christ, has come. Christ

loved and gave himself for humanity (2:20). Even as a reference to believing trust, “faith” must still be conceived in terms of its necessary, eschatological object: “Christ-Faith.” The coming of Christ is the fulfillment of faith’s longstanding expectations and at the same time provides more specific content with respect to that faith. The Law no longer functions as a restrictive guardian figure now that Christ has come. Salvation in 3:23–25 is not expressed as the forgiveness of sins but rather as liberation from powerful enslaving forces! (CC)

*this faith.* In Christ (v. 22). (CSB)

Paul continues to declare the usefulness and necessity of the Law. Earlier (v. 19) he said that it was added on account of transgressions. This does not mean that it was the chief purpose of God in giving the Law only to cause death and damnation; as he says also in Rom. 7:13: “Did that which is good bring death to me? By no means!” For the Law is a Word that shows life and drives us toward it. Therefore it was not given only for the sake of death. But this is its chief use and end: to reveal death, in order that the nature and enormity of sin might thus become apparent. It does not reveal death in a way that takes delight in it or that seeks to do nothing but kill us. No, it reveals death in order that men may be terrified and humbled and thus fear God. The text of Ex. 20:20 itself shows this clearly: “Do not fear,” it says, “for God has come to prove you, and that the fear of Him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin.” Therefore the function of the Law is only to kill, yet in such a way that God may be able to make alive. Thus the Law was not given merely for the sake of death; but because man is proud and supposes that he is wise, righteous, and holy, therefore it is necessary that he be humbled by the Law, in order that this beast, the presumption of righteousness, may be killed, since man cannot live unless it is killed. (Luther)

Although the Law kills, therefore, God still uses this effect of the Law, this death, for a good use, namely, for life. When God saw that the most widespread pestilence in the whole world, that is, hypocrisy and confidence in one’s own saintliness, could not be restrained and crushed in any other way, He decided to kill it by means of the Law. This was not to be permanent; but it had as its purpose that when this pestilence was killed, man would be raised up again and would hear this voice beyond the Law: “Do not fear. I did not give the Law and kill you through it with the intent that you should remain in death, but that you should fear Me and live.” A presumption of good works and of righteousness leaves no room for the fear of God. But where there is no fear of God, there cannot be a thirst for grace and life. Therefore God must have a mighty hammer to crush the rocks, and a fire burning in the midst of heaven to overthrow the mountains, that is, to crush that stubborn and perverse beast, presumption. When a man has been brought to nothing by this pounding, despairs of his own powers, righteousness, and works, and trembles before God, he will, in his terror, begin to thirst for mercy and the forgiveness of sins. (Luther)

Now, listen to the language here. Listen to how he's now talking about the era of the law, which is the Old Testament. Even though he doesn't use that language here. But he's going to contrast it to the era of *faith*. *He says: Now, before faith came -- before the era of faith, Christ's faith and our faith in Christ -- we were imprisoned.* You know,

we were held captive under the power of the law. That's the life Paul lived as a Pharisee before the cross. That's his nomistic life in which he lived according to the mosaic Sinaitic covenant. That's what happened before Christ came. And he says very clearly: Imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. Now, look at that. Imprisoned until the faith that was about to come would be Apocalyptically revealed. Now there faith is invasively revealed. Just like Christ is invasively revealed in the incarnation. (Just – V-29)

Here it's faith. And I think that the language here of faith is simply a metaphor for Jesus. When faith comes, that means Jesus comes. When he comes, everything changes. The whole cosmos changes. The way in which we look at reality changes. And of course that finds it's culmination in the cross as Paul has already said. Where Christ is cursed because he is under the power of the law there. And the law kills him. (Just – V-29)

*held prisoners by the law.* To be a prisoner of sin (v. 22) and a prisoner of law amounts to much the same, because law reveals and stimulates sin (see 4:3; Ro 7:8; Col 2:20). (CSB)

The Law and the Promise can represent two different eras in salvation history. However, God has always worked with people in these two ways. (TLSB)

This means that before the time of the Gospel and of grace came, it was the function of the Law to keep us confined under it as though we were in prison. (Luther)

This is a beautiful and most appropriate analogy, which shows what the Law accomplishes and how upright it causes men to be. Therefore it must be carefully weighed. No thief or murderer or criminal who has been captured loves his fetters or the foul prison in which he is held bound. In fact, if he could, he would destroy his prison and his iron shackles and reduce them to ashes. In prison he does indeed refrain from doing evil, not out of good will or out of a love for righteousness but because the prison prevents him. Now that he is locked up, he does not despise and hate his sin and crime—in fact, he heartily laments that he is not free and is unable to commit further crimes—but he hates his prison; and if he could get out, he would return to his former life of crime. Such is the power of the Law and such is righteousness on the basis of the Law that it forces us to be outwardly good so long as it threatens transgressors with penalties and punishment. Then we comply with the Law out of fear of punishment, but we do so unwillingly and with great indignation. What kind of righteousness is that, if you refrain from evil because you are compelled by the threat of punishment? In actual fact, therefore, this righteousness of works is nothing but to love sin, to hate righteousness, to despise God and His Law, and to adore the worst sort of wickedness. As vigorously as a thief loves prison and hates his crime, so readily do we obey the Law, do what it commands, and refrain from what it forbids. (Luther)

UNTIL FAITH SHOULD BE REVEALED – Paul is referring to the time of fulfillment, when Christ came. But you should apply it not only to the time but also to

feelings; for what happened historically and temporally when Christ came—namely, that He abrogated the Law and brought liberty and eternal life to light—this happens personally and spiritually every day in any Christian, in whom there are found the time of Law and the time of grace in constant alternation. The Christian has a body, in whose members, as Paul says (Rom. 7:23), the Law and sin are at war. By sin I understand not only lust but all of sin, as Paul usually speaks about sin, saying that it not only still clings to a flesh that is Christian and baptized, but that it battles against it and captures it, producing at least a powerful urge, if not actual assent or action. Even though a Christian does not fall into coarse sins like murder, adultery, or theft, he still is not free of impatience, grumbling, hatred, and blasphemy against God—sins that are completely unknown to the human reason. They force him against his will to despise the Law; they force him to flee from the countenance of God; they force him to hate and blaspheme God. For just as sexual desire is powerful in the body of the young man, and just as the ambition to gain glory and possessions is powerful in the mature man, and just as greed is powerful in the old man, so in the saintly man impatience, grumbling, hate, and blasphemy against God are powerful. There are examples of this throughout the Psalms, Job, Jeremiah, and all Scripture. Therefore when Paul describes this spiritual struggle, he uses very emphatic and meaningful terms like “being at war,” “fighting back,” and “making captive.” (Luther)

**3:24** ὥστε (“so then”)—This signals result or consequence. (CC)

γέγονεν (“became”)—The use of the perfect (γέγονεν) for the aorist is well supported in the manuscript tradition, but  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$  and B have the second aorist ἐγένετο, “(it) was.” There is no distinction in meaning (BDF § 343). The perfect in this case does not have a sense of continuing action. The Law does not continue to act as a custodian for believers. (CC)

*So then, the Law became our custodian until Christ, so that we might be justified on the basis of faith.* Paul draws an inference from the preceding verses: “so then.” The temporal expressions in 3:23–24 inform Paul’s conclusion in 3:25 and help clarify how he views the Law as a custodian or “pedagogue.” In the Greco-Roman world, from the age of six to sixteen a boy would be cared for by a pedagogue (Plutarch, *Mor.* 4A–B; 439F; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.22.26; 3.19.5–6; Xenophon, *Lac.* 3.1; Philo, *Sacr.* 4 § 15). Pedagogues were slaves who disciplined and protected a child on his way to and from school. They kept watch over the boy and supervised the boy’s daily activities (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 1.2.1 § 56). They would rebuke or discipline the child for wrong or immoral behavior (Philo, *Mut.* 39 § 217; Plato, *Leg.* 7.808D–809B). While the formative role of the pedagogue was admired as the ideal during the early Roman Empire, the actual practice was far less than ideal. The least desirable slaves typically served as pedagogues (Plutarch, *Mor.* 4A–B). Many pedagogues had reputations for being overly harsh in their discipline. At no point did the child enjoy freedom from the rule of the pedagogue. Only upon reaching the age of maturity would he be free to live by “his own laws” (αὐτονόμους, Xenophon, *Lac.* 3.1). (CC)

Pedagogues were viewed both positively and negatively in antiquity. Modern interpretations of Gal 3:24 vary depending on how the scholar understands the ancient pedagogue. The best guide to Paul’s view of the “pedagogue” is expressed in the immediate context of the verse. The NRSV translates the Greek word for “pedagogue” as “disciplinarian.” The KJV translates it as a “schoolmaster” who is “to bring us unto Christ” (NASB: “to lead us to Christ”). In the English language a “pedagogue” is a teacher or tutor. Certainly Paul’s rivals in Galatia would have welcomed the notion of the Law as a moral educator which leads people to Christ. For them, the

Law and Christ would be perfectly compatible.<sup>217</sup> If the pedagogue were fulfilling a positive educational function in leading people to Christ, it would be unclear why Paul would consider pedagogy to have ended with Christ's coming. While the pedagogue provided basic moral discipline and escorted the child to and from the school, he himself was not an educator.<sup>219</sup> The ancients never confused the "pedagogue" with a *didaskalos* or teacher (Plato, *Lysis* 208C; Plato, *Leg.* 7.808D–E). For that matter, the Law does not "lead" people "to Christ" (a telic sense of εἰς Χριστόν). Those who rely on the Law find themselves "under" (ὑπό) a pedagogue (3:25) in the same manner as being "under sin" (3:22) or "under the Law" (3:23). Paul is stressing the *confining* or *oppressive* function of the Law (3:22–23). The translators of the KJV ("bring us unto Christ") and NASB ("lead us to Christ") overlooked the temporal expressions that dominate this paragraph: "until the Seed" (3:19), "before the coming of this faith" (3:23), "until this coming faith" (3:23), "since faith has come" (3:25). Even as the Law imprisoned "until" the "coming" of "faith" (εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν, 3:23), the prepositional phrase in 3:24 is likewise temporal: εἰς Χριστόν, "up to Christ" or "until (the coming of) Christ." Existence "under" the Law is like being "under sin" (3:22; see also Rom 3:9) or under the curse of the Law (Gal 3:10) or "under the elements" (4:3). The Law is an oppressive custodian but only for a temporary period. The Law's oppressive, imprisoning role has come to an end in Christ. One age is giving way to another. "We" are no longer "under" a pedagogue (3:25). (CC)

The Law functions as a custodian "so that" "we might be justified" on the basis of faith. The restrictive "pedagogue" guarantees no other way out apart from a genuine liberation from captivity. Lenski found "startling" the phrase "we might be justified on the basis of faith" (ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν) since Paul seems to make faith the source or basis of God's justifying activity (as is the case also in Gal 3:12 and Rom 1:17; 4:16). Lenski labored with the Lutheran fathers to interpret the phrase as "in view of *the saving merits of Christ* perseveringly apprehended by faith." Lenski would likely have found the modern translation of "faith" as Christ's own "faithfulness" theologically attractive. Irrespective of the faith in/of debate, if the Law were able to function positively in leading people to life, then justification would have been by means of the Law (3:21). However, gentile and Jew enjoy God's justification in the same way, by faith! (CC)

*was put in charge.* The expression translates the Greek (from which "pedagogue" is derived). It refers to the personal slave-attendant who accompanied a freeborn boy wherever he went and exercised a certain amount of discipline over him. His function was more like that of a baby-sitter than a teacher (see 1Co 4:15, "guardians"). (CSB)

ESV has "guardian." Greek paidagogos, "boy," "child leader." Greco-Roman households often secured slave who duty was to supervise and guard (though not to teach) children from about ages 6-16. Guardians had to walk children to and from school. Their temporary role served as the point of comparison. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession says, "God wants wild sinners to be restrained by civil discipline. To maintain discipline, He has given laws, letters, doctrine, rulers and penalties." (TLSB)

When Paul says that "the Law was our custodian until Christ came," he once more joins Law and Gospel together in feeling, even though in themselves they are as far apart as

possible. This analogy of the custodian is truly outstanding; therefore it must be considered carefully. Although a schoolmaster is very useful and really necessary for the education and training of boys, show me one boy or pupil who loves his schoolmaster! For example, did the Jews love Moses warmly and willingly do what he commanded? Their love and obedience toward Moses was such, as the history shows, that at times they would have been willing to stone him. Therefore it is impossible for a pupil to love his schoolmaster. For how could he love the one by whom he is being detained in prison, that is, by whom he is being forbidden to do what he would like to do? If he commits something that is against his schoolmaster's orders, he is denounced and scolded by him; what is more, he is forced to embrace and kiss his whip. How wonderful the pupil's righteousness is, that he obeys a threatening and harsh schoolmaster and even kisses his whip! Does he do this willingly and joyfully? When the schoolmaster is absent, he will break the whip or throw it into the fire. And if he had authority over the schoolmaster, he would not let himself be beaten by the schoolmaster's whips but would order that the schoolmaster be whipped. Nevertheless, a schoolmaster is extremely necessary for a boy, to instruct and chastise him; for otherwise, without this instruction, good training, and discipline, the boy would come to ruin. (Luther)

Therefore the schoolmaster gives the boy the impression of being his taskmaster and executioner and of holding him captive in prison. To what end and for how long? So that this severe, hateful authority of the schoolmaster and the slavery of the boy will last forever? No, but for a predetermined time, so that this obedience, prison, and discipline may work for the boy's good and so that in due time he may become the heir and the king. For it is not the father's intention that the son be subject to the schoolmaster forever and be whipped by him, but that through the instruction and discipline of the schoolmaster the son may be made fit for accession to his inheritance. (Luther)

Raymond Breggemeier – Randy Woller

LEAD US TO CHRIST – Thus Paul says that the Law is nothing but a custodian. But he adds "until Christ came." Thus he said above (v. 19): "The Law was added because of transgression, till the Offspring should come"; and (v. 22) "Scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised, etc."; and (v. 23) "we were confined under the Law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed." Therefore the Law is not simply a custodian; it is a custodian "until Christ came." For what kind of custodian would it be who would merely annoy and whip a boy and would teach him nothing? That is the kind of teacher the previous century had, when the schools were a veritable prison and hell, and the teachers were tyrants and executioners. The boys continually suffered floggings; they studied with great effort and untiring diligence; but very few of them ever accomplished anything. The Law is not such a teacher. It not only frightens and annoys, as an unskilled and stupid teacher only whips his pupils and does not teach them anything. But with its whippings it drives us to Christ, just as a good teacher whips, trains, and disciplines his pupils in reading and writing with the purpose of bringing them to a knowledge of the liberal arts and of other good things, so that

eventually they may do with pleasure what initially, when they were forced to it by their teacher, they did involuntarily. (Luther)

By means of this fine illustration, therefore, Paul shows the true use of the Law: that it does not justify hypocrites, because they remain outside Christ in their presumptuousness and smugness; on the other hand, if those who have been frightened use the Law as Paul teaches, it does not leave them in death and damnation but drives them to Christ. Those who continue in these terrors and in their faintheartedness and do not take hold of Christ by faith despair utterly. With this allegory of the custodian, therefore, Paul clearly portrays the true use of the Law. For just as the custodian scolds, drives, and troubles his pupils, not with the intention that this custody should last forever, but that it should come to an end when the pupils have been properly educated and trained and that they should then eagerly and freely enjoy their liberty and their inheritance without the constraint of their custodian, so those who are frightened and crushed by the Law should know that these terrors and blows will not be permanent, but that by them they are being prepared for the coming of Christ and the freedom of the Spirit. (Luther)

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH – Paul is speaking about those who are to be justified, not about those who have been justified. Therefore when you want to discuss the Law, you must accept the subject matter of the Law, namely, the sinner and wicked person. The Law does not justify him; but it places his sin before his eyes, crushes him, leads him to a knowledge of himself, and shows him hell and the wrath and judgment of God. This is the proper function of the Law. Then there follows the application of this function: the sinner should know that the Law does not disclose sins and humble him to make him despair, but that the Law was instituted by God so that by its accusation and crushing it might drive him to Christ, the Savior and Comforter. When this happens, he is no longer under a custodian. But those who already have faith are not under the Law but are free of it, as Paul shows at once in the words that follow. The Law disciplines only the wicked, who have not yet been justified. This use is extremely necessary; for since the whole world is in the power of sin (1 John 5:19), there is need for this ministry of the Law to reveal sin; for without it no one could come to righteousness, as we have said at great length earlier. But what does the Law do in those who have been justified through Christ? Paul replies in these words, which are a sort of appendix: (Luther)

Now, look at Verse 24. You have first the result clause and then a purpose clause. So Verse 23: Before faith came we were enslaved, held captive under the power of the law. Imprisoned until the faith that was about to be revealed, Apocalyptically revealed came. So that, with the result that, the law has become our imprisoning jailer. And here it's until Christ came. Now, that's the point of the law. And the pedagogus, the pedagogue, pedagogy, the word for education, that's the word that's being used here. And interestingly in the ancient world, a pedagogue, you know, you say I'm a Father and I have sons and I gave them over to a pedagogue, he's basically like a jailer so them. They are considered slaves. Paul is going to say that later on. You know, they are not a son. They are a slave. Until it comes time for the inheritance. And that's what a pedagogue does. He kind of -- he makes their life almost as if they are in jail. And that's what the law did. It put us in jail until Christ came. It was an imprisoning jailer.



So that, in order that, we might be declared righteous by faith. Christ's faith and our faith? Christ. Because that's the era of faith. (Just – V-29)

So there you can see the law is not a friend. The law is a power that enslaves us, puts us in jail. And we're freed when Christ, the one who is the faithful one and who we now believe in declares us righteous, justifies us if you want to make that statement or declares what was wrong now right. (Just – V-29)

So there you can see the law is not a friend. The law is a power that enslaves us, puts us in jail. And we're freed when Christ, the one who is the faithful one and who we now believe in declares us righteous, justifies us if you want to make that statement or declares what was wrong now right. (Just – V-29)

**3:25** *Since faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian.* Paul does not write “but with the coming of the Christ we are no longer under the Law.” In contrast to “the pedagogue,” Paul continues to emphasize “the faith.” The article with “faith” is anaphoric referring back to the coming of faith in 3:23. The coming Faith may refer to the faithfulness of Jesus Christ or to believing faith conceived in terms of its necessary object, “Christ-faith.” Confident assertions of the one option over the other overextend the available evidence. Commentators have often overlooked that Paul conceives of “the Faith” as an alternative religious system to that of the Mosaic Law. Whether Paul has Jews primarily or exclusively in mind with the first person “we”—a possibility that is rather questionable—or all humanity, either interpretive option is inclusive of the Jewish people. Paul is pointing out that even those who claim the authority of James and the other Jewish-Christian leaders in Jerusalem (cf. 2:11–13) are no longer under the Law. The Galatians are seeking to return to a “B.C. lifestyle in an A. D. period.”(CC)

NO LONGER UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE LAW – That is, we are free from the Law, our prison and our custodian; for after faith has been revealed, it no longer terrifies and troubles us. Paul is speaking here about the faith promulgated through Christ at a specific time. For having assumed human nature, Christ came once for all at one time, abrogated the Law with all its effects, and by His death delivered the entire human race from sin and eternal death. Therefore if you consider Christ and what He has accomplished, there is no Law anymore. Coming at a predetermined time, He truly abolished the entire Law. But now that the Law has been abolished, we are no longer held in custody under its tyranny; but we live securely and happily with Christ, who now reigns sweetly in us by His Spirit. But where the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor. 3:17). If we could perfectly take hold of Christ, who has abrogated the Law and reconciled us sinners to the Father by His death, then that custodian would have no jurisdiction whatever over us. But the law in our members is at war with the law of our mind (Rom. 7:23), and it interferes so that we cannot take hold of Christ perfectly. Therefore the defect is not in Christ; it is in us, because we have not yet shed the flesh, to which sin clings as long as we live. So far as we are concerned, then, we are partly free of the Law and partly under the Law. With Paul we serve the Law of God with our mind, but with our flesh we serve the law of sin (Rom. 7:25). (Luther)

From this it follows that according to our conscience we are completely free of the Law. Therefore this custodian must not rule in our conscience, that is, must not menace it with his terrors, threats, and captivity. No matter how he tries this, the conscience remains unmoved; for it has in view Christ the crucified, who abolished all the claims of the Law upon the conscience, "having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands" (Col. 2:14). Therefore the conscience must be as unaware, in fact, as dead toward the Law as a virgin is toward a man, and vice versa. This does not come by works or by any righteousness of the Law; it comes by faith, which takes hold of Christ. According to our feelings, however, sin still clings to the flesh and continually accuses and troubles the conscience. So long as the flesh remains, there remains the Law, the custodian who continually terrifies and distresses the conscience with his demonstrations of sin and his threats of death. But it is always encouraged by the daily coming of Christ. Just as He once came into the world at a specific time to redeem us from the harsh dominion of our custodian, so He comes to us spiritually every day, causing us to grow in faith and in our knowledge of Him. Thus the conscience takes hold of Christ more perfectly day by day; and day by day the law of flesh and sin, the fear of death, and whatever other evils the Law brings with it are diminishing. For as long as we live in a flesh that is not free of sin, so long the Law keeps coming back and performing its function, more in one person and less in another, not to harm but to save. This discipline of the Law is the daily mortification of the flesh, the reason, and our powers, and the renewal of our mind (2 Cor. 4:16) (Luther).

Thus we have received the first fruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23), and the leaven hidden in the lump; the whole lump has not yet been leavened, but it is beginning to be leavened. If I look at the leaven, I see nothing but the leaven; but if I look at the mass of the lump, there is not merely the leaven anymore. Thus if I look at Christ, I am completely holy and pure, and I know nothing at all about the Law; for Christ is my leaven. But if I look at my flesh, I feel greed, sexual desire, anger, pride, the terror of death, sadness, fear, hate, grumbling, and impatience against God. To the extent that these are present, Christ is absent; or if He is present, He is present weakly. Here there is still need for a custodian to discipline and torment the flesh, that powerful jackass, so that by this discipline sins may be diminished and the way prepared for Christ. For just as Christ came once physically, according to time, abrogating the entire Law, abolishing sin, and destroying death and hell, so He comes to us spiritually without interruption and continually smothers and kills these things in us. (Luther)

And then Verse 25, this is a conclusion. But again, it uses that same kind of sense of the coming of faith. But now that faith has come. I think that's the way. Yeah. But now that faith has come, we are no long under the power of -- and look at that hupah, same word, under the power of the enslaving jailer, the imprisoning jailer. That is the law. Because now we're in the era of faith, that is now that the Gospel has come because Christ has come, that which we believe, now that that has come, we are in a position now to see that the law is not enslaving us because we have been freed in Christ. (Just – V-29)

Now, I think you can see that this is a very complicated argument. And yet at the same time it's very, very simple. Is it Christ? Or is it the law? Is salvation through Christ alone? Or is salvation through Christ and works of the law? If works of the law imprison us, then why? Why would we want to be back in prison? (Just – V-29)

Now, this is going to be a key point to Paul's argument in the future. He is saying to the Galatians: Before you came to faith, when you were unbelievers, you were imprisoned under the power of sin. Why would you want to replace the enslavement of sin with another enslavement? To be enslaved under the law? That's the way it was for me before Christ came, before I was converted to Christ at Damascus. Why would you go back to that? I preach to you the freedom of the Gospel says Paul to the Galatians. I have set you free in Christ. Christ has freed you by his becoming a curse on behalf of you. So why would you want to go back to your former lifestyle? Why would you like to become what is the equivalent of a pagan? It's a different jail. But it's still a jail. (Just – V-29)

Now, this is going to be the powerful argument that's going to be building from this point on. And I think you can see that Paul makes it very clear that with the coming of faith, with the coming of Christ, this now era of faith, we're now no longer living under the power of the law. And really we're no longer living under the power of sin. Because through Christ who took our sin upon himself and was killed by the law, cursed by the law on the cross, we now live as members of Christ in the era of faith. (Just – V-29)

The Law played an interim role for Israelites from Moses to Christ, but when faith (i.e., Christ) came, this arrangement ceased. (TLSB)

### *Sons of God*

**<sup>26</sup> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup> for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**

**3:25–26** By adoption, the justified believer is a full adult and heir in God's family, with all the attendant rights and privileges (4:1–7; Ro 8:14–17). (CSB)

### **3:26 All One in Christ Jesus by Baptism (3:26–29)**

πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε (“you are all sons of God”)—The subject, πάντες, “all,” is placed in an emphatic position at the beginning of the sentence. The placement of the predicate, υἱοὶ θεοῦ, “sons of God,” prior to the copula, ἐστε, “you are,” is likewise a signal of emphasis. (CC)

διὰ τῆς πίστεως (“through faith”)—This reading is well supported but without the article in  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$  P Clement Cyprian. (CC)

ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“in Christ Jesus”)—The deletion of ἐν (“in”) before “Christ Jesus” in  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$  and the tenth-century 1739 (also 1881) is an assimilation to 2:16 (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) and to 3:22 (ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), where no preposition intervenes between “faith” and “Jesus Christ.” The  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$  reading is also less awkward, less unusual, and thus most likely secondary. (CC)

*For through faith, you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.* After downgrading the status and role of the Mosaic Law as an agent of imprisonment and condemnation in the preceding verses, in 3:26–29 Paul turns to the positive side of the benefits “in Christ”—thus the “for” (γάρ) that relates 3:26–29 to 3:19–25 as the converse. Faith and Baptism incorporate an individual and a community “into” Christ, through whom all people may enjoy Abrahamic sonship and status as God’s own children. Arguably, 3:26–29 represents the pivotal, climactic center of the letter. (CC)

In 3:26, “you are *all* sons of God *in Christ Jesus*.” At the end of 3:28, Paul concludes that “you are *all one in Christ Jesus*.” He is emphasizing a status “in Christ Jesus” that “all” baptized believers enjoy. Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” with at least three senses. First, he uses “in Christ” to refer to Christian believers. In 1:22 Paul mentions “the assemblies of Judea in Christ.” “In Christ” functions synonymously in that verse for those whose faith is in Christ (so also in Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Second, the prepositional phrase may bear an instrumental sense: “by/through Christ Jesus.” In Gal 5:10 Paul is persuaded “in the Lord,” presumably, *by* the Lord. In 1 Cor 1:2 those sanctified “in Christ Jesus” are surely sanctified *by* Christ Jesus (see also Gal 2:17; 3:14; so also Rom 14:14; 2 Cor 3:14; Phil 4:13). Third, “in Christ Jesus” may have a locative sense (e.g., Gal 2:4; 3:26, 28; 5:6; see also Rom 8:1; 2 Cor 5:17, 19; Eph 1:20; Phil 3:9). This usage is analogous to the Johannine pattern: even as Jesus declares he is “in” the Father without compromising the integrity of his personal identity (Jn 10:38; 14:10, 11, 20; 17:21), Paul speaks similarly of the believer as “in” Christ. The believer does not lose his or her individuality or identity by being absorbed into Christ. Nevertheless, the believer shares in the person of Christ in an intimate relationship. (CC)

“In Christ Jesus” in 3:26 is in the immediate context of a *second* prepositional phrase: “through faith.” The two prepositional phrases, “through faith” and “in Christ Jesus,” may be construed in differing ways grammatically. First, the two prepositional phrases may be taken *together* (e.g., NASB: “through faith in Christ Jesus”; KJV is similar), or, second, as *separate* modifications of “you are all sons of God—*through faith*, [and] *in Christ Jesus*” (see, e.g., RSV, NRSV, NEB). Supporting the first approach, in an early textual tradition ( $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$ ) a scribe understood the prepositional phrases together as referring to “faith in Christ Jesus”—evidence that the scribe interpreted the now disputed “faith in/of Christ” phrases the same way (“in”). To render “faith in Christ Jesus” as the meaning of the two prepositional phrases more clearly, the scribe removed the definite article (τῆς) before “faith” (πίστεως) and the preposition “in” (ἐν), thus changing διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ to διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. The second approach, in which “through faith” and “in Christ Jesus” are unassociated modifications, strikes many as awkward. To ameliorate that awkwardness, many translations distance the two prepositional phrases from each other: “through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.” In a similar construction in Rom 3:25, “through faith” modifies separately from the prepositional phrase “in his blood.” The construction “faith *in* the Lord/Christ Jesus” (πίστις ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ/Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) is limited to the

disputed Pauline letters (Eph 1:15; Col 1:4), and even these two instances may indicate the sphere of faith rather than the object of faith. Paul does not generally use the preposition “in” (ἐν) to refer to putting one’s trust “in” someone or something. Paul expresses faith *in* Christ with the *verb* “believe” (πιστεύω) in 2:16 (note the preposition εἰς, not ἐν). One puts one’s faith “into” Christ. Most decisively, 3:28 maintains the emphasis on being “in Christ Jesus.” The second approach, then, is preferable; the two prepositional phrases are separate modifications. “In Christ Jesus” is adverbially modifying the main verb, “you (all) are” (ἐστε): “Through faith, you are all ... in Christ Jesus.” (CC)

That “all” the believers in Galatia are God’s sons (and daughters) is a “startling pronouncement” despite Paul’s emphasis on “all the nations” and “all under sin” in 3:8, 22 (cf. 3:28; 6:10). First, the Jews considered *Israel* to be God’s children (Ex 4:22–23; Deut 14:1–2; Is 43:6; Jer 31:9; Hos 1:10 [MT 2:1]; 11:1; *Jub.* 1.24–25; Sirach 36:17; 3 Macc 6:28; 4 *Ezra* 6:55–59; cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17:26–27), or at least the righteous within Israel as God’s children (Wis Sol 2:13–18; 5:5; Sirach 4:10; 51:10; 2 Macc 7:34; *Pss. Sol.* 13:8). Paul’s rivals would have agreed with Israel’s being God’s children as they sought to include the Galatian gentiles among the Messiah’s own people. Second, Paul is clear throughout his letters that Jesus is *the* Son of God (seventeen instances; e.g., Gal 1:15–16; 2:20). From the very first verses of Galatians in which Paul narrates the Father’s raising Jesus from the dead, God’s Son is Jesus Christ. Paul is explaining in 3:26–29 how believers come to *share* in the rights of the Son. Surprisingly, the apostle emphasizes that “all,” whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, enjoy in Christ the rights of sons, whether as sons of Abraham (3:7) or as sons of God. (CC)

Paul shifts from “we” in 3:25 to “you” in 3:26 as a way of emphasizing his point that the gentile Galatians are included in the benefits in Christ: thus “you ... all” are “in Christ.” Paul repeats the point in 3:28. Jewish ethnic identity is no longer a stumbling block for enjoying God’s blessings. Although for the sake of clarity the words “through faith” may be placed at the beginning of 3:26 in an English translation, Paul places the word “all” at the beginning of the sentence in the original Greek. The rivals had been preaching to the Galatian Christians the necessity of joining the people of Israel. Again, Paul wants to be very clear that they are “all” already included! (CC)

**SONS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH** – As a very good teacher of faith, Paul always has these words on his lips: through faith, in faith, on the basis of faith in Christ Jesus, etc. He does not say: “You are sons of God because you are circumcised, listen to the Law, and keep its works,” as the Jews imagined and as the false apostles taught; but “through faith in Christ Jesus.” Therefore the Law does not create sons of God; much less do human traditions. The Law cannot beget men into a new nature or a new birth; it brings to view the old birth, by which we were born into the kingdom of the devil. Thus it prepares us for the new birth, which takes place through faith in Christ Jesus, not through the Law, as Paul dearly testifies: “You are all sons of God through faith.” It is as though he were saying: “Even though you have been troubled, humbled, and killed by the Law, the Law has not made you righteous. It has not made you sons of God, but faith has. Which faith? Faith in Christ. Therefore faith in Christ, not the Law, creates sons of God.” The same thing is written in John 1:12: “To all who believed, He gave power to become children of God.” (Luther)

All believers in Christ, including Gentiles, without distinction, bear this honorific title once reserved for Israel (Ex 4:22–23; Dt 14:1; Is 43:6; Hos 1:10). (TLSB)

**3:27** *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ put on Christ.* “Through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus” (3:26), “*for [γάρ] as many ... as were baptized into Christ put on Christ.*” Gal 3:27 supports 3:26. The close connection between 3:26 and 3:27 reflects how inseparably Paul views faith and Baptism. In the book of Acts the apostles required new converts to be baptized (e.g., Acts 2:38; 10:47–48), and new believers sought Baptism themselves (e.g., Acts 8:36). The NT treats faith and Baptism as intimately related. Baptism is a one-time event by which believers decisively “put on” Christ (note the aorist tense of ἐνεδύσασθε). (CC)

At least one interpreter has doubted whether Paul is referring to water Baptism in 3:27. She connected Gal 3:27 with 1 Cor 12:13 as references to “Spirit baptism.” A reference to “Spirit baptism,” however, is far-fetched in 1 Cor 12:13 since Paul is revisiting his discussion of Baptism in 1 Cor 1:13–16 and is clarifying that water Baptism, far from being a source of division, is actually the means by which the Spirit unites believers into a single body (cf. 1 Cor 1:11–12). “Baptism” in the Greek language almost always referred to the application of a liquid. The rare instances which depart from this pattern include clear contextual indications that the “Baptism” should be taken in an unusual, metaphorical sense. Non-sacramental commentators have typically asserted that Baptism is merely metaphorical for conversion.<sup>244</sup> Paul’s own language, however, is much stronger than that. Those who have been baptized have put on Christ, and that putting on of Christ in Baptism is the basis (γάρ) for how believers become sons of God in Christ Jesus (3:26). Paul’s assertions should be taken as they stand. (CC)

Many interpreters have concluded that Paul is drawing on a baptismal tradition or creed from the earliest Christian assemblies. In that case, the strong affirmation of Baptism and its benefits would predate Paul’s ministry. Gal 3:27–28; 1 Cor 12:13; and Col 2:11–12; 3:10–11 bear at least six distinctive features of a possible baptismal tradition/creed:

1. All three passages treat Baptism. (CC)
2. Each passage offers a series of contrasting pairs that are abolished through Baptism. Only the first pair in Gal 3:28, “neither Jew nor Greek,” is directly relevant to the Galatian situation. The second pair, “neither slave nor free,” refers to a social reality and classification, whereas elsewhere in the letter slavery functions in a metaphorical sense for existence under the forces of the old age. Similarly, the “male and female” pair seems irrelevant for the rest of Galatians. The second and third pairs of opposites thus seem ill-fitted to their context and could be vestiges of a baptismal tradition. Even the pairing of “Jew” and “Greek,” which is indeed central to the letter, differs from Paul’s preference for the word “gentile” (Gal 2:11–15; 3:8, 14). (CC)
3. In each passage the opposing pairs are overcome by unity in Christ, whether within the corporate body (1 Cor 12:13), within one corporate person (Gal 3:28), or within Christ himself (Col 3:11). (CC)
4. Gal 3:29 follows 3:26 very naturally in terms of grammar and logic. After identifying the Galatians as “sons of God in Christ Jesus” in 3:26, 3:29 very naturally concludes that those “of

Christ” are “Abraham’s seed” and “heirs according to the promise.” A fairly coherent train of thought would result from the omission of the intervening material (3:27–28). The intervening material may therefore be a citation of pre-Pauline tradition. (CC)

5. Even as 3:26 concludes with “in Christ Jesus,” so also does 3:28 (without διὰ τῆς πίστεως, “through faith”). The repetition of the phrase may signal a return from the cited material (3:27–28) to Paul’s own line of thought (3:29, as in 3:26). (CC)

6. Paul shifts from first person plural pronouns and verbs (“we,” “our”) in 3:23–25 to second person plural pronouns and verbs (“you,” Greek plurals) in 3:26–29. (CC)

Unfortunately, the claim that Paul is drawing on traditional creedal language is ultimately unverifiable. Gal 3:26–28 bears a Pauline stamp. For instance, “baptized into Christ” is Paul’s own phrasing (cf. Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 10:1–2). Other NT writers prefer to write of being “baptized into *the name of*” (Mt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5). Gal 3:27 serves as support (note its initial “for,” γάρ) for 3:26, especially with 3:26’s reference to faith, a motif that is central in the preceding verses, 3:22–25. The emphasis in the Galatian context on faith in Christ is lacking in 1 Cor 12:13 and Col 3:10–11. Paul also stresses in Gal 3:26 that “through faith” the Galatians “are all ... in Christ Jesus.” Baptism brings about a corporate unity. The inclusion of the gentiles in God’s saving plan as well as the unity of a new humanity is a major emphasis of Paul’s letter. Thus an old reality of Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female have passed away in favor of a “new creation” in which there is “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision” (6:14–15). The new corporate community replaces the old, divided realities. Gal 3:27–29 is laying the foundation for Paul’s turn to the relationships between believers in the community in Galatians 5 and 6. Whether or not Paul is drawing on traditional material, his own stamp on these verses is clear. (CC)

Paul never uses “baptize” (βαπτίζω) with the Greek preposition “in” (ἐν). One is baptized “into” (εἰς) Christ (3:27; also Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 1:13 [“into the name of”], 15; 10:2 [“into Moses”]; 12:13 [“into one body”]). The Greek preposition often translated as “into” (εἰς) could have a static sense in the ancient Greek papyri. If Paul is using εἰς in that sense, Rom 6:3 may be referring to being baptized “in” Christ rather than “into” (εἰς) Christ, even as one is baptized “in” (εἰς) the triune name in Mt 28:19. Nevertheless, Baptism incorporates a person *into* the sphere of Christ and his power. An individual “is baptized” into Christ. “To be baptized” is likely another instance of the now-familiar divine passive construction that Paul is using throughout the letter. In view of 3:1–5, 14; 4:1–7, God’s own Spirit is likely the active agent in the birthing of God’s children through Baptism (cf. 4:29). (CC)

Paul’s clothing language stresses the believer’s new identity in Christ. Some would take the metaphor further to suggest that Baptism must be administered by a full immersion. To be clothed in Christ or to put on Christ is an image unrelated to the application of a liquid and offers little or no evidence with regard to whether Baptism is to be administered by an immersion or not. The Greek verb for “baptize” (βαπτίζω) refers to the mere application of a liquid and not necessarily to an immersion. The word can be used for soldiers carrying their weapons overhead in water who are “baptized” only up to their waists. “To put on” or “to clothe oneself with” is a figure of speech that derives from the Hebrew Bible and means “to be characterized by the

named quality or attribute.”<sup>252</sup> God clothes himself with the attributes of righteousness, majesty, power, and praise (Pss 93:1 [LXX 92:1]; 104:1–2 [LXX 103:1–2]; Is 51:9; 59:17; Wis Sol 5:18). The psalmist prays that Israel’s priests would be clothed with righteousness (Ps 132:9 [LXX 131:9]; see also 2 Chr 6:41), and God responds by clothing them with salvation (Ps 132:16 [LXX 131:16]). Isaiah calls on Zion to clothe herself with the attributes of strength and glory (LXX Is 52:1). God clothes humans with strength in Sirach 17:3 in order that they might have dominion over the beasts and the birds (Sirach 17:4). Those clothed in strength, dignity, wisdom, or righteousness are recognized by those attributes (Job 29:14; Prov 31:25–26; Sirach 6:31). Those clothed in shame suffer dishonor and disgrace (Job 8:22; Pss 35:26 [LXX 34:26]; 109:29 [LXX 108:29]; 132:18 [LXX 131:18]; 1 Macc 1:28). Since so much of the ancient body was covered by clothing, clothes served as a person’s identity markers. They announced a person’s country of origin, social class, and occupation. To put on Christ is therefore to be *identified* with Christ! Paul often uses a clothing metaphor as he stresses a new identity in Christ along with the attendant behavioral traits (Rom 13:12–14; 2 Cor 5:2–3; 1 Thess 5:8; Eph 6:11–17; Col 3:10, 12; cf. Zech 3:3–5). That emphasis on a new identity is the strongest in Gal 3:27 when the believer puts on Christ. Whereas Paul’s rivals were encouraging a stripping off of sinful flesh in circumcision, Paul counters with putting on Christ. No longer do people see Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, to anticipate 3:28. In the believer, people see *Christ!* “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (2:20). (CC)

*baptized into Christ.* See Ro 6:3–11; 1Co 12:13. (CSB)

Through Baptism, God incorporates believers into union with Christ (cf Mt 28:19). Thus His righteousness becomes theirs. Luth: “Christ Himself is our garment . . . the garment of our righteousness and salvation” (AE 26:353; see LC IV 83–84). (TLSB)

Putting on Christ is understood in two ways: according to the Law and according to the Gospel. According to the Law (Rom. 13:14), “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is: Imitate the example and the virtues of Christ. Do and suffer what He did and suffered.” So also 1Peter 2:21: “Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps.” In Christ we see the height of patience, gentleness, and love, and an admirable moderation in all things. We ought to put on this adornment of Christ, that is, imitate these virtues of His. In this sense we can imitate other saints as well. (Luther)

But to put on Christ according to the Gospel is a matter, not of imitation but of a new birth and a new creation, namely, that I put on Christ Himself, that is, His innocence, righteousness, wisdom, power, salvation, life, and Spirit. We were dressed in the leather garment of Adam, which is a deadly garment and the clothing of sin. That is, we were all subjected and sold into the slavery of sin; horrible blindness, ignorance, and a contempt and hatred of God are present in us. Besides, we are filled with evil lust, uncleanness, and greed. By propagation from Adam we have acquired this garment, that is, this corrupt and sinful nature, which Paul calls “the old man.” He must be put off with all his activities, so that from sons of Adam we may be changed into sons of God (Eph. 4:22 and Col. 3:9). This does not happen by a change of clothing or by any laws or works; it happens by the rebirth and renewal that takes place in Baptism, as Paul says: “As many of you as were baptized have put on Christ.” Titus 3:5: “He saved us, in virtue of His



own mercy, by the washing of regeneration.” For in those who have been baptized a new light and flame arise; new and devout emotions come into being, such as fear and trust in God and hope; and a new will emerges. This is what it means to put on Christ properly, truly, and according to the Gospel. (Luther)

In Baptism, then, it is not the garment of the righteousness of the Law or of our own works that is given; but Christ becomes our garment. But He is not the Law, not a lawgiver, not a work; He is the divine and inestimable gift that the Father has given to us to be our Justifier, Lifegiver, and Redeemer. To put on Christ according to the Gospel, therefore, is to put on, not the Law or works but an inestimable gift, namely, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace, comfort, joy in the Holy Spirit, salvation, life, and Christ Himself. (Luther)

One of the reasons that we think that Paul is exegeting that is interpreting a baptismal formula here because in the early Christian churches whether you realized this or not most baptisms if possible were done by immersion. And they were done in the nude. So when you came up out of the font, you were immediately -- you had a white robe put on you after you were anointed with oil. And that robe was a symbol of your righteousness in Christ. And that's essentially what that means, to be clothed in Christ is simply to say that one is now a Christ in the world. That one now represents Christ not in kind of a detached way. But because Christ is in us and we are in him. And that that union with Christ means that when people see us, what they see is Christ. That's what baptism means for Paul. Now, remember, this is one of his very earliest, if not his earliest statement on baptism. And it is profound in every way. (Just – V-39)

**3:28** οὐκ ἔνι (literally, “there is not”)—The ἔνι may be taken in two different ways. This word could be a strengthened form of ἐν with an understood verb of being, ἐστί, along with an understood ὑμῖν, “among you.” Thus οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ὑμῖν, “there is not among you.” More likely, ἔνι is a shortened form of ἔνεστιν, which may mean “it is possible,” e.g., 4 Macc 4:22. ἔνεστιν or its shortened form ἔνι may also have the sense “there is,” e.g., 1 Cor 6:5; Col 3:11; James 1:17; Sirach 37:2. The negation here is emphatic. The context of this verse favors “there is not” rather than “there cannot be.” Paul is writing of a new *reality* and not a mere possibility. Furthermore, when ἔνεστιν means “it is possible,” an infinitive is normally present, which is not the case in 3:28. (CC)

πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“for you are all one in Christ Jesus”)—In place of the four words εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ,  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$  and A only have two words, ἐστε Χριστοῦ, resulting in the statement, “for you are all *of* [i.e. belong to] Christ.” The “of Christ” would match the phrasing in 3:29 (Χριστοῦ).  $\mathfrak{N}^*$  has three words, ἐστε ἐν Χριστοῦ, resulting in “for you are all *in* Christ.” Both variants omit εἷς, “one,” to avoid the potential misunderstanding that the distinctions of Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female cease to exist entirely. The ancient scribes responsible for the variants took 3:28 as describing who is “in” or “of” Christ. Some manuscripts have the neuter ἓν (“one”) instead of the masculine εἷς (“one”), perhaps under the influence of 1 Cor 12:12. (CC)

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Paul heralds the benefits of Baptism in 3:28 with a proclamation of the unity of humanity in Christ. No longer is there Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female. The Greco-Roman world was intensely hierarchical. The ancients celebrated and coveted the honor associated with superior status, even though that status was set, in large measure, from birth. Diogenes Laertius in antiquity attributed to the philosophers Socrates and Thales this thanksgiving: “There were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: ‘first, that I was born a human being and not one of the brutes; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian’ ” (*Vit. Phil.* [Thales] 1.33; Hicks, LCL). Plutarch attributes to Plato similar language.<sup>256</sup> Even the Jews celebrated status in a threefold classification of their own. According to the fifth-century AD Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Judah said: “[A Jewish man] must recite three blessings every day: ‘Praised are you, O Lord, who has not made me a gentile,’ ‘Praised are you, O Lord, who did not make me a boor,’ and ‘Praised are you, O Lord, who did not make me a woman’ ” (*b. Menah.* 43b, citing *t. Ber.* 6.18a; trans. J. Neusner). In the Jewish morning prayer: “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a heathen. Blessed art thou . . . , who hast not made me a bondman [slave]. Blessed art thou . . . , who hast not made me a woman.” (CC)

The free Jewish male found justification for these distinctions in the Law of Moses. The Law distinguished the male, who could observe God’s commandments fully throughout the entirety of a month, from the woman, who could not (Lev 15:19). The Jewish historian Josephus was blunter: “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man” (*Ag. Ap.* 2.24 § 201; Thackeray, LCL). Likewise the slave or uncircumcised gentile was limited in ability to observe the Law.<sup>258</sup> The distinctions of Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female were the product of the covenant of circumcision in Gen 17:9–14. Circumcision reinforced the boundary between Jew and Greek, the distinction between men and women, and the freedom to observe the Law fully. Paul announces that the era of such divisions is over! No longer do these distinctions hinder an individual from being a full member of God’s people. The privileges “in Christ” are not hierarchically ranked. No Christian believer is second class.<sup>261</sup> “Baptism into Christ provides for a unity that cannot be realized in a circumcised community.” (CC)

The final clause of 3:28 explains *in what respect* the relationships of Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female are abolished: “*for [γάρ] you are all one [person] in Christ.*” Paul employs the masculine form of “one” (εἷς) rather than the neuter (ἓν). Baptized believers are incorporated into a oneness with the person of Christ himself. In Christ is a new humanity, a new creation (6:15; see also Rom 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15). Paul finally resolves the central problem of Galatians 3. He finally explains how believers enjoy the benefits of Abrahamic sonship. The beneficiary of the Abrahamic promises is Christ alone (Gal 3:15–17). The baptized are “one” in and with Christ and thereby enjoy the promises and status of God’s children (3:28). (CC)

Many interpreters have read 3:28 as if Paul had written “you are all *equal* in Christ.” Many have considered 3:28 a “Magna Carta” for a new humanity in which the differences between men and women, slave and free, and Jew and Greek are abolished. Paul the apocalyptic thinker envisions a new age in Christ and his Spirit which invades and abolishes the distinctions of “the present evil age” (1:4). Nevertheless, that change of the eras is not yet fully realized. An “already-not yet” tension characterizes Paul’s thought. Where exactly is the emphasis to be placed? On the

“already” side of the equation or on the “not yet”? In 3:28 the apostle is stressing the state of affairs that exists *now* in Christ. Thus the verse closes “you *are* all one in Christ”—present tense. Baptized believers are *already* enjoying these benefits. (CC)

Paul offers clues within the letter and elsewhere in his writings for the potential social implications of the pairings in 3:28. With respect to the Jew-Greek distinction, Paul does not envision Jews abandoning their ancestral rites. Paul did not cease being a Jew (Gal 2:15; Phil 3:3–8). When Paul asks in Rom 3:1 whether there is any remaining advantage in being a Jew, he responds in Rom 3:2 that there are indeed advantages. He develops his logic in greater detail in Romans 9–11. In Paul’s metaphor in Romans 11 gentiles, as outsiders, are grafted onto the olive tree that represents Israel’s unique heritage. Likewise in Galatians, Paul refers to the gentile believers as members of the Jerusalem above (4:21–31). The difference between Jew and gentile is not erased. Gentiles join God’s people as gentiles (see, e.g., 2:3, 11–14), and yet they must be incorporated into the heritage and blessings of Abraham. (CC)

Neither does Paul abolish the distinction between slave and master. Although the presence of faith has radically modified the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon, Paul does not demand that Philemon release Onesimus. Slaves, if not offered their freedom, should stay where they are (1 Cor 7:17). At the same time, Paul is clear that the relationship between master and slave has been radically transformed by the presence of Christ. The master and the slave who are both Christian are dear siblings within the family of God. In Gal 4:1–7 Paul draws on the concepts of slavery and freedom in order to identify whether a person is enjoying the benefits of Christ and his Spirit, or whether he or she still remains under the oppressive powers of the Law, sin, and this evil age. Paul urges the Galatians to use their freedom “through love” to become enslaved to each other (5:13). (CC)

Paul breaks the pattern for the third pair: “There is neither Jew *nor* Greek, there is neither slave *nor* free, there is no male *and* female.” “Male and female” (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ) is not the normal way of identifying men and women. These words seem to focus on gender distinction. Some have argued that Paul envisions an abolition of such distinctions entirely. Surely the biological difference between men and women is not thereby abolished. The Greek Septuagint of Genesis offers a helpful clue: God made humanity “male *and* female” (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ) in Gen 1:27, before the fall into sin. An allusion to the Genesis creation account here is rendered more likely by Paul’s later mention of the dawning “new creation” in 6:14–15. In Mk 10:6–8 (|| Mt 19:4–5; cf. Mk 12:25) Jesus interprets Genesis’ “male and female” (Gen 1:27; see also Gen 2:24) in terms of marriage. In Mt 22:30 Jesus explains that after the resurrection the relationships between men and women will not be the same. Although for Paul marriage is clearly optional in 1 Corinthians 7, marriage remains a godly state. Paul does not envision an abandonment of male and female roles, as if believers would no longer be husbands and wives. The remainder of the Pauline corpus does not bear out an abolition of the created differences between men and women. (CC)

One recent interpreter, Brigitte Kahl, has contended that Paul in his letter to the Galatians is undermining any hierarchy of gender. Paul draws on the language of the male body, such as “foreskin” (ἀκροβυστία, 2:7; 5:6; 6:15) and “seed” (σπέρμα, 3:16, 19, 29), and then declares that there is “no male and female” (3:28). He describes himself as a mother giving birth (4:19).

Kahl's observations, however, do not prove that Paul is particularly concerned with the respective roles of men and women. Most of the apostle's emphases highlight circumcision and the Jew/gentile divide, the central issues in the letter. The image of Paul as a mother giving birth paves the way for the discussion of Sarah and Hagar in the following paragraph, in which Paul makes no particular point about gender roles. Instead he contrasts two Jerusalems, one under the Law and in servitude and the other free (Gal 4:21–31). (CC)

Other interpreters have taken the opposite extreme and have limited the application of Paul's words "male and female" to justification or salvation in Christ. They have denied any social implications in 3:28 at all. However, Paul posits a *new* pair of opposites in 5:6 that reminds the reader of 3:28: "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision." The apostle envisions powerful social implications for those "in Christ" (3:28). That pair of opposites is done away with in favor of "faith expressing itself through love" (5:6). In other words, the divisions of 3:28 and 5:6 are resolved through faith's loving expression. In 6:15 the apostle returns to "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision" as replaced by the "new creation." Sandwiched between these two instances of the circumcision/uncircumcision pairing (5:6; 6:15) is a middle section, 5:13–6:10, in which Paul develops more fully the social implications of the "new creation." In that section Paul envisions people filled by God's Spirit who express the Spirit's fruit of Christ-like behavior in love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, and more. Paul is not envisioning a revolution of society from without. He imagines something far more powerful. He is envisioning a transformation of fallen people from within, and that transformation leads *any* given societal relationship into a new Christ-like direction. The master-slave relationship may not be abolished, but the way the master and the slave relate to each other will be transformed by the presence of Christ and the Spirit's fruit in action. Likewise, the roles of men and women may not be abolished, but the relationship of husband and wife will be characterized by the presence of Christ and the Spirit's selfless fruit in action. Such Christ-like behavior is far more revolutionary than this present age can even imagine. (CC)

For Paul, male and female are one person in Jesus Christ. They do not lose their individual identities but share in the identity and personhood of Christ. As individuals, the believer bears Christ to the world. This is also a *corporate* identity. Paul does not countenance isolated individualism. *All* believers, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social class, are one person in Jesus Christ.<sup>280</sup> "You are all" (3:28) stands in contrast to the distinctions in the first part of the verse. Believers all share in a new identity as they *together* bear Christ to the world. Paul will continue this train of thought in Galatians 5 and 6, where he returns to the pairs of opposites that are done away with in Christ. Abolishing the old division of circumcision and uncircumcision is the new reality in Christ and his Spirit. Christians are simply a different sort of people. (CC)

Unity in Christ transcends ethnic, social and sexual distinctions (see Ro 10:12; 1Co 12:13; Eph 2:15–16). (CSB)

Ethnic, social, and sexual identities do not determine one's standing before God. All who are baptized into Christ are one in His Body, even while distinctions present in creation remain. (TLSB)

Here many other titles could be added of offices that have been divinely ordained, For example: “There is neither magistrate nor subject, neither professor nor listener, neither teacher nor pupil, neither lady nor servant.” For in Christ Jesus all social stations, even those that were divinely ordained, are nothing. Male, female, slave, free, Jew, Gentile, king, subject—these are, of course, good creatures of God. But in Christ, that is, in the matter of salvation, they amount to nothing, for all their wisdom, righteousness, devotion, and authority. (Luther)

With the words “there is neither Jew,” then, Paul vigorously abolishes the Law. For here, where a new man comes into existence in Baptism and where Christ is put on, there is neither Jew nor Greek. Now he is not speaking of the Jew in a metaphysical sense, according to his essence; but by “Jew” he means someone who is a disciple of Moses, who is subject to the laws, who has circumcision, and who observes the form of worship commanded in the Law. Where Christ is put on, he says, there is no Jew any longer, no circumcision, no temple worship, no laws that the Jews keep. For Christ has abolished throughout the world whatever laws there are in Moses. Therefore the conscience that believes in Christ should be so sure that the Law with its terrors and threats has been abrogated that it simply does not know whether Moses or the Law or the Jew ever existed, for Christ and Moses are utterly incompatible. Moses comes with the Law and various works and forms of worship; but Christ, granting grace and righteousness, comes absolutely without the Law or any demands of works. John 1:17: “The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (Luther)

With the next words, “nor Greek,” Paul also rejects and condemns the wisdom and righteousness of the Gentiles. Among the Gentiles there were many great and outstanding men, such as Xenophon, Themistocles, Marcus Fabius, Atilius Regulus, Cicero, Pomponius Atticus, and many others. Endowed as they were with excellent, in fact, heroic virtues, they administered their commonwealths very well and accomplished many brilliant things for the welfare of the commonwealth. And yet, with all their wisdom, power, honorable deeds, outstanding virtues, laws, righteousness, worship, and religion—for we must not imagine that the Gentiles were simply despisers of honesty and religion, but all the nations scattered all over the world had their own laws, worship, and religion, without which the human race cannot be governed—with all these adornments, I say, they amounted to nothing in the sight of God. Therefore whatever belongs to domestic, political, and divine justice, such as the justice of the Law, with the highest obedience, performance of the Law, and sanctity—none of this amounts to anything in the sight of God. Then what does? The garment of Christ, which we put on in Baptism. (Luther)

Thus no matter how diligently a slave performs his duty, obeys his master, and serves faithfully; or if a free man directs and governs either the commonwealth or his private affairs in a praiseworthy way; or whatever a male does as a male, getting married, administering his household well, obeying the magistrate, maintaining honest and decent relations with others; or if a lady lives chastely, obeys her husband, takes good care of the house, and teaches her children well—these truly magnificent and outstanding gifts and works do not avail anything toward righteousness in the sight of

God. In other words, whatever laws, ceremonies, forms of worship, righteousness, and works there are in the whole world, even those of the Jews, who were the first to have a kingdom and a priesthood that was divinely instituted and ordained, together with its laws, devotion, and forms of worship—nevertheless none of these can take away sins or deliver from death or save. (Luther)

“Therefore, O Galatians, your false apostles are seducing you when they teach that the Law is necessary for salvation. In this way they are snatching you from the great glory of your new birth and sonship and are calling you back to your old birth and to the miserable slavery of the Law. From sons of God who are free they are making you slaves of the Law, so long as they seek to distinguish among persons on the basis of the Law.” There is, of course, a distinction among persons in the Law and in the sight of the world; and there must be one there, but not in the sight of God, where all men are equal. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). In the presence of God, therefore, let Jews and Gentiles and all the world keep silence (Hab. 2:20). Of course, God has various ordinances, laws, styles of life, and forms of worship in the world; but these do not achieve anything to merit grace or attain eternal life. As many as are justified, therefore, are justified, not on account of their observance of human or divine Law but on account of Christ, who has abrogated all laws everywhere. The Gospel sets Him forth to us as the only One who placated the wrath of God by His own blood, as the Savior; without faith in Him, the Jews will not be saved through the Law. (Luther)

ALL ONE IN CHRIST – These are magnificent and very glorious words. In the world and according to the flesh there is a very great difference and inequality among persons, and this must be observed very carefully. For if a woman wanted to be a man, if a son wanted to be a father, if a pupil wanted to be a teacher, if a servant wanted to be a master, if a subject wanted to be a magistrate—there would be a disturbance and confusion of all social stations and of everything. In Christ, on the other hand, where there is no Law, there is no distinction among persons at all. There is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one; for there is one body, one Spirit, one hope of the calling of all, one and the same Gospel, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, one Christ, the Lord of all (Eph. 4:4–6). The same Christ whom Peter, Paul, and all the saints have, we have too—you and I and all believers; and all baptized infants have the same one also. Here the conscience knows nothing about the Law but looks only at Christ. This is why Paul always makes it a practice to add the words “in Christ Jesus”; if Christ is lost sight of, everything is over. (Luther)

This is beautifully shown by the story of the bronze serpent, which is a figure of Christ (John 3:14). The Jews, who were being bitten by the fiery serpents, were commanded by Moses to do nothing but look at that bronze serpent with a fixed gaze. Those who did so were healed merely by their fixed gaze at the serpent. But the others, who did not listen to Moses, looked at their wounds rather than at the serpent and died. Thus if I am to gain comfort in a struggle of conscience or in the agony of death, I must take hold of nothing except Christ alone by faith, and I must say: “I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who suffered, was crucified, and died for me. In His wounds and death I see my sin; and in His resurrection I see victory over sin, death, and the devil, and my

righteousness and life. I neither hear nor see anything but Him.” This is the true faith of Christ and in Christ, through which we become members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones (Eph. 5:30). Therefore in Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). Hence the speculation of the sectarians is vain when they imagine that Christ is present in us “spiritually,” that is, speculatively, but is present really in heaven. Christ and faith must be completely joined. We must simply take our place in heaven; and Christ must be, live, and work in us. But He lives and works in us, not speculatively but really, with presence and with power. (Luther)

**3:29** Bligh pointed out that there appears to be an ellipse after ἐστὲ in place of the fuller ἄρα κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι, “*then/consequently* heirs according to the promise.” He added: “Since parataxis is used, κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι [‘heirs according to the promise’] is probably regarded as explanatory of σπέρμα [‘seed’], and τοῦ Ἀβραάμ [‘of Abraham’] goes with both nouns [‘seed’ and ‘heirs’]: ‘then you are Abraham’s “seed,” *his* heirs according to the promise.’ ” (CC)

*And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.* Paul brings together key strands from the chapter. Although the phrase “sons of Abraham” would match Paul’s reasoning in 3:7 and in 4:1–7, in 3:29 the apostle returns instead to the “seed of Abraham” (τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα). In 3:16 Paul introduces “seed” language only surprisingly to deny corporate Israel as Abraham’s seed in favor of the single person of Jesus Christ. The polemical edge about Paul’s denial in 3:16 suggests that the rivals probably introduced the phrase “seed of Abraham” to the Galatians. Similarly, in 3:7 Paul answers a question he had not himself asked regarding the identity of the real sons of Abraham. That verse too seems to be a response to someone else’s point. The rivals would have been pointing to the OT Septuagint, in which “seed of Abraham” functions as a synonym for the people of Israel (2 Chr 20:7; Ps 104:6 [MT/ET 105:6]; Is 41:8; cf. Rom 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22). The rivals were encouraging the Galatians to accept circumcision and thereby become members of “Abraham’s seed” and children. (CC)

Paul affirms that the promises were to Abraham and to his single offspring, Christ (Gal 3:15–18). Baptized believers are “one (person)” “in” Christ (3:28). Paul therefore declares that those who are “of Christ” are the corporate seed of Abraham and the heirs of the promises (3:29). To be in Christ, Abraham’s sole Seed and heir (3:16), is to enjoy all the privileges of Abrahamic descent. Thus even gentiles can enjoy those privileges through Baptism and faith. Paul emphasizes the Galatians’ inclusion with the emphatic second person pronoun (ὕμεῖς): “If *you* are Christ’s.” The conditional sentence calls on the Galatians to recognize for themselves the reality of the protasis (εἰ, “if ...”). God entered into a special relationship with his people Israel. In Ex 19:5: “You shall be for me a treasured possession out of all the peoples” (cf. Deut 29:12–13 [MT 29:11–12]). In Deut 27:9: “This very day you have become the people of the LORD your God.” The prophet Jeremiah looked forward to a new covenant: “At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people” (Jer 31:1). Jewish literature regularly extols the special relationship between God and Israel (e.g., *1 En.* 1.8; 1Q22 II.1: “On this day [you are going to become the peo]ple of God, your God” [trans. F. García Martínez]; 1QM XIII.9: “You, [have crea]ted [us] for you, eternal people” [trans. F. García Martínez]; 1Q34bis 3.II.5: “You have chosen a people in the period of your favour” [trans. F. García Martínez]; 1QS IV.19–23;

*Jub.* 1.22–25). The apostle is clear that that special relationship is only enjoyed by those “of Christ” (Gal 3:29)! (CC)

Not surprisingly, key terms from throughout the chapter recur at this climactic moment, including “Abraham” (see 3:6–9) and the Abrahamic “promise” (see 3:8). The emphatic “according to the promise” entails an implicit contrast with the Law of Moses, another key aspect of the chapter. Paul introduces the “inheritance” and Jesus Christ as the one and only heir of Abraham in 3:15, 17, and 18 and returns to the theme with “heirs” here. The heir of Abraham is the “Seed,” Jesus Christ (3:16), and thus in 3:29 those “of Christ” are the “seed of Abraham” and “heirs” “according to the promise.” The “then” (ἄρα) in the middle of the verse is a conclusion not only to the conditional sentence of 3:29 but also to the chapter as a whole. The Law is unable to mediate the blessings of the Abrahamic inheritance, which are available only in Christ. There is no middle ground between Paul and his rivals. The Galatians “in Christ Jesus” (3:28) are the true descendants of Abraham. As co-heirs and sons with Christ, they enjoy the promise. Paul is clear in 3:14 that the Abrahamic promise entails the powerful Spirit. God has sent his Spirit into their hearts (4:6). The Galatians are not just the descendants of Abraham. They are the children *of God* (3:26)! (CC)

Christians are Abraham’s true, spiritual descendants. (CSB)

The argument in vv 15–29 comes full circle. Gentiles believing in Christ, who is Abraham’s Seed (“Offspring” in the singular; see note, v 16), become Abraham’s seed (“offspring” in the collective plural) and thus heirs of the promise given to him. (TLSB)

In a short statement Paul here transfers all the glory of Lebanon to the desert; that is, he makes all the Gentiles the offspring of Abraham and transfers to the Gentiles the fatherhood and the blessing promised to Abraham. Scripture had predicted long before that this would happen when it said (Gen. 22:18): “In your Offspring shall all the nations be blessed.” Because we Gentiles believe and because by faith we receive the blessing of the Offspring of Abraham, therefore Scripture calls us sons of Abraham and hence heirs. And so we are all one in Christ, who is the Offspring of Abraham. Hence the promise, “In your Offspring, etc.,” applies also to us Gentiles; and the Christ who is promised here is ours also. Of course, the promise was given only to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, as Ps. 147:19–20 states: “He declares His word to Jacob. He has not dealt thus with any other nation.” Nevertheless, what was promised comes to us through faith, by which alone the promise of God is received. Although it was not promised to us, it was promised about us; for we were named in the promise, “In your Offspring, etc.” The promise shows clearly that Abraham was to be the father not only of the Jewish nation but of many nations, the heir not of one kingdom but of the entire world (Rom. 4:13). Thus the glory of the whole kingdom of Christ has been transferred to us. Therefore all laws are completely abrogated in the heart and conscience of the Christian, even though they still remain outwardly in the flesh. About this I have spoken at great length earlier. (Luther)

**3:15–29** Through Christ, God fulfills the promise He gave to Abraham. All united to Christ by Baptism become heirs of the promise and therefore are righteous before God. The Law, as between Moses and Christ, still serves the good purpose of revealing sin and our need for a Savior. However, Christ does what the Law cannot do. He gives forgiveness and life. • Lord,



help us to see that in our congregation all are to be welcomed, whatever their background or place in life. Help us also to reach out to all with the message of Jesus' love. Amen. (TLSB)

**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. <sup>2</sup> He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. <sup>3</sup> So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. <sup>4</sup> But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.**

Gal 4:1–11 is a discrete paragraph in which the apostle seizes on the notion of "inheritance" (3:18) in the preceding pericope (see also "heirs" in 3:29). In 4:1–2 Paul offers an illustration or legal example that he then applies in 4:3–7. He concludes in 4:8–11 with a rebuke of the Galatians based on his illustration and its application. Several verbal connections tie 4:1–2 to 4:3–7: the pair "heir" and "slave" (κληρονόμος and δοῦλος, in both 4:1 and 4:7); "time" (χρόνος, 4:1, 4); "minor" (νήπιος, 4:1, 3); and "the F/father" (ὁ πατήρ, 4:2, 6). Also, "under guardians and managers" (ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ... καὶ οἰκονόμους, 4:2) corresponds to "under the elements of the world" (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, 4:3), and "the time set by the father" (ἡ προθεσμία τοῦ πατρός, 4:2) corresponds to "the fullness of time" (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, 4:4). "But" (ἀλλά) in 4:8 signals the beginning of Paul's rebuke as he expands on 4:3's "under the elements of the world" (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου), to which the Galatians are returning. (CC)

The first part of the new chapter, 4:1–7, develops certain strands of the argument at the end of chapter 3. The parallels between this paragraph and 3:23–29 may be outlined as follows:

**Galatians 4:1–7**

**Galatians 3:23–29**

<sup>1</sup>As long as the heir is a minor ...

<sup>23</sup>Before the coming of this faith,

<sup>2</sup>He is under guardians and managers until we were held in custody under the Law, the time set by the father.

imprisoned until this coming faith should be revealed.

<sup>3</sup>When we were minors, we were enslaved under the elements of the world.

<sup>24</sup> The law became our custodian until Christ.

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time came ...

<sup>25</sup>Since faith has come,

<sup>5</sup> in order that he might redeem those under we are no longer under a custodian. the Law

and in order that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God.

<sup>6</sup>God sent forth the Spirit of his Son ...

<sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ ...

<sup>7</sup>Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and since a son, also an heir through God.  
<sup>29</sup>Then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

Paul invites his hearers to consider matters from a different angle. The key difference between the two sections is the role (or lack thereof) of Abraham. The terms of 3:1–29 were dictated by Paul's opponents, who had advocated status as a child of Abraham (see the commentary on 3:6). Paul neatly resolves the issue of Abrahamic descent with incorporation by faith and Baptism into Abraham's sole Seed and heir, Jesus Christ (3:29). With 4:1–7 Paul restates the whole matter on *his* terms. Paul is not ultimately concerned with Abrahamic descent but rather with *status* as children and heirs of God! The key term with which Paul opens and concludes 4:1–7 is therefore "heir." Who are the heirs to God's promises? (CC)

Scholars are not certain to what social and legal customs Paul is alluding. A long line of specialists have conceded the difficulty. Richard Longenecker concluded his rather lengthy discussion: "It is difficult to determine exactly what legal system Paul had in mind.... It is entirely possible, in fact, that Paul, being more interested in application than precise legal details, made the specifics of his illustration conform to his purpose. No illustration is required to represent exactly every aspect of a situation in order to be telling or meaningful." Leon Morris was categorical: "We do not know of a guardianship in the ancient world in precisely the terms Paul uses."<sup>30</sup> Similarly Richard Hays: "Paul is speaking in general terms here for the purpose of illustration, and there is no point in seeking to pin down precise legal details presupposed by the analogy, which works only loosely in any case." With respect to "the time set by the father" in 4:2, Hays added: "Whether this detail corresponds precisely to the provisions of inheritance law in Paul's culture is beside the point; he is already looking ahead to his application in v. 4, thinking of the fact that it is God who appoints the time for the state of subjection to come to an end." (CC)

More recently, many scholars have noted the possibility of exodus and wilderness allusions throughout Galatians and especially in 4:1–11. The evidence is not as clear for these allusions as the proponents suggest. Paul neither mentions the narratives explicitly nor cites their distinctive phrasing. The structural similarities between Israel's story and the Galatians' situation may nevertheless suggest an echo at a very general level. In 1:1–4 the Galatians have been rescued from the present evil age but are now, like the rebellious generation of Israel in the wilderness, turning away (1:6–7). In 4:3–7 God redeems and adopts the Galatians even as he made Israel his son, and now the Galatians are turning back again to their former slavery (4:8–9). Christ has freed the Galatians (4:21–5:1a), and so they must not submit again to the yoke of Egypt-like slavery (5:1b). The Galatians' story is analogous to the story of Israel upon the people's departure from Egypt when they threatened to apostatize and return to slavery (Ex 14:10–12; 16:3; 17:3; Num 11:4–6, 18; 14:2–4; Josh 24:14–20; Neh 9:17). The Israelites threatened to abandon their Lord in order to return to their old rulers. The rivals were urging the Galatians to join God's people Israel through observance of the Law. Paul may be suggesting that his hearers

*already* share in Israel’s story; the problem is that the Galatians are threatening to share in the worst part of that story. (CC)

The Romans practiced the adoption of sons into a new family. Adoption involved a tremendous change of status. An adopted son left one household and became subordinate to a new household head, a new father. During a ceremony the adoptee three times would be “sold” into bondage and then redeemed from bondage by the adopting father. Adopted sons subsequently enjoyed all the privileges of natural-born offspring. With this cultural background in mind, the concept of bondage/slavery in 4:3 would lead very naturally to redemption and adoption as sons in 4:5. Released from the oppressive, enslaving powers of old, a genuine reversal of fortune has taken place for those in Christ. Believers in Christ enjoy the status of adopted sons in the most prestigious household of all, God’s! (CC)

### **An Illustration of the Appointed Time (4:1–2) (CC)**

**4:1–2** *I tell you: As long as the heir is a minor, he is no different from a slave, even though he is the master of all. But rather he is under guardians and managers until the time set by the father.* “I tell you” (λέγω δέ) signals a minor break (cf. 3:17; 5:16). One could translate the expression as “and I am telling you this” or “my point is this.” Paul shifts in 4:1 away from the imagery that dominated 3:23–29 to a new set of metaphors. Nevertheless, the article with “*the* heir” (ὁ κληρονόμος) is anaphoric in referring back to the “heirs” just mentioned in 3:29. Those “heirs” are, collectively in Christ, “Abraham’s seed.” The “heirs” in Christ pave the way for a discussion of the representative “heir” in 4:1. (CC)

Paul’s “heir” is experiencing that temporary period of minority when a young man is subject to “guardians and managers” (4:2; “as long as,” ἐφ’ ὅσον χρόνον, 4:1; cf. Rom 7:1; 1 Cor 7:39). The word “guardian” (ἐπίτροπος) sometimes functioned as a synonym of “pedagogue/custodian” (παιδαγωγός). Perhaps the use of “pedagogue/custodian” in 3:24–25, with the child’s comparable period of minority, suggested to the apostle the imagery of 4:1–2. The period of minority under “guardians and managers” is temporary, even as the child’s time under the pedagogue has come to a close. The Galatians are now “sons” (υἱοί, 3:26) and “heirs” (κληρονόμοι, 3:29). (CC)

In the context of 4:1, however, Paul is not thinking of a “pedagogue/custodian,” but rather of a child’s legal guardian (ἐπίτροπος). A guardian would manage the child’s household and estate until he came of age.<sup>38</sup> The guardian would clothe the child and provide for his schooling. The minor could not act independently.<sup>40</sup> The guardian would treat an orphaned child as if the child were his own. The presence of a guardian does not necessarily imply that the child must be an orphan. The guardian (ἐπίτροπος) in Mt 20:8 works in a large household while the owner is still alive. A guardian could even be a family friend of high social status who had voluntarily stepped in for the father. “Managers/trustees” (οἰκονόμοι), on the other hand, were typically slaves who managed estates. Paul may be envisioning a division of labor: a guardian to handle the youth’s upbringing and education, and trustees to care for the property of the youth’s estate. Paul is describing a household of both wealth and status. The boy is the legal heir who will eventually become the master of a royal estate (“master of all,” κύριος πάντων), but as a “minor” (νήπιος) the boy is “no different from a slave” (οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου) since he may not act freely or make substantive decisions until the time set by the father. (CC)

Although Paul may employ the word for “minor” (νήπιος) with a sense of immaturity (1 Cor 13:11–12; Eph 4:13–14), Gal 4:1–2 is not outlining a process of maturation but rather an established time! The word for the set “time” (προθεσμία) in legal documents referred to an appointed day either when a contract’s stipulations were fulfilled or when a status or condition had changed. In one Hellenistic legal papyrus (P.Oxy. 491.8–10), a man specified in his will that if he died before his sons were of the appointed age of twenty years or older, then their maternal grandfather would serve as their “guardian” (ἐπίτροπος). The key word in 4:2 is “until” (ἄχρι). The heir’s life may be divided into the periods before and after he receives the full privileges as heir at “the time set by the father” (τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός). For Paul, the appointed “time” has arrived with the dawning of the new creation in Christ (see 4:4–5!). (CC)

One must be cautious about Paul’s imagery. He does not identify the Galatian Christians with the minor of 4:1. Rather, in 4:3, 7 he identifies the Galatians as *former slaves*! Paul appears to be distinguishing the Galatian gentiles from ethnic Israel as the proper “heir.” Thanks to Christ, the baptized gentiles now share in Israel’s status (3:28–29). Whereas Israel was under the Law and hence under a “pedagogue” (3:23–24) as a minor (4:1–2), the former (gentile) slaves enjoy the inheritance of Abraham and his descendants as *adults*. They have entered into the inheritance with none of the restrictions of the age of minority. The gentile Galatian believers are therefore “master[s] of all” (see, e.g., Sirach 44:21; *Jub* 22.11–15, 24; 32.19; *1 En.* 5.7; Philo, *Mos.* 1.28 § 155). How sadly ironic that in seeking to become the children and beneficiaries of Abraham, they are seeking what is already theirs! (CC)

**4:1** ἐστὶν ... διαφέρει ... ὧν (“is ... is different ... is”)—The present tenses are likely gnomic, signaling a general, timeless fact. Some see a reference to Israel’s former situation as slaves in Egypt with the historical present tense employed in the same manner as in 3:17 (ἀκυροῖ, “does [not] invalidate”), but 3:17 is too distant to be of any value in interpreting 4:1–2 (note the transition at 3:21). Furthermore, 3:17’s verb is likely a perfective present as the Law *still* does not invalidate the Abrahamic promises.

οὐδέν (“no”)—This pronoun (literally, “nothing”) is used adverbially.

δούλου (“from a slave”)—This is a genitive of comparison.

κύριος πάντων ὧν (“even though he is the master of all”)—The circumstantial participle ὧν is concessive. (CC)

*child.* A minor. Contrast with “adults” in 1Co 14:20 (“mature” in Php 3:15). (CSB)

**4:2** *guardians.* A broader term than “[one] put in charge to lead us” in 3:24. See Mt 20:8 (“foreman”); Lk 8:3 (“manager”). (CSB)

These were legally appointed individuals to whom a child’s welfare, support, and household affairs were entrusted. Under the Roman legal system, the status of a child still under the care of a guardian was roughly that of a slave (both were unable to enjoy the inheritance). The precise legal details of the procedure, however, are not known to us. (TLSB)

“You see,” he says, “even in civil law, that although the heir is the owner of the entire estate of his father, he is still a slave. Of course, he has the promise and the blessing of his inheritance. Nevertheless, before the time of emancipation, as the lawyers call it, has arrived, he is held and subjected to guardians and trustees, just as a pupil is to a

custodian. They do not entrust the administration or control of his goods to him, but they force him to serve. He lives and eats on his own property as though he were a slave. Therefore he is no different from a slave so long as the time of his imprisonment and captivity lasts, that is, so long as he is under his taskmasters and superintendents. This subjection and captivity is actually for his own good; otherwise he would dissipate his goods foolishly. Still his captivity is not permanent; but it is finished at a definite date, which his father has set.” (Luther)

**4:3** ἡμεῖς (literally “we”; translated as “in our case”)—The pronoun, which could have been omitted, helps signal a change in referent from the minor (4:1–2) to “our case.”

ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι (“we were enslaved”)—Paul employs this middle form of εἰμί (P<sup>46</sup> B D\* and the tenth-century uncial 33) with the perfect passive participle δεδουλωμένοι in the pluperfect periphrastic construction, which takes the place of the proper pluperfect form ἐδεδουλώμεθα. The verb construction conveys an emphasis on the state of existence during the period of minority. The alternative reading ἤμεν δεδουλωμένοι (A B C Textus Receptus and most manuscripts), also a pluperfect periphrastic, employs an active form of εἰμί and is a scribal harmonization with ἤμεν earlier in the sentence. ἡμεθα should be preferred over ἤμεν as more likely original. (CC)

### **The Application of the Illustration (4:3–7) (CC)**

**4:3** *So also in our case, when we were minors, we were enslaved under the elements of the world.* With “so also in our case” (οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς), Paul begins to apply the metaphor to the Galatian audience. The Galatian “we” group of 4:3 was in slavery under the elements of the cosmos and cannot be identified with the young “heir” of 4:1–2, who only experiences limitations *like* a slave. The “also” (καί) signals the shift in subject from the legal minor to the enslaved. Both the formerly enslaved Galatians and the heir have to await the fullness of the appointed time under restraining entities, but their prior situations differ.<sup>49</sup> In 4:3 Paul therefore turns to a people who were of lesser status than the heir (Israel) in 4:1–2 but who are nevertheless enjoying the inheritance at the appointed time. Commentators who identify the “we” group as Jewish Christians (as opposed to the gentile Galatians) have overlooked the distinction in status between 4:1–2 and 4:3. The status-conscious first-century Galatians, on the other hand, would not have missed it. Paul’s association of the “elements” (στοιχεῖα) with the Galatians’ pagan past in 4:8–9 confirms that the fuller phrase “elements of the world” (4:3) is referring to the situation of gentiles. The “enslaved” gentiles of 4:3 will become the sons of 4:7. (CC)

The precise meaning and referent of the phrase “elements of the world” (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) has been a longstanding problem. Paul and his contemporaries would have heard the phrase used almost exclusively for the fundamental constituting elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Paul chooses to employ the phrase metaphorically. He opens the letter with reference to “the present evil age” (1:4) and closes with the present “world” (κόσμος, twice in 6:14) being crucified and replaced by the “new creation” (6:15). The ancients understood the elements of the cosmos to consist of opposing pairs. Indeed, 4:3 follows on the heels of the climactic declaration in 3:28 that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female. The fundamental, enslaving divisions of this age, as fostered by Moses’ Law, have passed away with the dawning of a new age in Christ (note the past verb tenses of the imperfects ἤμεν and ἡμεθα, “we were,” in 4:3).

Paul is limiting the authority of the “elements” to *this* world and not to the new creation in Christ. The “elements” can no longer enslave or bind those in Christ’s new creation—thus the redemption in 4:4–5. (CC)

WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN – Describes a state of confinement under the Law. (TLSB)

*in slavery.* See **note** on 3:23. (CSB)

Therefore the emphasis lies on the phrase “we were slaves,” as though he were saying: “Our conscience was subject to the Law, which exercised its tyranny over us with all its might, It whipped us as a tyrant whips his captive slave. It held us confined and captive; that is, it made us fearful, sad, pale, and desperate, by threatening us with eternal death and damnation.” This theological slavery is very harsh—not permanently, however, but as long as it lasts, as long as we are children, that is, until Christ comes. So long as He is absent, we are slaves, confined under the Law, lacking grace, faith, and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But after Christ comes, the imprisonment and slavery of the Law come to an end. (Luther)

*basic principles.* The Greek term meant essentially “things placed side by side in a row” (as the ABCs) and then came to mean fundamental principles or basic elements of various kinds. The context here suggests that it refers to the elemental forms of religion, whether those of the Jews (under the law, v. 5) or those of the Gentiles (under their old religious bondage, v. 8). (CSB)

Cf v 9. Depicts the condition of slavery to which both Jews and Gentiles were subject prior to Christ’s coming—the Jews to the Law and the Gentiles to their pagan way of life (cf Col 2:8, 20; Heb 5:12). (TLSB)

*of the world.* In the sense that these principles do not come from the “new creation” (6:15). (CSB)

Paul is the only one to use this phraseology, when he calls the Law of God “elements of the world” or “weak and beggarly elements” or “the power of sin” or “the letter that kills.” The other apostles did not speak this way about the Law. Therefore let every student of Christian theology carefully observe this way of speaking that Paul has. Christ calls him “a chosen instrument” (Acts 9:15). Therefore He gave him a most excellent way of speaking and a unique phraseology, different from that of the other apostles, so that he, as the chosen instrument, may faithfully lay the foundations of the doctrine of justification and set it down clearly. (Luther)

**4:4–5** *But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that he might redeem those under the Law and in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.* The roughly chiasmic structure of the verses serves to contrast God’s Son/sons with those under the Law in need of redemption:

A God sent forth his Son

- B Born under the Law
- B' To redeem those under the Law
- A' That we might receive the adoption as sons (CC)

Paul does not develop the phrase “born of a woman” (γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός) elsewhere in the letter, and “the fullness of time” (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου) is unique in the Pauline corpus. Some scholars have therefore contended that these two phrases, the chiasmic pattern of the verse, and the first person usage (“we”) are evidence that Paul is adapting a Jewish-Christian “sending” formula. These scholars hypothesize that Paul draws on the “sending” formula also in Rom 8:3–4: God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to resolve the requirement of the Law. Like Gal 4:4–5; Rom 8:3–4 speaks of God’s sending, of Christ’s sharing human existence, and of the plight under the Law. The two passages, however, differ considerably in wording. The hypothesis that pre-Pauline material stands behind either Gal 4:4–5 or Rom 8:3–4 is questionable. The phrases “the fullness of time” and “born of a woman” need not reflect pre-Pauline Jewish Christianity. Paul admonishes the Galatians at the beginning of the letter to recognize that they are in the midst of a new age inaugurated by Christ’s saving work (1:4), thus “the fullness of time.” “Born of a woman” is a common expression in Greek literature for sharing in humanity. Paul is stressing at this point Jesus’ identification with the human condition. (CC)

In developing their hypotheses of a Jewish-Christian “sending” formula, some commentators have speculated that the first Christians were connecting Jesus with the figure of Wisdom. Perhaps standing behind Gal 4:4 is Wis Sol 9:10: “Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from the throne of your glory send her” (NRSV). Perhaps standing behind Gal 4:6 is Wis Sol 9:17: “Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy spirit from on high?” (NRSV).<sup>58</sup> Another scholar abandoned any reference to pre-Pauline Jewish-Christian traditions and attributed the language of “sending” to Paul himself as he identified the Son seen on the Damascus road with the figure of Wisdom. These suggestions are unlikely as well. Wisdom of Solomon 9 does not identify Wisdom with the “Son of God,” and the sending of Wisdom is a response to Solomon’s need for guidance and not to the plight of the people as a whole. The sending of Wisdom may parallel the sending of the Son *or* the Spirit but hardly the twofold sending of both the Son *and* the Spirit in Gal 4:4–6. Still another scholar linked a potential “sending” formula not with Wisdom but rather with the Gospel traditions. In Mk 12:1–12, especially Mk 12:6–7, the father “sent” his son to check on the vineyard tenants even as God “sent” his own Son in Gal 4:4. As these varied hypotheses demonstrate, the notion that Paul is citing traditional material in 4:4–5 is unlikely and incapable of proof. Whether traditional or not, these verses express Paul’s own thinking. (CC)

The debate over pre-Pauline traditions behind 4:4–5 raises yet another question: the referent of the first person pronouns and verbs. Is Paul distinguishing “we” Jewish Christians by his first person pronouns and verbs in 4:3, 5 from “you” gentile Christians in 4:6? Paul never actually *says* that the “we” group in 4:3, 5 consists of Jewish Christians, and 4:5–6 is even more problematic for the proposal. In 4:5b “we” receive adoption as sons, and yet 4:6a concludes on the basis of that very adoption of the “we” group: “Now because *you* are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into *our* hearts.” *The “you” and “we” groups must be the same, or Paul’s line of reasoning would collapse.* One ardent advocate of the distinction between “we” Jewish Christians and “you” gentile Galatians has therefore resorted to the desperate measure of

emending the Greek text of 4:6 from “our hearts” to “your hearts” in order to match “you are sons” in 4:6. This proposed textual emendation is based on meager external evidence. The first person “our hearts” is the more difficult reading and therefore more likely the original reading, since scribes would have wanted to eliminate the possibly jarring contrast between the first person and second person pronouns and verbs (“we” in 4:5; “you” and then “our” in 4:6). Certainly God did not send his Son in 4:5 in order that “we” *Jews* might receive the “adoption as sons.” That is a privilege that Paul grants Israel *before* Christ’s coming (see Rom 9:4)! The logic of Gal 4:6–7 makes little or no sense if the pronouns and verbs are referring to differing groups: “And because you [gentiles] are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into *our* hearts [as Jewish Christians] ... so that you [gentiles] are no longer a slave but a son.” Jewish Christians do not depend for their reception of the Spirit on the gentiles’ adoption as sons. Paul is describing in 4:4–7 the situation of believers in general, regardless of whether they are Jewish or gentile. The Son’s work of redemption in 4:4–5a leads to the reception of sonship in 4:5b, which, in turn, leads to the reception of the Spirit by the same group (4:6): Since *you* are sons, God sent forth the Spirit into *our* hearts. (CC)

Paul begins 4:4 with “but when the fullness of time came” (ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου). The apostle does not say anything here about conditions in the Roman Empire. He does not say anything about a common government, a single language of commerce, a network of roads, or protected sea lanes. Paul’s categories here, as elsewhere in the letter, remain apocalyptic. Galatians opens with reference to “the present evil age” (1:4) and closes with the dawning of a “new creation” (6:15). The Scriptures frequently refer to God’s appointed purpose being brought to fruition at the appointed time (Dan 8:19 [cf. Dan 11:35]; 1QpHab VII.2; Mk 1:15; 13:32; Lk 21:24; Acts 1:7; 3:21; Eph 1:10). The rival teachers have completely missed *what time it is!* Substantives in Greek that end in -μα, as does πλήρωμα, “fullness,” tend to stress completed action. God has a plan for this world, and that plan is now coming to completion with the sending of the Son! The coming of the Son with his powerful Spirit has inaugurated a new age in the history of humanity with the full benefits of sonship. Paul, along with *all* Christ’s own (!), lives at a climactic moment. Two thousand years of intervening history do not change the comforting fact that believers enjoy God’s historic, completed work. (CC)

The reference to God’s “Son” in 4:4 comes amidst a cluster of terms centered on family and inheritance. Thanks to the rivals’ influence, the Galatians are coveting a sonship that would relate them to Abraham, the father of God’s historic people (3:6). Paul speaks of something even better. He grants that they have indeed become sons of Abraham, even if not in the manner that they had supposed. They are sons of Abraham not through Moses’ Law but rather through Christ, the sole, legitimate Seed of Abraham and the rightful recipient of the Abrahamic promises (3:16–18, 29). Christ is not only the sole, proper heir of the Abrahamic promises, but he is also the sole, proper “Son” of God (1:16). Since believers are “in Christ” (3:28) and God has sent Christ’s Spirit “into” them (4:6), they become *fellow* heirs. The Galatians are striving for Abrahamic sonship when they have already become sons of God with an incredible new identity (3:26)! (CC)

In the fullness of time, “God sent forth his Son, *born of a woman*” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός). Perhaps the sending of the Son is no different than God’s “sending” of human prophets and implies nothing with respect to Christ’s preexistence (Judg



6:8; Jer 7:25; Ezek 2:3; Hag 1:12; Paul in Acts 22:21). Indeed, Paul narrates his own call/sending with the language of the prophets (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Is 49:1, 5; Jer 1:5). The phrase “born of a woman” is a common way of expressing human existence in the OT, Second Temple Judaism, and even early Christianity (Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; Mt 11:11 || Lk 7:28; 1QS XI.21; Sirach 10:18; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.1.4 § 21; 16.11.5 § 382). Paul is probably not, then, referring in 4:4 to a virgin birth. The Son simply became thoroughly, fully human. The late-first-and second-century Docetists who denied Christ’s humanity would have done well to reconsider 4:4–5. (CC)

The question still remains whether Paul is implying the birth of a preexistent, divine being. In support of this conclusion, first, if “born of a woman” were only emphasizing Jesus’ humanity, then the phrase would have been unnecessary in the Galatian context since none of the parties would have disputed Jesus’ humanity. Paul does not elaborate on Jesus’ genuine humanity elsewhere in the letter. The phrase would be extraneous were it not signaling Jesus’ preexistence. Second, even as God sent forth the Spirit in 4:6, God sent forth the Son in 4:4. Even as the Spirit is preexistent, so also the Son is preexistent. Third, although Paul was sent by God in a manner comparable with the sending of the prophets (Gal 1:15–16; cf. Jn 17:18), he is not God’s Son. Unlike the prophets or apostles, the Son comes for a purpose that is cosmic in scope: he delivers people from “the present evil age” (1:4). Jesus’ mission to “the present evil age” suggests that he stands *beyond* this age and has invaded it from without in order to rescue and redeem humanity. Fourth, the order of Paul’s verbs in 4:4 (“sent ... born ... born”) has the Son’s sending *before* his birth, thereby implying his preexistence. Fifth and finally, Paul elsewhere in his letters expresses a very high view of Christ as God (Rom 9:5; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:6 [cf. Phil 2:5–11: a preexistent person!]; Col 2:9). The apostle also describes Christ in the language of preexistent Wisdom in 1 Cor 1:24, 30; 8:6b; 10:4; cf. Col 1:15–17. Precisely because the Son is a powerful, preexistent, otherworldly figure, he can deliver those who are under the potent, enslaving Law. (CC)

In Gal 4:4–5 God sent forth his Son under the Law “in order that he might redeem those under the Law.” Apart from 3:13 and 4:5, the verb “redeem” (ἐξαγοράζω) is used elsewhere in the Pauline corpus only in Eph 5:16 and Col 4:5 in the difficult phrase “redeeming the time.” The only use of “redeem” in a sense similar to Gal 4:5 is in Diodorus Siculus 15.7: Some philosophers reportedly came together and redeemed Plato (ἐξηγόρασαν τοῦτον) to freedom after his sale on the slave market. Paul treats existence “under the Law” (Gal 4:5) as a form of slavery comparable to being “under the elements of the world” (4:3). The metaphor of slavery in this context probably suggested to Paul the verb “to redeem.” A Jew such as the historian Josephus could write: “[God] made the Law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master” (*Ag. Ap.* 2.17 § 174; Thackeray, LCL).<sup>82</sup> Paul does not view such subjection so favorably. Earlier in 3:10–12 Paul explains that God’s Law demands obedience, and human beings fail to obey God’s Law in the perfect manner that befits the God who gave it. The Law inevitably brings a curse upon its adherents. In 3:13 Paul turns to God’s solution for humanity’s plight under the Law in Christ’s redemption. The apostle rejects as burdensome, oppressive, and impossible the futile attempt to avoid the curse through a proper obedience. One must die to the Law in Christ (2:19). Christ had to be “under the Law” (4:4) in order to redeem those “under the Law” (4:5). Luther’s advice with respect to justification still stands: “Law, I shall not listen to you, because you have an evil voice. Besides, the time has now fully come. Therefore I am free. I shall no longer endure your domination” (AE 26:365). God in Christ has delivered humanity from the Law’s burdensome, Egypt-like “yoke of slavery” (5:1; cf. Lev 26:13; Is 10:24–27). The

mark of maturity for a Jewish teacher, Mosaic Law observance (e.g., Rom 2:20), has become ironically a mark of immaturity! (CC)

In Gal 4:4–5 Paul says that God has sent forth his Son not only to redeem those under the Law but also “in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.” In 3:26 Paul climactically declares the Galatians to be “sons of God in Christ,” and in 4:6 he again emphatically proclaims them God’s adopted “sons.” In the Greco-Roman world, adoption could grant even a slave the full rights and privileges of a natural son (thus 4:7). Although the Jews did not generally practice adoption in Paul’s day (υιοθεσία, Gal 4:5; cf. also Rom 9:4), the apostle is drawing on a widely recognized custom as a way of explaining the benefits of Christ’s saving work. (CC)

Paul associates “adoption as sons” (υιοθεσία) with the “Spirit.” In Rom 8:15, for instance, he refers to “the *Spirit* of adoption (as sons).” The parallels between Gal 4:5–7 and Rom 8:15–17 are striking:

**Galatians 4:5–7**

**Romans 8:15–17**

<sup>5</sup>... in order that he might redeem (from<sup>15</sup>slavery) those under the Law  
You received not the spirit of slavery ...

and in order that we might receive the adoption as sons.  
but you received the Spirit of adoption as sons,

<sup>6</sup>God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who cries, “Abba, Father,”  
by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.”

because you are sons.  
<sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness ... that we are children of God,

<sup>7</sup>... and since a son, also an heir through<sup>17</sup>God.  
and if children, then heirs of God.  
God.

Paul likewise connects “adoption as sons” (Gal 4:5) with the Spirit in Galatians as the logic of 4:6–7 spells out. (CC)

**4:4** γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός (“born of a woman”)—In common speech there appears to have been some confusion between the verbs γενόμενον (from γίνομαι, “to become”) and γεννώμενον (from γεννάω, “to beget”). On γίνομαι as the quasi-passive of γεννάω, see 1 Esdras 4:15–16; Tobit 8:6; Wis Sol 7:3; Sirach 44:9; Jn 8:58. (CC)

*time had fully come.* The time “set” (v. 2) by God for his children to become adult sons and heirs. (CSB)

Pictures a container steadily being filled with the passage of time until full. Corresponds to “date set by his father” in V. 2. Thus at a specific and appropriate time in human history, God acted to fulfill His eternal purpose. (TLSB)

"But when the time had fully come" simply means "the full time." "When God wills it." Leave it at that. (Buls)

At God's perfect time, maturity came, brought by the Son of God Himself. Jesus was born as a Jew so He might be subject to all the ceremonial laws as well as the moral law, the Ten Commandments. Having kept them perfectly, and also suffering for us the penalty of sin (death), He "redeemed us – bought us back from the curse and power of the Law, so that we might have full adoption into the family with all the rights of sons. (LL)

Some think of this as when the Jews had finally reached a time in a certain maturity. This is not so because if Judaism was ever at a low spiritual ebb, it was so when the fullness of the time arrived. We can enumerate some of the providences which helped to open the way for the gospel such as the vast extent of the Roman Empire, the spread of the Greek language, the facility of travel throughout the empire, the extensive diaspora of the Jews, its many proselytes from Gentilism, etc. All of these aided the spread of the gospel. What God saw and regarded as the fullness of the time in the spiritual condition of men, barbarian as well as Greek, is too difficult for us to predicate because His thoughts and judgments are too unsearchable for us. (Lanski)

Romans 5:6, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."

2 Peter 3:8,9, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Romans 11:33-36, "<sup>33</sup> Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! <sup>34</sup> "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" <sup>35</sup> "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" <sup>36</sup> For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."

*God sent his Son.* See Jn 1:14; 3:16; Ro 1:1–6; 1Jn 4:14. (CSB)

Then God "commissioned forth His Son." This means that the Son went out on His commission not only "from" God but "out from" God. John says that He was with God (John 1:1) and was God and that He became flesh (John 1:14). (Lanski)

"Sent" means "to send out with a commission." (Buls)

"His Son" denotes the divinity of Jesus. His pre-existence is implied. (Buls)

*born of a woman.* Showing that Christ was truly human. (CSB)

The preexistent Son of God (1 Co 8:6; Php 2:6-11; Col 1:15-16) became fully human. Paul nowhere mentioned Mary by name; Jesus was the focus of his theology and devotion. (TLSB)

Does "born of a woman" denote the virgin birth? Luther and others say it does. (Buls)

It denotes more than the separation from the womb, it includes the entire human nature of the Son as this was derived from His human mother. (Lenski)

*born under law.* Subject to the Jewish law. (CSB)

Jesus was born a Jew and under obligation to keep the Law of Moses (see FC SD III 58). Consistent with Paul's imagery, Jesus entered our prison (3:23). (TLSB)

"Born under the Law" shows the humanity of Jesus. These words lead us right into the vicarious atonement. (Buls)

Luther: The Law did everything to Jesus that it did to us. It accused us and terrified us. It subjected us to sin, death, and the wrath of God; and it condemned us with its judgment . . . . It accused Him of blasphemy and sedition; it found Him guilty in the sight of God of all the sins of the entire world; finally it so saddened and frightened Him that He sweat blood, Luke 22:44; and eventually it sentenced Him to death, even death on a cross, Philippians 2:8. (Buls)

Space does not allow further beautiful quotes from Luther. It is time well spent for the reader to peruse his *Commentary on Galatians*. (Buls)

The Son "came to be under law" in general and not only under the pure code of Moses, but by virtue of this code under all that mankind had left of God's law as written in their hearts. (Lenski)

**4:5** υιοθεσίαν ("adoption as sons")—Although daughters were sometimes adopted in the Greco-Roman world—and this may be reflected in Paul's movement from (masculine) "sons" to (neuter, inclusive) "children" in Rom 8:14, 16—daughters could not carry on a family line in first-century patriarchal society, and their adoptions are narrated with different terminology. Males were the only ones described by the ancients as enjoying "adoption as sons." Paul also prefers "sons" (υιοί, e.g., Gal 3:26; 4:6) over "children" (τέκνα, in Galatians only in 4:19–31) because the adoption of baptized believers as sons is dependent upon and inextricably tied to Jesus as God's "Son" (υιός, 4:4; also, e.g., 1:16; 2:20), the proper heir. (CC)

Here are two purpose phrases. Compare this with Galatians 3:14 where we also have two purpose phrases. In fact there is a close relationship between 3:10-14 and 4:1-7. Read the two side by side and note how the vicarious, universal atonement is so prominent in both passages. (Buls)

Compare the two clauses in 3:14 and 4:5. (Buls)

- a. In each case the *first clause* denotes what we call "objective justification."
- b. And in each case the *second clause* denotes what we call "subjective justification." (Buls)

REDEEM THOSE UNDER LAW – It is extremely important, therefore, to keep in view and always to consider this statement, so delightful and full of comfort, as well as others like it which define Christ properly and accurately; for then throughout our life, in every danger, in the confession of our faith in the presence of tyrants, and in the hour of death, we can declare with a sure and steady confidence: “Law, you have no jurisdiction over me; therefore you are accusing and condemning me in vain. For I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom the Father sent into the world to redeem us miserable sinners who are oppressed by the tyranny of the Law. He poured out His life and spent it lavishly for me. When I feel your terrors and threats, O Law, I immerse my conscience in the wounds, the blood, the death, the resurrection, and the victory of Christ. Beyond Him I do not want to see or hear anything at all.” (Luther)

The first pair of clauses: Why did Christ redeem us from the curse of the Law? "In order that Abraham's blessing (the Gospel) in Christ Jesus might come to the nations (3:14)." Why did God send His Son into the world? "In order that he might redeem those under the Law (the cursed, all men) 4:5." This is clearly objective justification. (Buls) The Jews. (TLSB)

WE – Both Jewish and Gentile believers (cf 3:14). (TLSB)  
Galatians 3:13-14, “<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” <sup>14</sup> 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.”

*full rights of sons.* Lit. “adoption [of a son].” See Ro 8:15, where the “Spirit of sonship” is contrasted with the “spirit of slavery” (cf. Eph 1:5). God takes into his family as fully recognized sons and heirs both Jews (those who had been under law) and Gentiles who believe in Christ. (CSB)

Now the second pair of clauses: In 3:14 it reads "In order that we might receive the promised Holy Spirit (the Gospel) by faith." In 4:5 we read: "In order that we might receive the adoption of sons." These purpose clauses are what we call subjective justification.(Buls)

In 3:10-14 Paul was discussing the awful danger of salvation by works. In 4:1-7 Paul is speaking about passing from the bondage under the Law to the freedom under the Gospel. (Buls)

Now, just one quote from Luther.

Luther: Now since Christ has conquered the Law in His own Person, it necessarily follows that He is God by nature. For except for God no one, neither a man nor an angel, is above the Law. But Christ is above the Law, because He has conquered and strangled it. Therefore He is the Son of God, and God by nature. If you grasp Christ as He is described by Paul here, you will neither go wrong nor be put to shame. Then you will be in a position to judge about all the various styles of life and about the religion and

worship of the whole world. But if this true picture of Christ is removed or even obscured, there follows a sure confusion of everything; for the unspiritual person cannot judge about the Law of God . . . . Then what is the purpose of the Law if it does not justify? The final cause of the obedience of the Law by the righteous is not righteousness in the sight of God, which is received by faith alone, but the peace of the world, gratitude toward God, and a good example by which others are invited to believe the Gospel. (Buls)

“The sonship” is modified by the context (v. 1-3) and thus signifies the status of sons who have advanced from their minority to their majority, to the status of full-grown son who are no longer under guardians and stewards. “Adoption” is not the proper word, for it may apply to a babe, a minor son and heir. (Lenski)

Pass from the condition and spirit of servants to the privileges and filial spirit of sons, in a state not of minority and servitude, but of manhood and freedom. The only sure evidence is connected to our faith in Christ and a hearty reliance on Him for salvation. (CB)

**4:6–7** *Now because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who cries, “Abba, Father.” Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and since [you are] a son, [you are] also an heir through God.* The causal construal of the ὅτι, “because [ὅτι] you are sons,” is the simplest and most natural approach to the syntax as Paul turns to the blessings of sonship, namely, the reception of the Spirit. Some commentators have advocated an alternative translation that reverses the logic: “*That* [ὅτι] you are sons is proved by [understanding ἐξαπέστειλεν to be an ellipsis for ἐμαρτύρησεν ἐξαποστείλας] God’s sending the Spirit of his Son.” Or: “It is clear [understanding δῆλον] that [ὅτι] you are sons, because [understanding another ὅτι] God sent forth . . .” In Rom 8:14–15 Paul grounds the status of sonship in the prior presence of the Spirit. In other words, God creates sons by sending his Spirit. Likewise in Gal 4:29, the Spirit gives birth to the children of God. The causal translation of ὅτι as “because” in 4:6, as advocated here, would seem to ground the experience of the Spirit in the prior sonship. That would appear to contradict the order in Rom 8:14–15, if not also Gal 4:29. Certainly Paul appeals to the Galatians’ prior reception of the Spirit in 3:1–5. Paul expresses the relationship between the Spirit and sonship *both* ways: in 4:6 the Spirit is granted to sons, and in 4:29 and in Rom 8:14–15 the Spirit creates sons. Precisely because the Spirit and sonship are experienced as coterminous, Paul may word the relationship differently depending on the context. The most natural understanding of the syntax in Gal 4:6 with the causal ὅτι (“because”) is preferable. The Galatians, as do all “in Christ,” enjoy the inheritance of sons: God’s powerful Spirit in their lives. (CC)

In 4:4 “God sent forth his Son” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ), and in 4:6 “God sent forth the Spirit of his Son” (ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ). God’s sending of the Son and the Spirit is reminiscent of the sending of divine Wisdom in the Jewish Apocrypha (Wis Sol 9:10, 17). If the Wisdom parallels are any indication, Paul gives the distinct impression that the Son and the Spirit should be understood as divine. Furthermore, even as the Son is a personal being, so also must be the Spirit. Both are experienced simultaneously within the same, saving

work of God. Gordon Fee has called 4:4–6 with its juxtaposition of God, the Son, and the Spirit “one of the great ‘Trinitarian’ passages in the New Testament.” (CC)

The sending of the Son and the Spirit together entails profoundly practical implications. Whereas the rivals are stressing the Law of Moses as the source of the Christian life, Paul is stressing the genuine change that “the Spirit of his Son” (4:6) brings. The Spirit has been poured “into our hearts” (4:6)! This is not some charismatic “second experience.” The experience of the Spirit is part and parcel of being a son, an heir, in Christ. The Spirit renders God and his Son a personal reality. The Christian enjoys a new, changed identity. Christ lives in the believer (2:20). The baptized believer is clothed in Christ (3:27). Those who enjoy the Spirit’s presence no longer stand at a distance from God but are privileged to address God as Father. The Spirit within the believer cries, “Abba, Father” (4:6) as did Jesus himself. The Spirit refashions those who are sons in Christ into the *likeness* of Christ (cf. Rom 8:29)! (CC)

“Abba” (ἄββᾶ) is a Greek transliteration of אבא, the Aramaic vocative for address of a “father,” even as the Greek ὁ πατήρ is likewise a vocative of address of the “Father.” The Aramaic word may initially seem out of place in a letter in Greek to a gentile audience.<sup>98</sup> Aramaic was the language of the Jews in the vicinity of their homeland, while Greek was the language of Paul’s gentile audiences. Paul’s doubled address of the Father in both Aramaic (ἄββᾶ for אבא) and Greek (ὁ πατήρ) is likely another way of expressing that Jews and gentiles in Christ now share the same rights as sons in the same family (thus also Rom 8:15). They are “no longer” slaves (cf. Gal 3:25). (CC)

The divinely enabled address of God as “Father” will be of comfort to those who have suffered under sinful earthly fathers. In his faithfulness to his promises and in his selfless love for his children, the heavenly Father is the model for all fathers. Those who have suffered enjoy a *new* family in Christ! The heavenly Father brought forth children for the purpose of a joyous personal relationship. The pain of broken homes, uncaring parents, and failed relationships all point to the need for a caring parent and, ultimately, for a sound relationship with the heavenly Father. The loving Father will heal the wounds, whatever they may be. (CC)

A venerable scholarly tradition has noted the fact that the Jews generally do not call God “Father” and has concluded that “Abba” must have been Jesus’ own unique, preferred form of address of God (thus Mk 14:36). That scholarly tradition has of late been scrutinized.<sup>101</sup> First, the term “Abba” cannot be attributed with certainty to Jesus and may have originated in the Syrian Christian communities. Second, “Father” or “my Father” was occasionally used as an address and epithet for God in ancient Judaism (4Q372 Frag. 1.16; *T. Job* 33.3, 9; 40.2–3; 47.11; cf. *T. Job* 50.3; not as an address in *T. Job*).<sup>103</sup> Third, the address of God as “Father” did not necessarily originate with Jesus. Even granting these reservations, God is rather frequently called “Father” (πατήρ) throughout the Gospels (forty-five times in Matthew, five times in Mark, seventeen times in Luke, and a hundred eighteen times in John). The frequent use of Father-language in the Gospels is striking when compared with the paucity of the appellation in Judaism. “If the title does not go back to Jesus, why should the writers of the gospels make such use of it?” “Father” as the preferred form of address for God conveys Jesus’ sense of a unique sonship. Mk 14:36’s lone attestation of Jesus’ calling God “Abba” should not be downplayed and should be considered alongside the multiply attested address of God as “Father.”

Furthermore: “That he should invite his disciples to use his word after him was almost certainly an expression of grace on his part.”<sup>107</sup> Believers who have received “adoption as sons” (υιοθεσία, Gal 4:5) participate in the rights of sonship to such an extent that they may address God in the very words of his own Son (αββα ὁ πατήρ, “Abba, Father,” 4:6). (CC)

In many Christian circles, “Abba” is understood as an intimate form of address that is the equivalent of “Daddy.” This popular understanding is unfortunately mistaken. Jesus addresses God as “Abba” in prayer during a rather serious moment in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mk 14:36. Mark interprets Jesus’ Aramaic utterance with the ordinary Greek word for “Father” (ὁ πατήρ) and not “Daddy” (πάπας or πάππας). Paul, like Mark, juxtaposes the Greek equivalent “Father” (ὁ πατήρ) to interpret the Aramaic word. Grammatically, the Aramaic *-a* ending signified not intimacy but rather definiteness. By Jesus’ day, “Abba” had replaced older Hebrew and Aramaic forms as a solemn, responsible address of a father, whether on the lips of an adult or a child. The word may indeed be used with a sense of endearment, but the context would convey that sense and not the word itself. The head of a household was an authority figure who had the right to put a family member to death. Paul’s point in Gal 4:6 is not to express intimacy, but rather status. The presence of the Spirit of God’s Son who cries “Abba” demonstrates that those in Christ are likewise the sons of God. Paul’s comments may have been a response to the rivals’ claims about the identity of the true sons of Abraham. In Rom 8:15–17, on the other hand, in a context not dictated by a conflict situation, Paul describes those rescued from slavery and fear who by means of God’s own Spirit cry out, “Abba, Father.” The address of God as Father is close to the apostle’s heart. Again, Christians enjoy a special relationship with their adoptive Father. Those who call God “Father” in the Lord’s Prayer do so by virtue of a powerful, enabling presence in their lives! (CC)

Paul writes “into our hearts” (Gal 4:6). That the corporate community together cries out, “Father,” attests to the Spirit’s creation of a new family. The centrality of this new family in Paul’s letter is signaled already in 1:4 when Paul called God “*our* Father” twice (1:3–4). Christians are members of *a new household*. The apostle develops the mutual burden-bearing of that close-knit community in 6:1–10. The Galatians are threatening to abandon their Father *and* their family! (CC)

The modern world is obsessed with identity crises. People are constantly seeking to discover their inner selves for self-fulfillment and self-actualization, or they may find their self-worth in their work or achievements. This preoccupation with identity and with the self is an exercise in vanity. God graciously and freely grants the Spirit, who directs the Christian away from a preoccupation with self toward the praise of God as “Abba, Father.” A Christ-centered, God-honoring focus is at the heart of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Such a focus inevitably leads to the service of other people, especially those of the household of faith (6:10). (CC)

Paul summarizes 4:1–6 with 4:7: “therefore [ὥστε] ...” Paul’s usage of a second person verb emphasizes to the Galatians that they share in the privileges of a son. The trouble is that the Galatians are on the verge of losing all that they have gained in Christ. Slavery to the Law and sonship in Christ are mutually exclusive—precisely the opposite of what the rivals are claiming. Nothing more is required of the Galatians beyond what they were when Paul left them (thus 4:12–20). Paul appends “through God” at the end of 4:7 to remind the Galatians that God has



already acted on their behalf. He sent forth his Son and his Spirit, and the Galatians now enjoy a privileged position as his heirs. The very notion that the masters of all (4:1) would want to return to slavery reeks of absurdity, an absurdity to which Paul turns in 4:8–11. (CC)

**4:6** δέ ἐστε (“now ... you are”)—The connective δέ signals a mild contrast with 4:5: the “adoption as sons” (4:5) is “now” a present reality for “you” Galatians. (CC)

τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (“the Spirit of his Son”)—This is the more difficult and thus the more likely reading since “the Spirit of his Son” is an unusual phrase nowhere else employed in the NT (thus likely drawing scribal attention); cf. Rom 8:9 (“the Spirit of Christ”); Phil 1:19 (“the Spirit of Jesus Christ”); 2 Cor 3:17 (“the Spirit of the Lord”). The omission of τοῦ υἱοῦ, “the Son” (leaving just τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ, “his Spirit”) in  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$ , Marcion, and Augustine is likely secondary and associates the Spirit only with the Father. (CC)

εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν (“into our hearts”)—This prepositional phrase is well supported  $\mathfrak{B}^{46}$   $\aleph$  A B C D\* G and also the more difficult reading. The switch to ὑμῶν (“your”) in some manuscripts and translations was likely motivated by a desire to assimilate the pronoun to the verb ἐστε (“you are”) at the beginning of the verse. (CC)

BECAUSE YOU ARE SONS – Through faith (3:26), the Holy Spirit is received (3:2, 14). (TLSB)

Note that in verse 5<sup>a</sup> Paul spoke of mankind in the third person, in 5<sup>b</sup> in the first person plural. In verse 6 he speaks of Christians in the second person plural. In verse 7 he speaks of Christians in the second person singular. (Buls)

"Because" in verse 6 is variously translated "because" or "to prove that you are sons" or "inasmuch as." The word denotes both *cause* and *evidence*. God sends His Spirit into our hearts because Jesus took our place under the Law. God sends His Spirit into our hearts as *evidence* of the fact that we are redeemed. Read Galatians 3:1-5. (Buls)

*Spirit of his Son.* A new “guardian” (v. 2), identified as the “Spirit of God” in Ro 8:9 (see Ro 8:2; Eph 1:13–14). (CSB)

The “Spirit of His Son” prompts the prayer of God’s Son (“Our Father” and so bears witness to the sonship of those who so pray (Mk. 14:36; Rom.8:15). (TLSB)

Note carefully the Trinity in this verse. The Bible always speaks of the Trinity as a *saving* God, in many, many places. Look at Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13. (Buls)

Note that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son. This is one of the proof passages for the *filioque* principle, which means "and from the Son." Look at the Nicene Creed. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into the heart of the repentant sinner to assure that sinner of forgiveness of sins. When that happens that sinner prays: "Abba, Father!" (Buls)

Redemption from condemnation of Law, reception of sonship, and the gift of the Spirit, are a unit. Never separate them. They stand or fall together.

The Spirit Himself testifies to our close relationship with the Father and cries out in prayer to the Father for our needs. We are now heirs entitled to the heavenly inheritance and the benefits of sons and daughters in the Kingdom. (LL)

*calls out.* The Greek for this phrase is a vivid verb expressing deep emotion, often used of an inarticulate cry. In Mt 27:50 it is used of Jesus' final cry. (CSB)

The Spirit is said to utter this cry when He moves us to utter it. The fact that He is in our hearts is the result of our sonship, and His presence makes this cry possible. (Lenski) God by His Spirit has given you a filial temper, and taught you to use the language not of servants, but of sons. (CB)

*Abba, Father.* Expressive of an especially close relationship to God (see also NIV text note). (CSB)

Aram for "papa," an address of special intimacy not typically found in Judaism. (TLSB)

Paul's first Scriptural argument about justification by faith is by experience, of course, not apart from the means of grace. Faith is never a religious, charismatic, subjective experience apart from the Word of God and the atonement. (Buls)

But God *does* give the Christian experiential evidence. What is the evidence? The Holy Spirit praying in the heart of the believer. And the greatest prayers are like those of Jesus: "Abba, Father." True prayer proves that there is saving faith. Saving faith proves that the individual is a son of God, a free man, and an heir of God and of Christ. (Buls)

Abba is an ancient Palestinian Aramaic baby talk meaning, "Dear Daddy." The rabbinic teachers of Israel used to say that when a child was weaned it began to say "Abba" and "Imma," words which exactly correspond to "Daddy" and "Mommy." Thus abba derives from an intimate family relationship. It is a young child's word, though there is evidence that it continued to be used by adult sons and daughter, as "Daddy" and "Papa" are used today. The only use of this Aramaic word in the Greek NT is in Mark 14:36 when Jesus prayed to God in Gethsemane as "Abba Father." The presence of an Aramaic word in the NT Greek text is in itself rather unique. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

Exhaustive research by biblical scholars has demonstrated that in all the huge literature of ancient Judaism there is not one instance of God being addressed in prayer with the word abba. The word abba was too personal, too familiar and intimate to be appropriate. The Lord was high and lifted up, the incomparable One. He was to be approached with reverence and awe. To call him "Daddy" was unthinkable

blasphemy. Yet Jesus prayed like this all the time. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

That Jesus gave Christians the right to address God as abba is usually argued from the wording of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-2). We need to be reminded periodically that the privilege of speaking with God so intimately was not given to even the greatest OT saints. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

Abba represents the essentials of the new relationship with God which Jesus offered men and women who believe on His name. From the Father's side abba implies many things: (1) His mercy, compassion and love for the child; (2) His personal interest in the child and consistent concern for its good; (3) His willingness to provide for the needs of and given protection to the child; and (4) the use of His mature knowledge, judgment and wisdom in guiding and caring for the child. (The God Who Hears – W. Bingham Hunter)

The thought of the apostle is that we sons who are now in full possession of all that we have in the Son and in the Spirit of the Son direct our "Abba Father" to God in our fullness of sonship. (Lenski)

Romans 8:15-16, <sup>15</sup> "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

In every temptation and weakness, therefore, just cling to Christ and sigh! He gives you the Holy Spirit, who cries: "Abba! Father!" Then the Father says: "I do not hear anything in the whole world except this single sigh, which is such a loud cry in My ears that it fills heaven and earth and drowns out all the cries of everything else." (Luther)

**4:7** εἶ (singular "you are")—The change from the plural verb ἐστε, "you are," in 4:6 to this singular verb (and singular nouns) in 4:7 is an instance of *orati variata* in accord with Greek idiom. Paul switches back to the plural "you" in 4:8–11.

εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος ("since [you are] a son, [you are] also an heir")—The δέ (literally, "and"; left untranslated) is continuative. Although all conditional sentences that express a real state of affairs are first class conditionals, not all first class conditionals express reality. This first class conditional sentence does.

διὰ θεοῦ ("through God")—This reading is strongly supported by  $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$   $\aleph^*$  A B C\*, but  $\aleph^c$  C<sup>c</sup> D K P Textus Receptus have θεοῦ διὰ Χριστοῦ ("of God through Christ"). The variants διὰ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ("through God in Christ Jesus"), μὲν θεοῦ συγκληρονόμος δὲ Χριστοῦ ("fellow heir of God and of Christ"), θεοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ("of God through Jesus Christ"), διὰ θεόν ("because of/on account of God"), and θεοῦ ("of God") are all more weakly supported. These scribal variations are, no doubt, a reaction to the unusual notion of God as a mediating figure ("through"), a role normally ascribed to Christ (with God as the source or origin). διὰ θεόν ("because of/on account of God") in G and 1881 (a fourteenth-century miniscule) appears to be a scribal error with respect to the last letter (ν in place of υ). This reading also removes the perceived difficulty of God as a mediating figure. διὰ θεοῦ ("through God") occurs only here in the NT, but διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ ("through Jesus Christ and God") in 1:1 is a close

parallel. See also the phrase “through the will of God” (διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ), which is unique to the Pauline corpus (Rom 15:32; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:5; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1). (CC)

SO YOU – Continuing to address the Galatians directly in the second person, Paul even switches to the singular pronoun to assure each and every Galatian individually of the blessings brought by the Savior sent at God’s good time. (PBC)  
Singular personal. By God’s grace, each person can regard himself or herself as an heir to all spiritual blessings. (TLSB)

Now comes the grand conclusion in the form of two fact conditions. (Buls)

"Therefore" in view of everything that's been said since Galatians 3:6 where Paul began by discussing the faith of Abraham and thus introduced the Scriptural arguments about justification by faith. Note that "you" is second person singular. "No longer a slave but a son" which means "you are no longer under the bondage and condemnation of the Law but you are free from sin, death, and the devil because Christ, your Substitute, suffered in your stead." (Buls)

But more than that. A second conditional sentence which also goes back at least to 3:29: "If you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." The last part of 4:7 is saying that the free person, the believer (see John 8:36) is an heir of everlasting life through the God who redeemed him. (Buls)

Luther: The Holy Spirit was sent first in a manifest and visible form, Acts 2:3. This was the first sending forth of the Holy Spirit; it was necessary in the primitive church, which had to be established with visible signs on account of the unbelievers, as Paul testifies. 1 Corinthians 14:22: 'Tongues are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers.' But later on, when the church had been gathered and confirmed by these signs, it was not necessary for this visible sending forth of the Holy Spirit to continue. The second sending is that by which the Holy Spirit, through the Word, is sent into the hearts of believers, as is said here: 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.' This happens with a visible form, namely, when through the spoken Word we receive fire and light, by which we are made new and different, and by which a new judgment, new sensations, and new drives arise in us . . . . Let everyone accustom himself, therefore, to believe for a certainty that he is in a state of grace and that his person with its works is pleasing to God . . . . Therefore we should strive daily to move more and more from uncertainty; and we should make an effort to wipe out completely that wicked idea which has consumed the entire world, namely that a person does not know whether they are in a state of grace. For if we are in doubt about our being in a state of grace and about our being pleasing to God for the sake of Christ, we are denying that Christ has redeemed us and completely denying all His benefits . . . . The Holy Spirit's cry in us vastly exceeds, and breaks through, the powerful and horrible cries of the Law, sin, death, and the devil. It penetrates the clouds and heaven, and it reaches all the way to the ears of God . . . . In deep terrors and conflicts of conscience we do indeed take hold of Christ and believe that He is our Savior. . . . And this is our foundation: The Gospel commands us to look, not at our own good deeds or perfection but at God Himself as

His promises, and at Christ Himself, the Mediator. By contrast the pope commands us to look, not at God as He promises, not at Christ our High Priest, but at our own works and merits . . . . And this is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from our selves and places us outside ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive. . . . For in the matter of justification I must be ignorant of the divine Law and not permit it to rule in any way over my conscience . . . . Therefore we come to these eternal goods -- the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and eternal life -- not actively but passively. Nothing whatever interferes here; faith alone takes hold of the offered promise. (Buls)

**NO LONGER A SLAVE BUT A SON** – This goes back to verse 1 that shows this person has attained his majority who possesses and enjoys the full benefits of an heir. (Lenski)

As non-Jews, the Gentile Galatians never were under the specific Mosaic Law. But they too had been freed from a tremendous burden of legal requirements – in their case, one imposed by their own former false ideas of how they needed to serve their pagan idols and “non-gods.” (PBC)

**SINCE ...ARE A SON... ALSO AN HEIR** – Whoever is a son must be an heir as well. For merely by being born he deserves to be an heir. No work and no merit brings him the inheritance, but only his birth. Thus he obtains the inheritance in a purely passive, not in an active way; that is, just his being born, not his producing or working or worrying, makes him an heir. He does not do anything toward his being born but merely lets it happen. Therefore we come to these eternal goods—the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and eternal life—not actively but passively. Nothing whatever interferes here; faith alone takes hold of the offered promise. (Luther)

**GOD HAS MADE** – This is due entirely to God. (Lenski)

**4:1–7** The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children, redeemed by Jesus Christ and made full heirs of the promise to Abraham. The Spirit never derides God’s Son or spiritual matters (1Co 12:3). Christ earned for us the right to call God “our Father,” a prayer taught only by the Spirit. • Dear Father, in confidence and boldness I bring my needs before You. Hear me for the sake of Jesus alone. Amen. (TLSB)

**GOSPEL – Luke 8:26-39**

**<sup>26</sup> They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. <sup>27</sup> When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. <sup>28</sup> When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” <sup>29</sup> For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he**

was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.<sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him, **“What is your name?”** **“Legion,”** he replied, because many demons had gone into him.<sup>31</sup> And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.<sup>32</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission.<sup>33</sup> When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.<sup>34</sup> When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside,<sup>35</sup> and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.<sup>36</sup> Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.<sup>37</sup> Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.<sup>38</sup> The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying,<sup>39</sup> **“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.”** So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Luke follows the calming of the storm with the second of Jesus’ mighty acts that come after the parable of the sower. For Jesus’ disciples this is reinforcing the pattern of Jesus’ ministry of teaching and miracles—the pattern of ministry they themselves will soon be sent to perform (9:1–6; 10:1–20). The hearer recalls that Jesus’ sermon in Nazareth (4:16–30) was followed by an exorcism (4:33–37), and a similar sequence exists here. Both exorcisms begin with the demon addressing the same question to Jesus, “What is there to us/me and to you?” (4:34: τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί; 8:28: τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί). Both include remarkable confessions of who Jesus is (4:34: “the Holy One of God”; 8:28: “Son of God the Most High”). Both show that Jesus releases those who are in bondage to the demonic forces. In both, the crowds respond in amazement at the power of Jesus’ word over the demons (4:36–37; 8:34–37). The difference between the two exorcism accounts is that this one includes the response of the one freed from demon possession. This response must be a focus of the interpretation of this miracle, especially in light of the context of the parable of the sower. (CC p. 364)

Certainly there are details in the miracle that may sound strange to the ears of a modern hearer who has never encountered a person possessed by demons: the nakedness, the chains, the madness, the abyss, and the destruction of the pigs. But for the first-century hearer, and particularly a catechumen in the infancy of the church, this miracle of Jesus would further confirm that in Jesus, God is present working *already now* his mighty acts of salvation. Ever since the Nazareth sermon, the hearer would be alert for clues that Jesus’ prophecy about his own messianic deeds was coming true. This miracle is such an indication—perhaps more. It is the bringing of salvation (8:36) even to the unclean Gentiles. (CC p. 365)

**8:26** *region of the Gerasenes.* The Gospels describe the location of this event in two ways: (1) the region of the Gerasenes (see note on Mk 5:1); (2) the region of the Gadarenes (see note on Mt 8:28). Some manuscripts of Matthew, Mark and Luke read “Gergesenes” (see NIV text note here), but this spelling may have been introduced in an attempt to resolve the differences. (CSB)

Cf. Matt. 8, 28-34; Mark 5, 1-20. Luke's description is graphic: They sailed down from the deep sea to the land. There was not the faintest indication of the recent tempest, and they had no difficulty about putting in near the shore. The country where they landed belonged to a strip of Gaulanitis, which was variously called the country of the Gadarenes or the Gerasenes, Gadara being a town farther inland, and Gerasa, or Gergesa, being situated near the Sea of Galilee. The strip of the country where the disciples cast anchor was comparatively wild and uninhabited, the hilly section just east of the lake, opposite Galilee. (Kretzmann)

ACROSS THE LAKE FROM GALILEE – ἀντιπέρα τῆς Γαλιλαίας—Even though this episode takes place “opposite Galilee” and therefore outside of Galilee, Luke takes pains to describe its relation to Galilee. This could be a subtle indication of Jesus’ mission to pagans, since this was non-Jewish territory, specifically the loose federation of Hellenistic city-states called the Decapolis (cf. Mk 5:20). (CC p. 362)

**8:27-29** Salvation and healing through the word of Jesus create faith in this demoniac; he is made a disciple. But what is extraordinary about this new disciple/catechumen is that he was once possessed by unclean spirits, *and* that he was an unclean Gentile from outside Israel (“opposite Galilee” [8:26]). No chain or human guard was as strong as Satan’s grasp. The demon forced him into “deserted places” (8:29), which were considered the haunts of evil spirits, and into the tombs (8:27), probably caves or clefts used as burial places. This man therefore is the epitome of Gentiles doomed to death, caught in the futility of their pagan worship (cf. Acts 14:16), which really is the worship of demons (1 Cor 10:20). The man’s rescue by Jesus foreshadows the Gentile mission in Acts. God *will* raise up from stones children to Abraham—by faith. Jesus goes to the most unclean of the unclean and cleanses. God can overcome any obstacle to create a hearer and doer of the Word. Look at the change that takes place in the demoniac through his conversion! Formerly he was driven into the abodes of demons, but now he is found sitting at Jesus’ feet. No longer chained, he is in his right mind. “The demons’ prisoner had been freed from their oppression” (cf. 4:18). (CC pp. 365-366)

**8:27** *demon-possessed man.* See note on 4:33. Matthew (8:28) refers to two demon-possessed men, but Mark (5:2) and Luke probably mention only the one who was prominent and did the talking. (CSB)

Social isolation and an attraction to burial sites were symptoms of this man’s demon possession. (TLSB)

δαίμονια—Luke describes the man in two slightly different ways: he was possessed by demons (8:27) and by an unclean spirit (8:29; τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ; cf. Mk 5:2).

This second description provides the narrative with symmetry when the unclean spirit enters into unclean animals (swine). (CC p. 362)

NOT WORN CLOTHES – καὶ χρόνῳ ἰκανῶ—The textual evidence is stronger for this word order, which places this phrase with οὐκ ἐνεδύσατο ἱμάτιον instead of ἔχων δαιμόνια: “for a considerable time he had not been wearing clothes.” (CC p. 362)

*tombs.* An isolated burial ground avoided by most people (but see note on Mk 5:3). (CSB)

ἐν τοῖς μνήμασιν—The man with the unclean spirit lived among the tombs, which, in harmony with the OT, the Jews considered to be unclean. It is appropriate for the unclean spirit (8:29) and the unclean animals (swine [8:32]) to dwell in an unclean place. See Num 19:11, 14, 16; Ezek 39:11–15. (CC p. 362)

He would also not remain in a house, but preferred to live in the tombs which were hewn into the rock on the lake shore. He had almost been stripped of the attributes of a human being, and rather resembled a wild beast in appearance and habits. (Kretzmann)

**8:28** *Son of the Most High God.* Cf. 1:32; 4:34. The title “Most High God” was commonly used by Gentiles (see Ge 14:19 and note; Ac 16:17); its use here perhaps indicates that this man was not a Jew (but see note on Mk 1:24). (CSB)

Demons often recognized Jesus’ divinity before humans did. Fully aware of Jesus’ authority, the demons pleaded for mercy. (TLSB)

The identity of Jesus is the main issue in this section of Luke (cf. 8:25). Luke continues to show his hearers that the demons know what human observers do not yet understand. A demon has already announced that Jesus is the “Holy One of God” (4:34), but now a demon declares that he is “Son of God the Most High” (8:28), the designation of Jesus first announced to Mary by the angel at the annunciation (1:32, 35). In fact, the hearer may also recall that John the Baptist was a “prophet of the Most High” (1:76) and that those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus by loving their enemies, doing good, and lending expecting nothing in return will be “sons of the Highest” (6:35). (CC p. 366)

That was the demon, one of their number speaking. The devil knows who Jesus of Nazareth is, was aware of it during the entire lifetime of Jesus, and tried everything in his power to frustrate the work of the Lord. If Christ had been a mere man, the devil could easily have conquered him. But He was the Son of the most high God, and therefore Himself true God from eternity. He had the power, if He so chose, to let the last terrible judgment upon the devils begin at any time, to chain them in the abyss of darkness and keep them there. The devil and his angels have been condemned by God, they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day, Jude, v. 6. The very fact that they are excluded from the bliss of heaven is



for them a species of hell torture. In the mean time, however, and especially during these last days of the world, the devil is loosed for a little season, Rev. 20:3. Until the Day of Judgment Satan and his demons still have permission to move here on earth and to torment God's creatures. But their chains are upon them. And on the Day of Judgment they will enter their eternal prison and feel the tortures of the fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. 25:41. (Kretzmann)

**DON'T TORTURE ME – μή με βασάνισις**—The demon pleads with Jesus not yet to begin the eternal torture that is the eschatological destiny of the devil and his minions according to Rev 14:10; 20:10, where βασανίζω occurs again; this is its only occurrence in Luke-Acts. (CC p. 362)

No sooner, however, did he see Jesus than he screamed aloud and threw himself down at His feet and begged with a loud voice that Jesus should not torment him. (kretzmann)

**8:29 FOR – γάρ**—This suggests that 8:29 be taken as parenthetical. The man's condition is described in a literary "flashback." (CC p. 362)

**JESUS HAD COMMANDED – παρήγγειλεν**—This aorist form refers to a "valid command whose execution is taken for granted." It describes a past specific utterance of an individual. The imperfect form παρήγγελλεν could signal the speaking of a command not yet accomplished or a focus on the contents of the speech. (CC p. 362)

Besides social isolation and a preoccupation with graveyards, superhuman strength was another characteristic of demoniacs. (TLSB)

For Jesus was about to command (conative imperfect) that the unclean spirit should come out of the man, hence the cry of fear. The disease was not permanently and continually of a violent nature, but rather took hold of this victim with intermittent spells of acute mania, followed by intervals of comparative quiet and sensibility. But when the devils seized him in their powerful grip, all efforts at keeping him under guard were fruitless. People had tried to keep him bound and in subjection by means of fetters and chains on hands and feet, but these were like strips of gossamer in the hands of the demoniac. At such times the poor victim was driven into the deserts, and no one could hold him. (Kretzmann)

**HAD SEIZED – συνηρπάκει**—"Seizing by violence. (CC p. 362)

**SEIZED...BOUND...WITH CHAINS – συνηρπάκει ... έδεσμεύετο ... ήλαύνετο**—These are iterative imperfects that suggest repeated action in the past, at a time prior to the event (Jesus' order) mentioned in the context. (CC p. 362)

**8:30 *What is your name?*** Jesus asked the man his name, but it was the demons who replied, thus showing they were in control. (CSB)

τί σοι ὄνομά ἐστιν ... — This is the only place in the synoptics where Jesus carries on a conversation with a demon. (CC p. 362)

Since the man appeared to have a rational interval, Jesus asked him his name. The poor man being the victim, not only of one or of a few devils, answered accordingly that his name was Legion, thousands of demons having taken possession of him. But the devils were growing restive, knowing that their time for torturing this man was over. (Kretzmann)

*Legion.* See note on Mk 5:9. (CSB)

λεγιών—A Roman legion consisted of three thousand to six thousand foot soldiers with cavalry. J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 414, notes that this Latin term “reflects the military might of the Roman occupying forces and perhaps the cruelty of their practices.” (CC p. 363)

*him.* The demon-possessed man. (TLSB)

**8:31** *Abyss.* A place of confinement for evil spirits and for Satan (see note on Rev 9:1). (CSB)

Note from Rev. 9:1: Conceived of as the subterranean abode of demonic hordes (see 20:1; Lk 8:31). The Greek word means “very deep” or “bottomless,” and is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) to translate the Hebrew word for the primeval deep (see Ge 1:2; 7:11; Pr 8:28). Seven of the nine NT references are in Revelation.

Cast into hell. As numerous and powerful as these demons were, they knew Jesus had dominion over them and so again begged not to be cast into hell. (TLSB)

εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον—The “abyss” (a transliteration) is described in various ways in Rev 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7, 17:8; 20:1, 3. It is pictured as a place of destruction, torment, and utter despair, the place where Satan dwells. It is the place of destiny for these demons. Rom 10:7 is the only additional verse where it occurs. The suggestion that the raging Sea of Galilee in Lk 8:22–25 represents the demonic forces of evil is supported by the comments of J. Fitzmyer, *Luke I–IX*, 739:

It is used often in the LXX to translate Hebrew *tehom*, which designated in OT cosmology the “watery deep,” or cosmic sea under the earth, the symbol of chaos and disorder conquered by the creator. Aware that this was their final destination, the demons now beg not to be sent there yet. Meanwhile, ... they ... wander the earth, seeking an abode in desert places, tombs, or even in demented persons. Hence they (violently) resist ejection and even seek to return to garnished abodes ([Luke 11:24–26](#)). Here they even request to be sent into pigs, unclean animals that will receive them. (CC p. 363)

**8:32** *pigs.* Pigs were unclean to Jews, and eating them was forbidden (Lev 11:7–8), but this was the Decapolis, a predominantly Gentile territory. (CSB)

The presence of these ceremonially unclean animals makes it likely that this was Gentile territory. Cf Dt 14:8; see note, Mt 8:31. (TLSB)

*he gave them permission.* See note on Mt 8:32. (CSB)

ἀγγέλη χοίρων ἱκανῶν—Mark (5:13) tells us there were about two thousand pigs. The unclean swine are more appropriate hosts for unclean spirits than clean animals would be, but certainly even when swine are possessed, evil has corrupted God's good creation. J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 411, summarizes the three main views as to what happened when the demons entered the pigs:

(i) The pigs go to the abyss after all, because they go into the sea: Jesus has got the better of them. ... (ii) The demons take their revenge on Jesus by ensuring that he will be unpopular with the residents of Gerasa. ... (iii) The demons unleash the same destructive powers upon the pigs that have up to that point brought misery to the possessed man. Beyond the destruction of the pigs we lose sight of the demons.

Each of these has an element of truth, but the greatest significance of the incident is that the eschatological victory over Satan is proleptically present in Jesus; this scene anticipates Rev 20:3, 10. (CC p. 363)

**8:33 RUSHED DOWN THE STEEP BANK** – The demons drop out of sight and are not mentioned again. The hearer may wonder what happened to them after the swine drowned. While the narrative provides no answer to that question, several observations may be offered. First, and most striking, is the *mercy* of Jesus. He takes no pleasure in prematurely torturing the demons (cf. Ezek 18:32; Jn 3:17). Even though they are beyond redemption, Jesus still shows them compassion by allowing their request. (CC p. 366)

Second, the fate of the *unclean* spirit(s) (Lk 8:29) now in *unclean* animals is an *unclean* death: they are literally “choked” (ἀποπνίγω). This word occurs only one other time in the NT: in the parable of the sower, the thorns choke some seed (8:7). *Thus the fate of the swine illustrates the fate of hearers of the Gospel who let worldly cares choke their faith.* (CC p. 366)

Finally, the wording of 8:33, “the herd rushed down the precipice,” recalls 4:29, where the Nazareth crowd intended to “throw [Jesus] over the precipice.” The suicidal stampede of swine is similar to the hometown crowd that rejected Jesus. To reject Jesus is to reject life and choose death. The demonic impulse behind such rejection may be seen in the parable of the sower, where in the first scenario *the devil* robs the hearers of salvation (8:12). (CC p. 366)

From a Jewish perspective, this was a fitting end for both the unclean spirits and the defiling animals. (TLSB)

**8:34 RAN OFF AND REPORTED** – These men were not merely reporting the loss of the pigs to their owners, but also recounting an amazing show of divine power. (TLSB)

**8:35 WENT OUT TO SEE** – And the people, undoubtedly with some resentment, went out to the spot to see what had happened. They came to Jesus, not in a gentle, receptive, but in an aggressive mood. (Kretzmann)

**SITTING AT JESUS' FEET** – παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ—In the language of Jewish rabbis, to sit at the feet of someone is to listen to his teaching as a student or disciple. To the early church, the picture here might call to mind catechetical instruction. Cf. Mary, who sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to his word (Lk 10:39). Contrast the defeated enemies of the seated Messiah who are placed under his feet in Ps 110:1, quoted in Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Heb 1:13. (CC p. 363)

Now free of his possession, the man sits in the posture of a disciple. Clothed, rational, and enjoying the company of other people, this fellow has been fully restored. (TLSB)

**8:36 HAD BEEN CURED** – ἐσώθη—The man released from demon possession is brought under God's reign of grace in Jesus. He is spiritually healed, or saved. Here, healing and cleansing from the unclean spirit (Lk 8:29) and salvation are all part of Jesus' liberation. (CC p. 363)

They found many things which should have set them to thinking and praising God. He that formerly roamed over the country without rest was now quietly sitting at the feet of Jesus; he that formerly was plagued with the devils was now freed from that scourge; he that had scorned shame and clothing was now fully dressed; he that had been a raving maniac was in full possession of rational powers of thinking and speaking. (Kretzmann)

**8:37 ASKED JESUS TO LEAVE** – ἠρώτησεν αὐτὸν ... ἀπελθεῖν ἀπ' αὐτῶν—Rejection (and reception [8:35, 38, 39]) of Jesus is also the mixed response when the Gospel goes to the Gentiles (cf. 8:4–15). (CC pp. 363-364)

—Jesus “turned away” to depart and return whence he had come; in the process, he was interrupted by the former demoniac. Cf. 8:40, where the same verb indicates that Jesus did return. (CC p. 364)

The reaction of the townspeople is understandable on two counts. First, they had just heard about the destruction of an entire herd of pigs, which represented a huge economic loss. Second, Jesus' show of divine power frightened them. (TLSB)

**8:38 SENT HIM AWAY** – Apparently, Jesus wanted him to witness to his hometown. There, his testimony would be most persuasive among those who knew him. (TLSB)

**8:39 Return home and tell how much God has done for you.** Although the man wanted to follow Jesus, he was directed to make the miracle known in his own native territory.

There was no danger here of interference with Jesus' ministry (see note on Mk 5:19). (CSB)

Luke subtly equates Jesus' miracle with something God has done. Cf 17:15–16, where the healed leper praises God by worshiping at Jesus' feet.

Further reinforcing this identification of Jesus, Luke concludes this passage with a startling affirmation that Jesus is God. Jesus tells the healed man to narrate “as many things as *God* has done for you” (ὅσα σοι ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός; 8:39), and then the demoniac went to his town proclaiming “as many things as *Jesus* had done for him” (ὅσα ἐποίησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς; 8:39). What God does and what Jesus does are one and the same. God acts through Jesus; Jesus is the presence of God. This is also why the demoniac desires to continue to remain with Jesus *in his presence* by sitting at his feet and begging to be with him (εἶναι σὺν αὐτῷ; 8:38). It is the *presence of Jesus* that wields such power over demons. But this also frightens other people and causes them to reject him. Ironically, it is not what the people *hear* (the word of Jesus), as in Nazareth, but what the people *see* (the miracle) that produces fear and rejection. The presence of Jesus, who is identified by the demon as “Son of God the Most High,” is met with faith by some and with rejection by others—the two reactions explained by the parable of the sower. (CC pp. 366-367)

The healed demoniac knows who Jesus is from the perspective of saving faith and goes throughout his home territory to proclaim what Jesus has done. Jesus, likewise, returns to his home territory, Galilee, to continue his preaching and healing. Soon, the Twelve and the seventy(-two) will be sent to do the same. Through this preaching of the Word, the demons are vanquished, as Jesus will remark to the seventy(-two) when he tells them that through their preaching, “I was watching Satan falling like lightning from heaven” (10:18). Preaching the Word of Jesus—the message of the kingdom—conquers the demons. Through this activity, the kingdom is coming. The final banishment and eternal torture of the demons is yet to come (see textual note on 8:28). But they are in retreat. The preaching of the Word sends them from where they ought not be—inhabiting man, created to be son of God (3:38)—into temporary refuge in places more appropriate: unclean swine and chaotic water (see comments on 8:22–25). Let the seed take root in the hearer, producing confident faith: Jesus is the one sent from God to bring salvation to all people, and when the church proclaims his words and his deeds, the “Son of God the Most High” (8:28) rolls back the reign of demons and ushers in God's kingdom. (CC p.367)

ὑπόστρεφε— Just as Jesus was to return to Galilee to preach the Gospel (8:37, 40), so this man is to return to his home to do the same thing. Evangelism begins at home (Acts 1:8). (CC p. 364)

διηγού— Luke termed a Gospel report as a “narrative” (διήγησις; 1:1). Here is the verb form, “narrate.” The demoniac is to narrate the mighty deeds of Jesus; he is an evangelist! (CC p. 364)

ALL OVER TOWN – πόλις—Gerasa officially is a πόλις, a city-state, with territory (farms and hamlets) surrounding it under its administration. (CC p. 364)

The man, following the order of Christ, promptly became a missionary throughout the city and region, declaring what Jesus had done for him. His faith would not permit him to remain silent; he must needs declare the great works of God. Every Christian has received such wonderful gifts of God in and through Christ, though perhaps not in the body, yet surely in the soul. And it behooves every one that loves the Lord Jesus to speak of the great things which God has done for him, as far as his personal influence reaches. (Kretzmann)

**8:26–39** Luke’s lengthiest report of an exorcism is also his most dramatic: in the Gerasene region, Jesus frees a deranged and menacing demoniac. The magnitude of this man’s suffering leads some—especially the pious—to dread evil spirits and wonder what prevents any of us from being the object of their attacks. Though we do well to take note that demons exist, we may also trust in Jesus, whose resurrection has disarmed the forces of sin, death, and even Satan. • “The pow’rs of death have done their worst, But Christ their legions hath dispersed. Let shouts of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!” Amen. (*LSB* 464:2). (TLSB)