**BCM Bible Study – April 5-6, 2023**

**Galatians 3:23-4:20: The Law and Heirs with Christ**

Paul finishes describing the purpose of the law and the role it played before Christ came. He then discusses our identity as sons and heirs, and what it means for our relationship to the law. Finished with his logical argument describing the purpose of the law and our relationship to it, Paul makes an emotional appeal to the Galatians to reject this idea that we are still being kept under guard by the law.

**Read Galatians 3:23-25**

* Who does “we” refer to here? (Probably refers to the Jews, but could include the Galatians as well)
* **Read Rom 7:12.** Look at the words used to describe the purpose of the law in verses 22 and 23 (confine/imprison and guard/protect). Did God give the law to imprison his people?
  + What might the relationship of a guardian/tutor mean? How does this affect the way we view the law? (Note: This word for guardian or tutor here refers to, usually, a slave tasked with caring for and disciplining the children.)
  + Now that faith has come, does the law imprison or protect us?
* Did Abraham have faith? Was it the faith that Paul refers to here?

**Read Galatians 3:26-4:7**

* Why does Paul say here a child does not differ from a slave? What is the significance of the similarity in this analogy?
* What is the significance of receiving the adoption as sons? What does sonship here imply?
  + (Note: Adoption in the ancient world includes receiving the legal rights, privileges, and status of the family. “Believers, whether male or female, attain the status reserved in the ancient world for the one specially chosen son.” We all enjoy full status as God’s people. )
  + **Read Exodus 4:22** What is the significance of being Abraham’s seed?
  + What does this role as son and heir say about how we should view other Christians? Do you view other Christians as fellow sons?
  + Is status a major concern for us today? Where have you seen it?
  + Considering the idea of “Super Christians”, do you ever struggle with comparison to other Christians?
* Are we still children? What is the guardian or steward Paul refers to?
  + “Israel (and people in general) under the law is like a child who has not yet received the expected inheritance (Moo).”
  + Since we are no longer children, what does this mean for us today? What does this look like practically?
* In verse 3, the phrase “elements of the world” could be read as “elementary principles or truths.” How does this change your understanding of this verse?
* **Read Romans 8:14-17**
  + What is the Holy Spirit’s role in us?
  + It is the Spirit put inside us crying out “Abba, Father” in verse 6. What is the significance of that?

**Read Galatians 4:8-20**

This section is an emotional appeal to his brothers in Christ to put away this false gospel. There is a lot of context we will miss since this is a personal appeal to the Galatians to remember his time with them. Paul here expresses his dismay at how the Galatians have chosen slavery again. After the section detailing what being a son means, why would they want to go back to slavery?

* In verse 9 we see a reference to the same “elements” as verse 3. Paul refers to these things of the world as miserable and questions why someone would choose to put themselves in bondage to them.
  + Where are you still living in bondage within your life? What elements of the world, whether good or bad, hold more power over your life than Jesus?
* How does Paul appeal to the Galatians? What does he use to persuade them here to listen to him and not the “agitators” preaching the false gospel?
* Why might this gospel (following Jesus plus law) have been persuasive to the Galatians? Is there something alluring about it for us today?
  + For examples of what they may have considered, think about stories of Abraham, such as God calling him to sacrifice Isaac. Was Abraham operating off of faith here or was he simply following God’s commandment/law?
* What does Paul mean when he says “Become like me”? (He is no longer under the law)
* **Read 1 Corinthians 9:20-23.** What does Paul mean when he says he became like the Galatians?
* Note: The physical infirmity referred to here may be an eye problem, which is why Paul says the Galatians would have gouged out their own eyes to give them to him. He wants to make a point of the love they showed to him when he came before.
* Why shouldn’t the Galatians simply add the law onto their beliefs about faith in Jesus? (verse 17)
* Paul finishes with a reminder of how he loves the Galatians. Why is this reminder important?
  + Through this letter, Paul has been discipling the Galatians. What can we learn from Paul about how discipleship works?