

The Privilege of the Gospel (Session 3)

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[0 : 00] Okay, so this evening's reading comes from Galatians 3, verse 26 to 4, verse 7.

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave.

Although he owns the whole estate, the heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

But when the sad time had finally come, when the sad time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Because you are his sons, God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, the spirit who calls out, Abba, Father, so you are no longer a slave, but God's child.

[1 : 36] And since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. Amen. Amen. This is the world of front of Allah. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. How is everyone doing? Okay.

Let me see if we can adjust the sound a little bit. It tends to be quite loud, so yeah, okay. All right.

Let's try that again. How is everyone doing? All right.

Good. Well, I hope the dinner, I heard the dinner was good, but I hope that they will not be putting you to sleep. Because if there's anything, I will blame you on the dinner, I guess.

But can I just invite you now to pray with me? And we are going to now just come before God and ask Him to speak to us. Father, we...

[2 : 38] Father, we grasp so little of what it means to be your children. And this passage, O Lord, that we are looking at tonight, O Lord, is so rich. Father, I just feel so incapable to actually just to show forth its gem and its treasures.

But I do pray, O Lord, if somehow tonight is just for us to have a journey into your heart, to see who you are as our Father in Christ, that we may somehow take a glimpse of what it means then, for us to live in that story of you redeeming us so that we may be your children.

We ask this in Jesus' name. So, there's a man that I met about last year.

I mean, as I told you, I started a Mandarin church this year. I started meeting weekly. So, my ears perked up whenever I hear people who are from Chinese churches.

So, that was a part of the preparation for it. I met this basically non-Christian guy. He's very successful from all kinds of ways. I mean, he has a family, he has a kid, and he is actually holding a pretty high-ranking job in the technical company.

[3 : 57] We used to be classmates together. And so, when I interviewed him, I just want to ask him his views about Christianity and all that. And at the end of the chat that we had, right, I asked him a question.

And I asked him this question, which he went quite silent, actually. This is quite interesting. I asked him this simple question, which is, what do you think is the meaning of life? And he said some words I can never forget.

He said, no, this is a guy who got it all together, put well, put together. And somehow, at the moment, when I asked him, what's the meaning of life? He said three words. You've got me.

Which means he couldn't tell me what's the meaning of life. And I wondered what he meant. I

mean, maybe he means that he's subscribed to non-ism, which means there's no meaning in life.

I don't know what he really means. But in my head, as I imagine what he means, is that he probably played quite a lot of different roles in his life, right? In the company, he's a technical director. But at home, he's a father.

[4 : 59] And he's also a husband to his wife. And he's looking at all these different roles. He seems to be doing well in all these roles. But I suspect that when he says, I don't know what the meaning of life, is that he's actually something like this, which is he says that life seems to be very fragmentary.

That is that I'm playing all these different roles in my life, right? But yet, it seems that there's no unifying principle or unifying thing that actually helps me to underline why I'm doing all these things I'm doing.

Why do I need to be a good technical director? Why do I actually need to be a good father? Why do I need a good husband? What's the meaning in all this? And I wonder whether you feel that way when you think about the different roles that you play in your life.

And I think that today, by Melissa, it's going to help us to actually think about this. It's going to help us to think about this. But what I'm really talking about, I think, to be fair, is actually not really a meaning of life per se.

But I think it's actually very close to something else that's close to that, which we tend to ask in this age, which is really a question of identity. What is, who am I?

[6 : 17] Right? At the heart of it, it's who am I? He's asking, am I a technical director? Am I a husband? Am I a father? Who am I? I don't know who am I primarily. That informs who, what's the meaning of my life.

I think that's what he's saying. And for us, I think that if I struggle in performing all the different roles in my life, I don't know, just even think deeper about it, right?

Actually, even for myself, I just talked to a friend just a couple, just quite a few weeks ago, and I said, actually, I realized that I have three roles. I have three roles, okay? I'm the dad of my kids. So can I mention that before? I'm the husband of my wife, right? But there's a hidden role, which is a bit different. I think husbands may understand this. I'm also a husband of my children's mother. That's a slightly different role than just being the husband of my wife. Right? Yeah. And all these roles are very different, and when you kind of play all these roles, it actually stretches us in all sorts of directions.

[7 : 26] And, you know, and I think that for all those who are working, you can understand this as well, because you want to do well in your workplace. You also want to serve your family well.

And sometimes life does not give us all the answers about how do we do what we do. And these things actually stretch us all around, and we don't know what to do. And we have been looking at the book of Galatians.

And what does it have to do with all of this? I think the book just tells us that, look, as we look at this book, and we reach chapter 3, it is entering into something that is quite different from the previous chapters that actually we have been looking at.

If you just take a glance at chapter 3, it's full of all these things about Abraham, about promise, about the law, for example. And what is this all about?

This, I'm going to suggest to you, is about the greatest story that you can ever live in. Because, you see, the real question I want to ask you is a question that's actually on the outline that's actually in your booklet, which says, which story are you living in?

[8 : 44] And how does that actually shape your identity? You see, the trouble is that, with a fragmentation in life, is that all these things seem to be mini-stories.

I have a story of how I come to this workplace, I have a story about how I came to know this girl, and got married, and how we have children, but somehow I'm not being able to put all these stories together into one narrative.

And stories, we like it very much today, because stories inform us of who we are. And maybe some of you, the story you are living in, is a story of hard work, and getting the career that you want.

And that actually informs your primary identity. And maybe for some of you, because you have been in Kuching for a long time, right? The reputation of your family, how your family has come to Kuching, how your family has put out the bootstraps, and become known and established over here.

That is your story. And not to sully the name of your family, is actually your identity. But I want to suggest that the story that we live in very much affects the life that we live, and that's the reason that God actually gives us a story to live in.

[10:03] It's a bigger story to live in. It's a story that is actually very amazing. It's a story, I think, that informs us of the fundamental identity that will actually inform all the other identities that we live in.

Which is this, that the most fundamental identity we can have before God, as we've been singing about, and I think to some degree talking about today, is how we are sons of God.

Children of God. So when you think about who is a Christian, right? How do we define a Christian?

We have looked at that in many ways. A Christian is someone who trusts in Jesus.

We have also talked about how this morning a Christian is someone who actually stops calculating and really relates to God. And tonight, we are looking at this, which is, who is a Christian? It's not really someone who just simply goes to church.

It's not someone who just simply moral. It's someone who goes to church camps. But really, I'm losing this. Sorry. A Christian's fundamental identity, I want to suggest to you, is that we are the children, the sons of God.

[11:15] I don't know if you, what do you think about this J.I. Packer quote that's actually found in your booklet? Let me read it for you. It says here, Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers, higher even than justification.

To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater. And maybe my question to you tonight is, do you know anything of this?

Do you know anything of this that means for us to be sons of God, to be children of God? Now, I'm aware that we have both genders in this room, and for some reason, I am keeping, I am, this is keeping sleeping all the time.

But, we have both male and female. I use a son, you work sons of God in a very deliberate way, but I'm going to look at the reason why. But really, the question I want to ask you is, do you really know anything of this, of being the children of God, to call Him your Father?

Is that your fundamental identity in your life? And to see this, we are going to just spend quite a bit of time to do two things.

[12:34] One, is to see the plan of the Father. That is, that the Father, God the Father, His plan in redemptive history has always been to make us sons, to give us sonship, and the second thing, we are going to do, is to know the Father of the plan, which is to relate to Him, as sons.

That is, we are going, in order to do this, we need to, need two things. We need to know what, what is the story that we are living in. That's the plan of the Father, that will, and the plan, and the amazing thing about this plan of the Father, in the end, is to give us sonship.

But at the same time, we need to know, the Father of the plan, and so that we know, how we may relate to Him. So first of all, let's look at the plan of the Father. As I mentioned, the plan of the Father, has always been one thing, is to make sinners, like us, into His children, and to make us sons, if you like, in His Son.

God is going to adopt us, and He's going to make us His own. Where do we see that? Where do we see that? We see that from a couple of verses, in the text that was just read.

You see that first of all, in chapter 4, verse 5. It says here, that God has sent for His Son, to redeem those who are under the law, so that we might receive, adoptions as sons.

[14:06] And I think in your version, it says, to be given the adoption of sonship. And in verse 26, of chapter 3, what does it say? It says here, that, for in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God, through faith.

I know that in your version, it says children, but you can ask Melissa later on, that the original there is, I believe, is huioi, which means, actually literally, sons.

And it's actually not an incident, that's the case. I know it's a bit strange, but, it's actually really this, is that, it's an amazing thing, that, when, no matter what our gender, whether we are female or female, as we come before God, and we are adopted by God, we are given the same status, as His sons.

That is actually the heart of our meaning, of adoption. Now, I don't know how you think about adoption, because, when I look at the whole room here, I understand, I see a lot of grown-ups, and I'm going to tell you, that the good news of the Bible, is that God is going to adopt you, as His child. I don't know, do you feel, accidentally, that's something that you get excited about? I'm a grown-up, I'm very independent. Why do I need to be, you know, adopted as a child?

[15:32] I need to be given resources, and empowerment, so that I can become, an independent person. But, I think I've seen enough, of, grown-up people, who lost their parents, even in the older age.

And I think, when I see their grief, I think it's not merely, just a grief, of losing relationship, per se. No matter how old we are, when we lose our parents, even for me, I heard about how, one of my parents was actually, in great health danger, a few years ago.

I, I, I was stunned, for the whole afternoon. I couldn't quite do anything. I could, I can, I can, I prayed, and I could hardly pray. Because, the sense of, losing your parents, hits you, no matter which age you are.

And I think, that speaks to something, that's very close to the heart, of all of us. Is that, no matter at what age, there's something in us, that longs, for, a good parent.

I don't know, what it's like, for your relationship with parents. If you have a great relationship, I think, I'm very thankful to God, for that. But I've met, many people in, Singapore, where, the young people in Singapore, they feel that their parents, have not parented them, them well.

[17:02] They don't feel, affirmed by the parents. They've been brought up, by Asian parents.

They've been told, all the time, that they are actually, not, good enough. And when you wake up, in such an, when you actually, grow up in such an environment, environment, you long for, you long for, you long for, you long for something.

You long for someone, to come into your life, to say that, you are indeed affirmed, you are indeed accepted, of who, just, just as yourself. And non-dead, you are going to be taken care of.

And, I think that's part of the meaning, of the adoption, when you talk about adoption, by, by God.

But, I want to, like, show you, where the Bible gets the idea, of adoption from.

Now, in, in Paul's time, when he wrote this adoption, right, when he talked about being heirs, right, to receive an inheritance, he's probably, really thinking about, Roman adoption.

And, Roman adoption, is actually very common, in Roman adoption, even for fairly, well, grown up people, to be adopted. One example, would be, Julius Caesar, who actually, adopted his, his heir, which is called, Gaius Octavius.

[18:16] And, if you know any story, anything about the story, or history of Julius Caesar, he was backstabbed by someone, right, but then, Gaius Octavius, actually went on, to take over his throne, and it became, Caesar Augustus.

Although, Gaius Octavius, was not his own, flesh and blood. But, what this means, is that, once you're adopted, you are treated, as if you are, his very own.

Including the rights, to all the inheritance. Which means that, in the mind, of Roman adoption, the adopted son, is no different at all, in status, with, the son, that's, flesh and blood.

I think I struggle, with this like, the whole, every time, I speak.

And, if you want to turn, to chapter 3, verse 26, it gives us, a very minor detail, over here, which is, that, the way, that we are all, sons of God, it says that, for in Christ Jesus, we are all, sons of God.

[19:36] I remind you, it's not just children, it's Krios, through, faith. But, I'd like you to think about, why does the Bible say, that it is only, in, Christ Jesus, that, we, are given, this, we are made, sons of God.

why does it just say, that, God adopted us, directly, why does it say, I feel like, I feel like, dancing to the music, why does it just say, that God gives us, the adoption directly, why does it say, in Christ Jesus, we are given that, adopt, we, what does it say, in Christ Jesus, right, that we are, that we are, made sons of God.

I think, this means this, apart from Jesus, apart from Christ, apart from what he has done for us, apart from trusting in him, we do not actually, we see some shit.

And, as we mentioned this morning, we are united to Christ. And, whenever you see in the Bible, that it says, in Christ Jesus, is actually really, an abbreviation, for that doctrine, that we are united to Jesus.

If we talk about, how Jesus, and, just share his destiny with us, when he died on the cross, right, he share his destiny with us, so that we may die with him, even if we die with him, we also be risen with him.

[21:03] And, in the same way, we also share, in this light, that we are giving, this new identity, because my, that destiny, has been joined to his, and therefore, I'm giving that identity, that comes from him.

But, Paul, is also, at the same time, over here, showing us, how God's plan, has always been, to give us, that, sonship, in Christ himself.

Why? Okay, because, if you come down, to verse 29, in chapter 3, what does it say, over there? It says, and if you are Christ, if you belong to Jesus, then you are, the seed, or, the offspring, of Abraham, as, according to, promise.

So, what does, all these things, have to do, with sonship? Abraham, promise, and Jesus Christ.

Okay, I'm very sorry, I know that you had, a good dinner tonight, but, this is probably, the most, theological part, of all the talks, I'm going to make.

So, I need you to, perk up, and, maybe, try to put on, a thinking cap, a little bit, alright? Okay, what does it, all to do with, with this? Well, it really depends, my friends, on how you, think about Abraham.

[22 : 18] What do you think, Abraham plays, in a role, in the Bible? Is Abraham, merely an example, for us? What role, does Abraham, play in the Bible?

You see, if you think of Abraham, as merely an example, then, these verses, are not going to make, any sense, to you, at all. Because, the whole chapter 3, is really asking, this question, who are those, who are also, the sons of Abraham?

If we just turn over, the Bible, to chapter 3, verse 7, it says there, that, know then, that it is those, of faith, who are the sons, of Abraham.

Abraham. And, this encapsulates, it's quite inclusive, all the way down, to actually, the end of chapter 3, where it talks about, how we belong to Christ, and we are the seed, of Abraham.

That's another word to say, we are sons of Abraham. And really, the question of, who are the sons of Abraham, is a question, that's very important, throughout the whole, of Bible. Why? So, you need to, follow me a little bit, over here.

[23 : 24] First of all, when God, appeared to Abraham, in chapter 12, in Genesis, right? You are all Bible students, so tell me, what does God promise, to Abraham?

Land? I'll make your name great, right? Okay, and through you, all nations will be blessed. Right? Okay, let's take this for example.

Why these, these particular blessings? Why did God, give these particular blessings, to Abraham? I think, promises, to Abraham. Why did he promise, these things to Abraham? Is it just because, Abraham is a nice guy, and therefore, God comes to him, and then he promises him, all these things?

I'll make your name great, right? I'll, through you, all nations will be blessed. And whoever, curses you, I'll curse, and whoever you're blessed, I'll bless. I'll make you a great nation. Okay?

Okay. I'm going to make one advertisement here, okay? On behalf of Pastor Brian. He runs this Bible overview thing, right? He tells me that, he tells me that about, maybe, I forgot the proportion.

[24 : 40] One third of people here, have done that? Okay? Look, you should really take that thing, okay? If you take that course, then you, you can answer all my questions, and you'll know that, I'm just being, I'm just doing child's play, because I cannot possibly, summarize all of that, into one sermon.

But, I've, I've, I've, I've, you have to come with me. Why? Why does actually, God promise those things to Abraham? Because those are the very things, that we have lost as humankind, in the fall, in Genesis chapter 3.

We are not known by God, we lost our relationship with God. That's why we don't really have a name. To have a name is to be known, and to be known by God, is our relationship with God.

The people are divided. Why? The people hate each other, because of sin. And therefore, they are not a nation. And of course, with sin comes what?

Curses, in Genesis chapter 3. And if you take a look at Genesis chapter 3, and Genesis chapter 12, in between, no blessings. And especially, no blessings, that will reverse the curses, of Genesis chapter 3.

[25 : 50] And so you see, what really happens is this, my friends. The Bible, I know, is two parts. We often say, it's Old Testament and New Testament. But the real way, to divide the Bible, is really, Genesis 12, and after, and before.

That is really, the beginning, of what? The salvation plan of God. Genesis chapter 12. And in Genesis 15, right, that's where Abraham believed God, and he was given righteousness.

And there, there's an amazing thing that happens, because Abraham asked God, how do I know that I'm going to obtain all these promises? How can I be sure, that I can obtain all these promises? And God made a ceremony. They took animals, and then they split them in the half. And if you're going to read Genesis 15, which we're not going to read now, only God walked in between the pieces.

Only God walked in between the pieces. What does that mean? What's that ceremony all about? That's actually what is called covenant making. That is, if I take those animals, like birds, like lamb, like cow, and then I split them in two, I walk between the pieces, I'm saying, look, if I do not fulfill my part of the covenant, of the promise, I will be like these animals.

[27 : 17] And in Genesis 15, Abraham was put to sleep. He does not walk through the pieces, but only God walked through the pieces. And if you look at Genesis 15, what's the promise about?

It's a promise, it's about the Son. But, when you read the Bible, the Bible story can be read in one way. Who will the true Son of Abraham, please stand up?

Isaac came. He's a promised son. But did he receive all the promises? Did they all come true? Did he get the land? No, he didn't. Then came Jacob.

Then came all the Israelites. Then came King David. King David almost made it. He almost got all the land that was promised. But King David had a holiday.

He looked out of his roof. And something happened. And as a result, the kingdom was split during Solomon's time. Solomon had too many wives. It was all downhill from there.

[28 : 25] And the whole Old Testament is crying out, when will the true Son of Abraham, please stand up? Please come. And until, a few thousand years later, by the river Jordan, there's a man, who went into the water.

And when he came out of the water, there's a voice from heaven saying, this is my Son, with whom I'm well pleased. The true Son of Abraham has come.

And I want to say, it's in Galatians itself, there's that. Why? Because we have no time to look at all the details in Galatians, but I want to show you something from Galatians.

There's a minor detail over here. Because, when we turn back to Galatians chapter 3, verse 15, and Paul talks about the covenant, right?

Sorry, verse 16. Now the promises were made. He's referring to Genesis 15. To Abraham and to his offspring. That's the Son.

[29 : 35] It does not say, to offsprings, referring to many, referring to the one, but, and to your offspring, refers to what? Who is the Son? Christ. It is Jesus, who is the true inheritor, of the promise of Abraham.

It is Jesus, who is the true son of Abraham. And, it is those who are united to Jesus by faith, who then are given the same identity, to receive the promise that's given to Abraham.

The promise that everything will be okay. that all the curses of the fall, that counts as brought about by sin, will finally be reversed. Okay.

I hope that's the toughest part, because I'm trying to summarize the whole story of the Bible over here, in some ways. And you see, when I think about that, God had a plan to make us sons in his son, from the beginning.

And that actually makes me feel, that this is pretty amazing. And the story that I just mentioned to you, is the greatest story of all time.

[30 : 52] It's a story that can actually, make all our fragmentary story, join together. Why? Because part of our trouble, is that we don't actually ask this story, which is, which is this question, which is, how is the thing that I'm facing right now, become part of God's redemptive story?

I had a chat with Tim this afternoon, and he has a great observation. He says, that Chinese people, are great in community, because we have that for free.

Right? We have Chinese New Year, we gather together, we have meals together, and all that. But there's something in there, that's not quite right. Why? Because community, that we enjoy, in these Chinese New Year gatherings, where we ask, of course, I don't know whether I've mentioned this to you, I've mentioned this to people, quite a lot of few times already, which is, awkward questions are being asked.

Right? Have you got, you know, do you have a friend? Which means, not just friend.

Are you married? Are you getting married? Do you have kids after that? Where do your kids go to school? And this becomes a comparison session, not a loving session. But I say one thing, that's

very striking to me, which Tim mentioned to me in the afternoon.

[32 : 11] He said, it's because that community aspect has not been redeemed by Christ. You see, all the stories that we have, no matter what the suffering that we are going through, or the difficulties we are going through, they can become part of God's story, when we look at it through God's redemptive lens.

And it's only Jesus Christ that can be the center of history, the goal of history.

It's only by us being united to Him that we can find true meaning. Of course, if you do not put that center on Christ Himself, if you do not find the identity in Christ Himself, our story will change.

Our story will change. Because something else will occupy that particular central piece. And so, that is the reason why. If you prioritize work over family, if you do overtime at the expense of family, no wonder children will feel estranged from you when you grow old.

No wonder. But, if you put family first, and then yet, sometimes, some of the things don't work out. Your children do not love you.

[33 : 33] You are crushed. You are crushed. And that's the reason. If we actually justify ourselves by anything else, apart from faith in Christ Jesus, we are bound to fail.

Because, none of these things we are banking our lives on is going to be able to take what it means to be the center of history itself. And, to make our...

And to really make anything else actually the meaning of our lives apart from God, to find our identity on anything else, our fundamental identity in anything else apart from being sons of God, that is very much the definition of sin.

And, God has come to make us sons so that we may see how foolish it is for us to make these things our identity, that we may, in His Son, find our identity and make Him the center of our lives.

And that is why if you look down to verse 28 in chapter 3 in Galatians, it says here that there's no longer Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, there's neither male nor female.

[35 : 02] And it means that our nationalities, our ethnicities, right, our socioeconomic status, whether we are slave or free, even our gender, whether male or female, do not finally actually even give us that fundamental identity of who we are.

Even though these things do not disappear, which I love about you guys, I see all, I see diversity, I see multiracial, church, I think this is really wonderful.

It's wonderful that you do not all look like each other. Do you know what's the wonderful thing about that? Because when you have relationships in church that cannot be explained apart from the fact that you are all one in Christ, that is how you witness for Christ.

It was Charles who gave me this idea to talk about this because he told me that's why he loved about the church. that you do not all look alike. And I think that's the reason because all these differences don't go away but that's actually the beauty of it because we have a more common thing that's deeper that is our fundamental identity in Christ.

So, I encourage you to sign up for the Bible overview class of Brian. Get to know the plan of the Father and you can actually get to see the glory of this that the Father has always planned to give us sonship.

[36 : 37] For the rest of our time, we are going to flip it over that we are going to know the Father of the plan. Knowing the Father of the plan. Now, the reason that we are given sonship is ultimately not so much that we are just given that status.

We are actually entering into this relationship with our Heavenly Father. Father. And if we need to know our Heavenly Father, we need to know what kind of God He is.

We need to know what kind of a Father He is. And that is what the rest of the verses are going to show us. And I just have two things to tell you, which is the promise of the Father and the grace of the Father.

The promise keeping Father, sorry, and the gracious Father. it is like when you observe how someone does something, you know. For example, if someone were to make a meal for you, we know that it is not just making a meal for you, there is something that is actually going to make us know the person.

It is even the way the person makes the meal for you, they will review the character of the person, right? Whether they are careful with the, I don't know, with the condiments.

[37 : 54] I can just think of Sarawak Sa, whether it is careful to give you not only the lime, the belachan, but also, you know, the coriander or the parsley on the top, right?

All these things, right, are important. These are details that reveal who they are. And so, in these verses, we are going to see, first of all, that God is a promise keeping God.

God is a promise keeping God. So, let's just jump down to verse 1 to 2. It talks about here, about, I mean, let me read that for us. I mean that an heir, as long as he's a child, is no different from a slave, though he's an owner of everything, but he's under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

And so, that's actually the analogy. The analogy here is that there's a point in time that we are like these underage people.

And we are underage. We are under the mercy of guardians, right, okay, or managers. And so, we're actually not different from slaves. And so, what is it pointing to?

[39 : 07] This points to, actually, because between the promise to Abraham, okay, I'm just going to do this very quickly, promise to Abraham, and also to the point when Christ has come. There's the middle part that I kind of skipped over just now, where God gave Israelites the Mosaic law.

And what is the purpose of God actually giving people His Mosaic law? And what Paul is trying to say is that the Mosaic law is not the way for people to actually obtain the promise.

It's not the way. In fact, when God gave them the Mosaic law, what happened immediately after God gave them Mosaic law? They worshiped the golden calf. You know your Bibles very well.

Right? And what did God do in response to that? He gave them even more law. Right? Even threatens them. He said, if you obey, you will enjoy all the fruits of the land. If you disobey, you're going to lose this.

Animals are going to come and eat you up. You're going to lose your harvest. Right? And finally, you're going to actually be what? You're going to actually going to lose your land. You're going to be driven out of your country. You're going to be exiled to another country.

[40 : 13] And you know what? Every single one of these things actually happen. And that's why in Galatians, it's a very, very mystifying sentence.

But I think it makes sense if you look at it this way. In chapter 3, verse, sorry, 17. It says here, why then the law?

Oh yeah, I think it's, sorry, 19. Sorry, my law, why is very bad now. So, okay. Chapter 3, verse 19, it says, why then the law? It was added because of what? Transgressions.

And that's the interesting thing. Because why? When you add law, what God is showing you is that when you add law, transgressions increase. That's what Romans 5 says as well, a very similar text. And that's what's happening in biblical history. and although in some ways, right, the law is acting like a guardian, why? Because a guardian is there not really as kind of a caretaker.

[41 : 13] You'd like to think of it that way. But in this analogy, it's saying that as long as the guardian is around, you are actually prevented from getting your inheritance. But the time has come. The time has come that we're no longer under guardians or managers.

That is God has come. That Jesus has come. Which is why in, back to chapter 4, verse 4, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons.

So that is, if you think that through the law you can actually get the promise, right, you are still actually trying to rely on your own effort.

You are still trying to rely on that's actually a date end. And in verse 4, when it says that in the fullness of time, I think your version says something like the set time fully has fully come.

I, okay, I'm going on a limp here. I'm feeling slightly anxious because Melissa is over there, but I think that she's going to hide under the desk now.

[42 : 32] Okay, sorry, I'm just teasing you, I'm just teasing you, don't worry, okay, sorry. The fullness here is actually really, it's actually really the idea that it's not just the right time because a lot of people don't read this text and say, oh, it's because, you know, there's Greek philosophy, there's all these things that you're preparing for Christ coming and Christ just came just at the right time.

I don't think that's what it really is saying. It's saying that the promise of God has come. That's the fullness of time. It's referring to when the promise of God has come, this is now the fullness of time.

It's a bit like this. It's like we're no longer just checking out each other. We're no longer just in courtship. We are actually now engaged. and we're not going to get married. The time of fullness has come.

The promise has come. We are now already looking forward to the completion of it. Or rather, if you think about engagement in this way, we are now engaged to be married, we will almost certainly be married.

Right? And that's actually come, the coming of Jesus means, is actually the guarantee that what? That one day, God will make all things new again.

[43 : 48] The fullness of time has come. The fullness of time has come. So main point is actually not how Jesus has come to divide history into two parts, although that's the thing in the AD and BC, but really, it is that how Christ has come.

If you think about the Christmas story in a manger, to live under the law for our sake, to actually obey the law that we cannot keep. Right?

And that is the beginning of God's promise fulfilling. We obtain this sonship through Christ.

We become sons of God through Christ. And we know Him. And this story of God sending His Son is the proof of God's faithfulness.

So we need to know God's faithfulness. We need to know His sovereign faithfulness from this story. And how does this apply to us? I think it applies to us in this.

[44 : 56] I don't know. When I look at all of you, you seem to be all living pretty good lives. Back home in my church, I talk to people who do suffer in many different ways.

there are some who suffer in mental health. They just do not have full control over their thoughts. They wake up in the middle of the night and certain dark thoughts just come to them.

And they, very much like Melissa, sorry to use you, I think this is the closest example that I can just give you just now, is to ask, how long, oh God? So ask, how long? And there are many as well.

I spoke to, they are trying to have kids or they are just going through the difficulty of having children and they cry out as well. How long, oh Lord?

And I think that that is a key difficulty to suffering, right? How long? How long do I need to wait? And I think the doctrine here is that you can see that God is faithful in fulfilling his promises and his timing is never wrong.

[46 : 09] I think it means this, God is someone that will come to him and bring our sorrows and troubles to him and will ask him to give us that faith to hang on even though hanging on is so difficult.

I think that's what Psalms do. The Psalms are able to bring their problems to God, they are able to cry to God how long? Psalm 13. Precisely because they believe that God himself is a sovereign God whose timing is never wrong.

So I want to submit that to you that that is part of even more so for us when we know that we are sons of God, we can come to him. And my friends, I'm sad to say, I know that some preachers want to say this, I am the son of God, I will never take anything less than first class.

That is a wrong way to think because if there's anyone who really deserves first class flights, it's Jesus Christ. But God did not spare his son, the true son, to suffer on the cross.

How can we expect less? But there's good news. The good news is because the true son has suffered on our behalf, our suffering will not be forever. And even when we die, there's still that hope of resurrection.

[47 : 25] So we can even come to God in our darkest moments because he is our heavenly father. If I were to promise you that because you go to him and everything will be okay, I'll be lying to you.

But I'm trying to tell you that it is something more than just okay. But more than that, we do not only see here that God is the promise-keeping father, he's also the very gracious father.

That's the last thing we will look at tonight. Okay? Sorry, I'm almost like, I don't know if you noticed by now, I'm almost like preaching without notes. So I hope that we are still good in time.

But the last thing we will look at is that God is the gracious father. We pick it up from the rest or from the last few verses. What does it mean for us to see that God is gracious?

Grace actually means this, right? What does grace mean? We often look at grace from this side, which is that we are unworthy to receive anything, but God gives it to us anyway.

[48 : 36] I understand. There's a very, very common way to understand grace. But I want to now talk about grace not from the other angle, not from the recipient angle, but from the angle of the one who bestows grace.

And it is this. God gives us grace. How do we see that? Because God doesn't have to. God doesn't have to.

That's a very important thing to think about. Because if you don't think in this way, we are going to misunderstand the grace of God. Don Carson spoke about someone he spoke to in Germany and explained the gospel to him and all that and trying to encourage this person to repent. and remember the story being told this way. The person ends with a line saying, struck his shoulder, says, I think I'll be alright at the end of the day. You know, I think when I see God, I think I'm going to be okay.

Even though if I don't change my lifestyle. And Carson asks him, why do you think that? Because you know what? It's God's job. It's God's job to forgive my sins anyway. And do you know the problem in that kind of thinking?

[49 : 49] The problem in that kind of thinking is saying that God has to, He's bound to forgive sins. Actually, not really. God chooses to forgive sins but He doesn't have to.

You see what I'm trying to say? There's no necessity that's being put on Him. And that is the meaning of grace. God is completely self-sufficient. He doesn't need us.

When He actually saves us, when He loves us, He gains nothing in Himself. But we are gaining everything. That is the meaning of grace. In that sense, even creation itself is a grace because when God creates, God's fundamental identity is not that He's a creator.

God doesn't have to create. But God creates so that He may share His life and His joy with us. But the story of the Bible is that we rejected God. We don't want Him to be in our lives.

But God has now come and redeemed us and this I want to show you is that so that we may truly know Him and enjoy His love like His Son.

[50 : 55] Because in verse 6, we see here, it says here, And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His sons into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. that is something I mentioned earlier this morning.

The wonderful thing about God, about Jesus regarding His friends is that we are entering into the inner life of God Himself. Fred Sanders says that it is only through Jesus that we know that we are, that God is a trinity, that eternally God is love, that God the Father loved the Son and the Spirit, they are all mutually glorifying, mutually loving.

This is a very different, sorry if I put it this way, very different view of God from Islam. Why?

Because the Islamic God is one person, one God. He doesn't have an object of love.

And that's a right question we ask Him. If He doesn't have an object of love, how can you be self-sufficient? But the Christian answer is amazing. God has no lack in Himself.

[52 : 15] Why? Because from eternity He's ready to these three persons in one God, mutually loving and mutually glorifying one another. Then the question you ask then, if this God is so wonderful and so self-sufficient, why does He even bother to create us?

So that we may share in His joy. And we are given the Spirit of His Son over here, which means that God loves us like how He loves His Son.

And that is why this measure or what it means to be the sons of God, you know that calling God Abba Father can be one of the sweetest things on earth.

I don't know what kind of system do you run in your home. I trust that no one at home calls their father Father. That's very formal. I know that some Angwas, they like to call their father Daddy.

Sorry, maybe you are that system. The word Abba, Father, is a little bit in between. I call my father Papa. Papa to me is in between the formality of the father and the informality of the daddy.

[53 : 27] I will never be able to, in a sense, you know, like, I don't know, maybe I'm just characterizing, sorry, that, it's like, so, there's that sense of intimacy, but yet, you never truly just simply saunter into his presence.

I don't know if that makes sense to you. He's our Abba Father, right? There's a sense of godly fear when you come to him, but yet, there's really this sense, this wonderful sense of calling Abba.

And, friends, we can really know this, we can enter into this relationship only because the true son on the cross, the true son, Jesus, he knows his father all the way.

When you look at the gospels, Jesus, whenever he prays, he addresses God. Am I going in and out with it? Are you guys okay?

He calls him father, but there's only one place in the gospels where Jesus stopped calling God father. Do you know where is that? That's where on the cross he says what?

[54 : 52] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The son of God is forsaken so that we may come in, so that we may be sons of God.

So, my friends, as we close, I'd like to share just one more story with you that really shows me this whole thing. So, if you forget everything, maybe this is something that will help you, which is we're talking about adoption.

And I think that in my church, there's a couple who really demonstrated what that means in a very real sense for us. There's a couple in my church, they actually had adopted before.

They have a couple of kids and then they have one more, they have one more child who is adopted. But somehow, they came across this video. This video that was actually from a country up north where the video showed a child that, you know, was born without years.

Born without years. And the point of the video is to say that this child who was born without years has now been put in an orphanage. And in that particular country, if you actually reach the age of 14, you can no longer be adopted.

[56 : 07] You are just your own. You are just your own. But, the couple saw that video and, in their own words, they fell in love with the child.

They fell in love with the child. And they make great sacrifices, pay a lot a ton of money, went to visit the child, did a lot of things. If you know about adoption, it's actually a huge, huge cost to bring that child to Singapore, to make him a Singapore citizen, to make this child the same right as all his other children.

And what does he really get? Of course, he got a new relationship, but really, so that they may pour out their love and joy into this child. And, my friends, that, to me, is really the essence of the gospel. It's not just that our sins are forgiven by Christ, but that God looked upon sinners in the world, and he wanted to adopt them as his sons, and he paid the ultimate price by sending his sons to die for us so that we may be sons of God.

Can you just pray for us now, and ask God to help us to put this into our hearts. Father, we thank you for this tonight. We thank you that we spend this time to look at your story, to look at what it means, oh Lord, to be your sons, to look at the plan, redemptive plan you have to make us your sons.

[57 : 47] And I pray, Father, that whatever, Lord, that has been speaking to us and pray, won't you keep it close in our hearts, won't you seal it into our life. Help us to know what it means to respond to you as your children, Lord.

They may walk in your ways, they may taste the intimacy like how Jesus knows you, they may call you in the Abba, Father, from our heart. I ask this and pray this in Jesus' name.