

Heirs of the Promise

Galatians 3:23—4:7

Introduction

Today is the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost. This Ordinary Time will last until the 1st Sunday in Advent, November 30th. Despite the lack of celebrations, it's not called Ordinary Time in the sense of being mundane, but because of the ordinal numbers used to designate the Sundays. During this time, we focus on the teachings of Jesus and reflect on faith and spiritual growth. To this end, today we will answer the question: "How are we to live the Christian life?"

Remember Who We Are

Put simply, living the Christian life is not so much about "doing" as it is about "being." When it comes to salvation, our life comes from Christ, not ourselves. And while the Christian life isn't sedentary, but one of action, the purpose, origin, and power of the actions all come from Christ. And as the saying goes, if you want to know who you are and where you're going, you've got to know where you came from.

From Whence We Came

In **Galatians 3** and **4**, St. Paul says that we were *under the Law (3:23)*. He uses two images to explain what that means. We were *imprisoned* and *under a guardian (v. 23, 24)*. The **Apology** calls this *righteousness of reason* and *civil discipline*, which is incomplete and weak. The Law restrains us from doing what we, as fallen, sinful people want, and holds us captive, awaiting execution. The guardian was the slave who protected the boys in the family by walking them to school. And he was cruel, disciplining them with a cane. The Law disciplines us severely but points us to Christ.

Law and Gospel

Knowing where we came from is not just so we appreciate what we have now. The tragedy is that many people separate them, that is, Law and Gospel, by wanting one without the other. Staying in the Law is a life of despair. And you can't come to the Gospel unless the Law points you to it. So, the Christian life begins with the Law and moves to the Gospel.

In Christ

Now that Christ is here, we are *in Him* (v. 26). That has changed our status greatly. We are in *Christ* through *faith*, and this is a gift of *grace*. We are in Christ because we have put on Christ in Baptism. This is more than putting Him on as one puts on a garment. Being in Christ means we abide in Him as *the branches abide in the vine* (John 15:5). This is our status.

Sons of God

In Christ, we are no longer slaves, but *sons of God* (v. 26). We are adopted. According to Augustine: *He says “adopted” so that we may clearly understand that the Son of God is unique. For we are sons of God through His generosity and the condescension of His mercy, whereas He is the Son by nature, sharing the same divinity with the Father (Epistle to the Galatians 30).*

All One

And ladies, don't be offended or feel left out because of the word “sons.” In Christ, we are all equal: *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* (v. 28).

Abraham's Seed

Last, in Christ, we are *Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise* (v. 29). Christ was Abraham's physical offspring, a direct descendant and the fulfillment of the promise God made to him. We are Abraham's offspring by faith, his spiritual offspring, according to the promise. But we're also heirs of a promise, the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Living in Christ

So, living the Christian life is living a life of gratitude for the blessings of salvation we have received, forgiveness of sin and new life, and the inheritance we look forward to, eternal life with Jesus in heaven. The Christian life is a life of joy as children of God.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
