

Galatians 4

Verses 1-2:

--Here Paul returns to his illustration of the law as our **tutor** or disciplinarian until we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ.

--The true heir doesn't get to enjoy all the benefits of his position until he reaches the age of maturity where he can legally receive his inheritance. Until then he has guardians that look after his person and stewards that look after his property.

Verses 3-5:

--(3) Even so, Paul is illustrating that we were once under the law as future heirs of God, waiting for the time that we could begin to enjoy the true wealth of our Father. Until then we were under the **elements of the world**.

--The Greek word for **elements** has the idea of the ABC's or elementary things. The very basics of religious life as is used in **Col. 2:20-23 & Heb. 5:12**.

--(4) Things changed **when the fullness of time had come**—which is related to the work of Christ and the promise of the Holy Spirit more than world conditions. Roman roads and Greek language were secondary. It was time for God to be revealed in a new way.

Mark 1:14-15: Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

--**God sent forth His Son**—(*His own Son*—**Rom. 8:3+32**). The work of Christ was near to the Father's heart. Jesus was **sent forth** because He was preexistent. Just as God has **sent forth** the preexistent Holy Spirit in verse 6!

--How was Jesus **sent forth**? He was **born of a woman, born under the law**. Jesus was born of a Jewish mother, into a Jewish nation, and under a Jewish law. The Incarnation!

--(5) Why? First, **to redeem those who were under the law**. This was key to Paul's arguments with these Galatians. Jesus came because lawkeepers needed to be redeemed! Jesus came under Torah—or law—to set us free from it! Why go back?

--Second, Jesus didn't only come and redeem us and then ignore us. He didn't set us free and say, Now go make your own way in the world. He redeemed us **that we might receive the adoption as sons**. We are redeemed to be adopted as children set free from all tutors.

--Christ is the Eternal Son by nature but we are sons and daughters by adoption.

Verses 6-7:

--(6) What kind of adoption? A very unique one!

--First, God sent His Son into the world to redeem us. Then God sent His Spirit into our hearts to conform us. His inheritance is more than money. It is life. *If we asked every church leader in America what the defining ingredient of a Christ was, what would our answers be? This?*

--Our hearts cry **Abba, Father!** Because God wants us to experience Christ's blessings through the Holy Spirit. Notice, the whole Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit—is involved in this process. So our adoption becomes something much greater than any human adoption where we receive legal standing, a name, and resources.

--From God we receive a new nature! We are sons and daughters indeed! There is a literal and internal witness that we are God's children. I believe that is why Paul uses the unique phrase—**the Spirit of His Son**—only here (Similar but different names in **Rom. 8:9 + Phil. 1:19**).

--The Spirit of the very Son that redeemed us has supernaturally birthed in us sonship.

Romans 8:14-16: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

--This simple prayer of **Abba, Father** is proof of God's work in them. The term **Abba** was used by Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in **Mk. 14:36**. His use of that term, and His relation to God as Father in general, were revolutionary as an invitation for the disciples to follow (as well as historic in Jewish literature). This blessed relation must have been widespread in the early church for Paul to assume the church in Rome would understand as well as these Galatians.

--(7) Our freedom as adopted children of God is actualized in experience by the Holy Spirit—**the Spirit of His Son**—living in us!

--How do you relate to God? As God's son or daughter? We are not perfect but nothing can ever change the fact that we are His! Is His Spirit in you? *The Bible assumes we know He is!*

--You are God's son or daughter, so live it out!

2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1: Therefore, 'Come out from among them and be separate', says the Lord. 'Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you shall be My sons and daughters,' Says the LORD Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Verses 8-11:

--(8) Having admonished them by pointing out their reality as adopted children of God through faith, Paul reminds them again where they came from. Basic pagan idolatry where they neither knew their gods nor were known by them.

--(9) Here Paul makes their former, pagan, idolatrous, and superstitious life an enslavement equal to turning back to lawkeeping. They might as well go back as slaves to the **weak and beggarly elements** of religious idolatry.

--(10) Paul points out some of the things that the Judaizers were pressuring them to return to.

Colossians 2:16: So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is Christ.

--(11) Here Paul shares his heart freely. He is afraid for them! How horrible to watch them falling away from life and grace in Christ. We have seen it here in individuals or groups but I cannot imagine fearing for our whole congregation!

--Paul's labor would be in vain if they turned from Christ. To turn to the law would be to turn away from Christ.

5:4: *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

--They were returning to bondage when they should have been growing in the liberty of the Spirit of God as sons and daughters.

*John Newton became involved in the African slave trade at eleven years old. He did horrible things that haunted him, until at 23, he was saved. He never forgot God's amazing grace in his life—nor did he ever forget his previous slavery. He had this verse mounted in his study:

Deuteronomy 15:15: *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.*

Verses 12-16:

--(12) Notice that Paul still recognizes these immature, weak, and confused believers as ***brethren***. We should not quickly deny the faith of those caught in a doctrinal or moral wrong.

--Paul urges these believers to be like him. He had once placed all his value in the law and his own pharisaical relation to it. Then he found Christ and gave it all up. Paul had already done what he was asking these believers to do!

--(13-15) Here Paul makes the point that their attitude toward him had changed from the first.

--We don't know what the physical issue with Paul was, there are many guesses but they are all speculation. Paul's point is clear though. When he first came to them—driven by a sickness—there was something in his physical state or health that would have challenged his message but they accepted the good news of the gospel gladly. *It was a common superstition to consider someone with a serious disease as cursed of the gods.*

--(16) What is the point? They had such a beautiful acceptance of Paul and the gospel at first, but now they disliked Paul! Why? What changed? Were they turning from him and Christ because of the truth?!

--We are called to speak the truth in love. *Do we make enemies of those who tell the truth?*

1 Kings 21:20: *So Ahab said to Elijah, 'Have you found me, O my enemy?'*

Proverbs 27:6: *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

Verses 17-20:

--(17) These false teachers would ***zealously court you, but for no good!*** Paul says they gave quite the showing of care but with devious motives. In the end, they only wanted to isolate them and make them zealous for them. *What a description of our day! LGBTQ agenda.*

--(18-19) Now, Paul knew that he was doing the same thing. He was zealously pleading with them but had their good in mind! He didn't want them for himself. He wanted them for Christ—to see Christ **formed** (the Greek is *morphoo* which refers to the inward) **in you**. This is good and godly zeal. The false teachers had an ungodly zeal.

*Tozer (The Size of the Soul): *“The truth is that though all godly persons are zealous, not all zealous persons are godly. The zeal that accompanies sanctity is rarely boisterous and noisy. So great was the zeal of our Lord that it was said to have eaten Him up, yet Isaiah said of Him, ‘He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.’ And it was He who excoriated the zealots who compassed sea and land to find one convert, only to make him more evil than he was before.*

*“Not only the quantity of zeal matters to God, but the quality. The significant question is not how zealous is the Christian but why is he zealous and to what does his zeal lead? To the church of Laodicea our Lord said, ‘Be zealous, therefore, and repent’ (Rev. 3:19). The zeal that leads to penitence, restitution and amendment of life is surely dear to God.”**

--Some people are won over by ungodly zeal. Zeal in personality, religiosity, or praise which is just for show or designed to make others zealous for them or their particular “group”. Are we zealous like Christ? For Christ? We must beware of those that **zealously court you, but for no good!**

--Despite their change in attitude toward him, Paul still love these Galatians as their spiritual father. He calls them: **My little children**, which is the only time this phrase is used in Paul's writings.

--Paul is even willing to **labor in birth again** to see Christ formed in them. First he had the burden of the evangelist (in salvation) and now the burden of pastor-teacher (in life in Christ).

Double-birth is unthinkable for most mothers!

--Paul wants to see Christ work in them all over again. He doesn't enjoy severity and wants to change his tone, but he is worried that his children are starting to go the wrong way.

--This is great language for a struggling loved one or friend. I want to talk to you face to face because I have doubts about you!

Verses 21-31:

--Now Paul is going to finish up his arguments with one final Scriptural teaching. In 21-23 we have the Scriptural facts. In 24-27 we have the allegorical interpretation. In 28-31 we have the spiritual application.

--(21-23) Paul goes back to the Scriptural account of Abraham's life for this last teaching. He does so by contrasting: two sons; two mothers; two standings; and two births.

1) Ishmael, Hagar, bondwoman, the flesh.

2) Isaac, Sarah, freewoman, promise.

Hebrews 11:11: By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

--(24-27) Now Paul gives us the symbolic or allegorical interpretation of these things. The fact that Paul does so becomes more of a controversial issue than the clear meaning of what he is getting across to the Galatians. This is mainly because symbolic and allegorical interpretations of the Bible get wildly unbiblical and often heretical!

--That said, there are symbolic and allegorical truths in Scripture. There are three things we should know about this:

1) These truths come *from* the actual facts of Scripture. *Symbols never *create* or *change* clear Biblical doctrine*

2) These truths never *conflict* with the actual facts of Scripture. *This is where we see wild heresies backed by fanciful symbolic interpretations*

3) These truths are most often given to us by Scripture. *Here; Adam + Eve in marriage; Passover; the tabernacle and temple; etc.*

--Symbols, types, and figures are there but it takes a mature knowledge of the Scripture to use them rightly—See **Hebrews 5:11-14**.

--Paul says two covenants are symbolized in these facts. One covenant relates to Hagar, Sinai, and the current Jerusalem as the home of Judaism.

--The other covenant relates to Sarah, the promise of God, and the current heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 12:22: *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. . .*

--So those of the old covenant retain the slavery of their mother but those of the new covenant retain the freedom of their mother.

--(27) Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1 which was given in context to the captives in Babylon as currently deserted and barren but with promise of a future return and fruitfulness.

--(28-31) The applications are clear.

--(28) Those who come to Christ by faith inherit the promises of God and are born from above and citizens of heaven.

--(29) If we are like Isaac then those that are like Ishmael will treat us accordingly (**Gen. 21:9**). Expect persecution from religious lawkeepers—the religious leaders persecuted Christ!

--(30) Cast out those who are false teachers. The two covenants cannot be intermingled. Faith and law/Grace and works are either-or issues. A line must be drawn as it was with Isaac and Ishmael. No one will ever inherit God's promises through the flesh.

--(31) **Brethren!** Live as what you are.