

20. The Book of Galatians 4:1-4 (Topical)

Liberty From Law-Part 19

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(6-9-24)

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We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ. In our study this morning, we find ourselves in the second main division of the book—“**Liberty from Law.**”

Last week we finished Chapter 3—but let's back up and read the last few verses of chapter 3 before starting Chapter 4:

Galatians 3:24-25, 29 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.... ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Eight times in the last 15 verses of chapter 3 Paul talked about the promise that God gave to Abraham—this whole section (as well as Romans 4) revolves around this promise, it is the key to understanding the passage.

God actually gave one promise to Abraham that contained *several* different elements—the promise is listed in 4 places in Genesis—

Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)

³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 15:5–6 (NKJV)

⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 17:4–8 (NKJV)

⁴ “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

Genesis 22:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

One commentator breaks down the promise God gave to Abraham identifying each part:

“The promise to Abraham was embodied in God’s covenant with Abraham, in which the patriarch was told that his descendants would be heirs of the world (Genesis 12:3; 15:6; 18:18; 22:18). In analyzing God’s promise to Abraham, four significant factors emerge.

First, the promise involved **a land** (see Gen. 15:18–21) in which Abraham would live but that would not be possessed until some five centuries later, when Joshua led the Israelites in their conquest of Canaan.

Second, the promise also involved **a people**, who would be so numerous that they could not be numbered, like the dust of the earth and the stars in the sky (Genesis 13:16; 15:5). Eventually, Abraham would become the “father of many nations” (Genesis 17:5; cf. Romans 4:17).

Third, the promise involved **a blessing** of the entire world through Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 12:3).

Fourth, the promise would be fulfilled in the giving of **a Redeemer**, who would be a descendant of Abraham through whom the whole world would be blessed by the provision of salvation. That promise to Abraham was, in essence, a preaching to him of the gospel.

The promise that God gave to Abraham was that he would be the father of a great multitude (hence the name change from Abram—“*Exalted Father*” to Abraham—“*Father of a Multitude*”) This great multitude would be a new nation, the people of God. How would people be a part of this new nation? They would have to be born into it the same way Abraham was—not physically, but spiritually by faith.”

Paul wants his Jewish readers to know that Abraham was justified by believing God’s *promise*, not by keeping God’s *law*—for the law itself wouldn’t be given through Moses for another 430 years (Galatians 3:17).

Okay, but does this promise God gave to Abraham have any relevance to our lives today?

Galatians 3:6–9 (NKJV)

⁶ just as Abraham “*believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*”⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Galatians 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:26–29 (NKJV)

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

- The promise God gave to Abraham was a unilateral, unconditional promise (covenant) that he received by faith. (Genesis 15:9-18)

- The promise to Abraham was given purely through God’s grace—Abraham didn’t earn it or deserve it—he simply believed it and received it by faith.
- This is the same unconditional promise God made with us through Jesus under the New Covenant (which in many ways is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant).

Today, God justifies the ungodly because they believe His promise (eternal life through His Son)—not because they obey His Law. As we have said—the Law was not given to save us, but to show us our sin and our need to be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect.

The expression ‘**heir of the world**’ means that God promised Abraham (and his descendants) that someday they would be the heirs (children) of God by faith and inherit all that belongs to their Father including the Kingdom He (Jesus) would come to establish—

Romans 8:16–17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

Paul now continues this thought in chapter 4—

H. Sons and Heirs—Galatians 3:26-4:6

Galatians 4:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

No matter how wealthy a father may be, his infant or toddler son wasn’t all that different from the infant or toddler son of a slave. In fact, in the Roman world, the children of wealthy people were often cared for by slaves who might have cared for their own children along with the master’s children.

The master’s child, although he was heir of all, really couldn’t benefit from that wealth while he was little. I mean Elon Musk’s son, although he is heir of all his father’s wealth as a toddler couldn’t write a check or use a credit card to draw from that wealth—and so in that regard he is really not that different from a poor child even though he is heir of his father’s fortune.

The same is true with the children of a wealthy father in Paul’s day. But then Paul went on to say—“**until the time appointed by his father**”—or in other words, ‘*until the time he was considered full grown.*’

In both Jewish and Greek cultures, there were definite “*coming of age*” ceremonies, where a boy stopped being a child and officially became an adult with all the legal rights of his father’s estate as his heir.

Galatians 4:3 (NKJV)

³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

The phrase, “**elements of the world**” refers to the Law.

Why did Paul refer to the Law this way? Because the basic building blocks (basic ‘elements’) of society is law (external laws which carry punishments if broken)—and it starts in the home with their parents’ laws (rules). But now, since the New Covenant has come, we have ‘grown-up’ and are no longer like little children who have to be ‘forced to obey’ their parents’ commands—or the Jews forced to keep the Law by threat of punishments.

Now in Christ we have the Holy Spirit living in us who has given us a new heart which obeys God’s commandments from the heart... So, Paul speaking to the Jews living in his day, this word ‘elements’ meant “the basic principles, the ABC’s”—or in other words, “The elementary principles of the Jewish religion (Judaism).”

One author—

“For some fifteen centuries, Israel had been in kindergarten and grade school, learning their “spiritual ABCs,” so that they would be ready when Messiah/Christ came. Then they would be mature enough to leave the Old Covenant behind and fully embrace the New Covenant in Christ. In this way the Law would be their tutor to lead them into spiritual adulthood and bring them to Messiah Jesus for salvation (and sanctification) by faith alone in Christ alone.”

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

The idea behind the phrase “the fullness of time” is—“when the time was right.”

There’s an old expression that many of us have quoted—“Timing is everything.” The problem is we don’t always know when the time is right for many of the decisions we have to make. We wrestle with decisions like—is it the right time to change jobs or to sell our house or start a business?

But when it comes to God there is no such thing as being early or late—God is always right on time! This was especially true when it came to the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ!

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...

In the Greek language there were two words for *time*: the first word is “kairos” which means “*opportune time*.” This speaks of seizing an opportunity when it comes your way—an opportunity that often comes out of the blue without any planning on your part.

Then there’s the word “kronos” from which comes our word “*chronology*” which is the— “*orderly progression of events, when everything follows the proper sequence and is exactly right.*”

The word Paul used in **Galatians 4:4** is “kronos” indicating that God didn’t just decide on the spur of the moment to take advantage of an opportune time—but rather, God *orchestrated* the sequence of events, and when the time was just *right*—He sent His only Begotten Son into the world!

Jesus came at just the right time in the history of the world to fulfill God’s redemptive plan—the time when the world was perfectly prepared for God’s work.

1. It was the right time Politically

When Paul wrote these words in Galatians 4:4—the Roman Empire was at its zenith of power and glory.

Rome had given the world good roads, a relatively fair system of government—and most importantly it had given the world peace.

For the first time in history, people could travel with relative ease almost anywhere in the empire which meant—those early Christians could carry the message of the gospel all over the known world!

2. It was the right time Morally

“It was a time when the pax Romana (Roman peace) extended over most of the civilized earth and when travel and commerce were therefore possible in a way that had formerly been impossible. Great roads linked the empire of the Caesars...Add the fact that the world was sunk in a moral abyss so low that even the pagans cried out against it and that spiritual hunger was everywhere evident—and one has a perfect time for the coming of Christ and for the early expansion of the Christian gospel.” (Boice)

3. It was the right time Culturally

Alexander the Great had conquered the world three centuries earlier and then ‘Hellenized’ it by imposing on it Greek culture, philosophy—and most importantly, the Greek language.

The influence of Greek culture and language was so powerful that even after the Romans conquered the world people still spoke Greek. Greek was the most precise and descriptive of all ancient languages—it was the language of the first century. It was the language everyone understood—it was a universal language perfect for the quick spread of the gospel.

So, the timing of Jesus coming was the right time politically and culturally—but most importantly:

4. It was the right time Prophetically

You see 450 years earlier Daniel prophesied that Messiah would come at a very specific time in human history. (Comment from Daniel 9:24-26).

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...

Paul is careful to point out the dual nature of Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4), that although He has existed from all eternity as God, the Second Person of the Trinity—at one point came the incarnation where He was born of a woman (only of a woman and not a human father).

The ancient prophecy said that the Redeemer would be of “*the woman’s seed*” (virgin born) (Genesis 3:15); and Jesus fulfilled that prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25).

Galatians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Further, Christ was “**born under the Law**” as a Jew (biblical prophecy said He would be a descendant of David)—born subject to the Law of Moses (born under the Mosaic Covenant).

He kept the Law perfectly, fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17), and then died on the cross paying for our sins completely thus redeeming us from the 'curse of the Law.' (Galatians 3:13).

One thing we need to understand is that from God's perspective the timing of His Son's birth was perfect and yet from a Jewish perspective—it no doubt looked like God was terribly late! God promised to send a Redeemer who would crush the serpents head (Satan's authority) way back in Genesis 3:15.

I mean to wait 4000 years from the time Adam sinned
and man fell until the Messiah came was
an awfully long time to say the least!

The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Micah all talked about the coming Messiah—and yet as we come to the New Testament period the Jewish people had heard nothing from God for over 400 years—since the close of the O.T. period! For four centuries there had been no prophet in Israel proclaiming , "Thus says the Lord..."

There had been no angelic messenger sent to speak on behalf of God—there had been no visions or dreams revealing the words of God.

The Jewish people were heart-broken thinking that God had abandoned them—that He had forgotten His promises to them. Then just about the time the people had lost all hope that they would ever hear from God again—something miraculous began to happen!

God began to move by dispatching angelic messengers to make a series of announcements:

- *An angel appeared to Zacharias announcing the birth of John, the forerunner of the Messiah.*
- *The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a young virgin named Mary to announce that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah.*
- *Another angel spoke to Joseph in a dream about the birth of the Savior—Jesus the Immanuel.*
- *A group of angels appeared to the shepherds by night announcing the birth of the Savior—Christ the Lord.*
- *And finally, God placed a 'star' in the sky (possibly an angel) to lead the Wise Men to Jesus.*

In very rapid succession—the silence was broken as all of heaven, it seemed, began to declare the good news of the Savior's coming and birth! Someone has said that God is never in a hurry in the work that He does—and the greater the work the more time He takes to prepare.

But when the time is right—He moves—and He moves suddenly, and things begin to happen quickly (think of Joseph in Genesis 41)!

As Americans we are (by nature) a very impatient people because we live in a society of instant news and weather, of fast foods and on demand entertainment. We tend to bring this 'on demand' attitude into our relationship with God—we want our prayers answered immediately—we want God to work on our behalf right now ("Answer me speedily O Lord!")!

When difficulties persist or we do not see God moving—we become impatient because God's timing is not our timing!

Paul reminds us that when it comes to the most important issues of life (or world history)—God is never too early or too late—He is always right on time!

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11 (NKJV)

¹ To everything *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven...¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time...

**Now that is a wonderful promise—
one that God has proven to me
time and time again is absolutely true!**

Things have happened in my life at exactly the right time and yet it was not because of anything I had done—doors were opened, opportunities offered, help received—God keeps His promises! No matter how difficult things may be, no matter how tough life becomes or how disappointed you are in your circumstances—God is still in control—God is still on the throne!

He was in control 2000 years ago when Jesus was born and He's still in control today in your life *personally* and in this fallen world politically—

Psalms 37:1–4, 7-11 (NKJV)

¹ Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. ² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. ³ Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. ⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart...
⁷ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. ⁸ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—*it only causes harm*. ⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. ¹⁰ For yet a little while and the wicked *shall be no more*; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it *shall be no more*.
¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

We will pick up our study in Galatians next week!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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