

Ln 8 ... Are You Spiritually Mature

[Galatians 4:1-20](#)

After our children grow up and mature, we don't have to tell them not to play with fire or to look before stepping into the street. When they become mature adults, they don't require curfews. They no longer need our rules and supervision. In the same way, mature Christians don't need rules and regulations. In this passage, Paul describes **three** things you will do if you are spiritually mature.

Recognize Your Family Relationship (4:1-7)

Using an example from Roman law, Paul describes a child who has inherited his father's estate but is too young to take possession of it ([4:1](#)). He is much like a slave who is placed *under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father* ([4:2](#)). No matter how wealthy the father, the child remains under supervision and cannot enjoy his father's wealth until he reaches the age set by his father.

This is the spiritual condition of Jews under the Law; they are heirs who have not come of age. In this analogy, Paul is stating that God has set a time when the Jews will come of age and be able to receive the full inheritance of their Heavenly Father.

How does Paul describe this point in [Galatians 4:4a-b](#)?

At the set *time*, God sent Christ to make provision for the transition from Law to grace. The *time* was when the Romans had brought peace and stability throughout the known world. They also provided a common language—Greek, the official language of the Roman Empire. Christ was *made of a woman* [He was human] and was *under the law* [He lived as a Jew] ([4:4c-d](#)).

Therefore, what does [Luke 2:21a-b](#) record about Jesus?

God sent Jesus *to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons* ([4:5](#)). God sent Jesus so, through faith in Him, we can receive all the rights and privileges of fully-grown children. Jesus came at just the right *time* to transform our relationship with God.

Because we are God's *sons*, or children, He *sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father* ([4:6](#)). Abba is an informal and affectionate Aramaic term for "father." It indicates intimacy as opposed to legalism or formality. Modern equivalents would be "daddy" or "poppa."

In Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin or any religion; we are **God's children** and, therefore, **His heirs** ([4:7](#)). If you are spiritually mature, you will **recognize your family relationship** and...

Refuse to Return to Spiritual Bondage (4:8-11)

Paul reminds the Galatians they were formerly enslaved to idols that *are no gods* (4:8). So, he asks them why they are turning *again to the weak and beggarly elements* that enslave them (4:9).

Since they know God as their Father, why would they return to the slavery of *elements* that are powerless to save? In other words, *bondage* to the Law is the same as *bondage* to pagan gods because neither has the power to save or bring spiritual liberation.

Then, in [verse 10](#), what does Paul cite as an example of keeping the Law in an attempt to earn God's favor?

In Judaism, observing these required times had been distorted into a way of earning salvation rather than honoring God, as they were originally intended ([Lev. 23-25](#)). However, as far as salvation is concerned, they have absolutely no saving power. That's why Paul calls them *weak and beggarly elements* (4:9c). Does this mean it is wrong for us to have special days such as Easter and Christmas? It's according to how we observe them.

How does [1 Corinthians 10:31b](#) tell us special days can be properly observed?

Because the Galatians are returning to observing these special times as part of their salvation, Paul feels his efforts with them were *in vain* (4:11). This doesn't mean Paul is afraid they will lose their salvation, but that it will render them spiritually unfruitful.

If you are spiritually mature, you will **recognize your family relationship, refuse to return to spiritual bondage**, and...

Respond to Offenses Lovingly (4:12-20)

Even though the Galatians believed and supported some malicious things that had been said about him, Paul lovingly writes: *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am* (4:12a-b). The affectionate term translated **brethren** (**ADELPHOS**, ad-el-fos) refers to siblings, or brothers and sisters of the same family. As beloved brothers and sisters, Paul pleads with them to be like him and stop trying to earn or to keep their salvation through legalism. Paul reminds the Galatians: *for I am as ye are* (4:12c). This probably means he virtually became a Gentile to win them to Christ. Paul adds: *ye have not injured me at all* (4:12d), which means they did not mistreat him when he first preached to them. Paul's method of winning others was always to meet people where they were.

How does Paul describe his evangelistic methods in [1 Corinthians 9:22c-d](#)?

Paul would never compromise or "water down" the Gospel, but he would restrict his own freedom in Christ so he might *by all means possibly save some*. In the same way, we are to use *all possible means* to reach

people. This includes special outreach days, Church school, home Bible studies, fellowships, parties, women and men's ministries, sports, personal evangelism, etc. All these are "hooks" that make us better *fishers of men* ([Mt 4:19](#)). However, we can never change or "water down" the message.

Paul writes, *through infirmity of the flesh*, or illness, he first preached the Gospel to them ([4:13](#)). Even though Paul's illness was an imposition to the Galatians, they received Paul as an *angel*, or messenger, of God, *even as Christ Jesus* ([4:14](#)). However, for some reason, things have changed because Paul asks what has happened to the sense of *blessedness* they had when he was with them ([4:15a](#)).

Paul's *infirmity* probably had something to do with his eyes. For, what does he write in [verse 15c-d](#)? We have further reason to believe Paul's *infirmity* was some kind of eye disease because later he mentions writing this epistle with *large letters* ([6:11](#)).

After reminding the Galatians of their kindness toward him, he asks if he has become their *enemy* because he tells them *the truth* ([4:16](#)). Paul was now being treated like an *enemy* because they didn't want to hear *the truth*. However, Paul was a real friend to the Galatians because real friends tell us what we **need** to hear, not what we **want** to hear ([Prov. 27:6](#)).

Paul warns the Galatians that the Judaizers want to *exclude* them from him so they will only listen to the false teachers ([4:17](#)). Paul continues: *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you* ([4:18](#)). In other words, it was right for the Galatians to do *good* to Paul, but they should do it all the time, not just when he is with them.

Paul lovingly writes: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you* ([4:19](#)). Their abandonment of the Gospel of grace causes Paul great pain, like that of childbirth. Paul wants Christ to be *formed* in them, as He should be in us. Christ being *formed* in us refers to inner, Christ-like character that shows up outwardly in our lives.

How does Paul express this in [Romans 8:29a](#)?

Paul concludes this passage: *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice* ([4:20a](#)). For some reason, Paul could not return to Galatia and talk to them face-to-face, which is always the best way to clear up a problem or misunderstanding. His firm *voice* might be different if he could sit down and discuss the matter with them in person.

However, the information he has about the Galatians forsaking the truth of the Gospel is causing him to *stand in doubt* about them ([4:20b](#)). Paul can't understand how people whom he had taught the Gospel and who had genuinely believed it, could now be turning back *again to the weak and beggarly elements* of the Law that can never save ([4:9](#)).

This perplexes Paul because he has no doubt taught them what truth in [Romans 3:24](#)?

Though Paul is in pain ([4:19](#)) and *in doubt* ([4:20](#)), he responds to the offenses of the Galatians lovingly because he is spiritually mature.

If you are spiritually mature, you will:

RECOGNIZE YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIP,

REFUSE TO RETURN TO SPIRITUAL BONDAGE,

RESPOND TO OFFENSES LOVINGLY.