

3/1/26

Sons Of Freedom Or Slaves Of Bondage?
Gal. 4:1-11

At times a person inherits a great fortune, but due to their youth and immaturity wasted all by their choice of lifestyle.

* The natural response of any person would be, “Why would he choose to throw it all away and settle for so little in life?”

This is precisely what Paul was saying to the Galatians who desired to be slaves under the law, rather than sons of God through faith in Christ according to promise.

The Galatians had acted like unappreciative heirs, willing to throw away the riches of their inheritance as sons of Abraham, to be slaves of the law.

Therefore Paul pointed out to the Galatians the difference between an heir of the law and an heir of grace by declaring three truths. Gal. 4:1-11

- I. The inferior position of an heir under law. vs. 1-3
- II. The superior position of an heir under grace. vs. 4-7
- III. The inferior regression of an heir under grace to law. vs. 8-11

I. The inferior position of an heir under law.
vs. 1-3

* Inferiority not in source, but only in that law was temporary and preparatory for grace.

A. The explanation of inferiority. Gal. 4:1-2

1. The heir of his father’s estate under law was a minor, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child.” vs. 1a-b
 - a. The word child “nepios” was a child under age, a minor in contrast to an adult child.
 - b. One who could not discern things clearly, in need of ongoing and future instruction.
2. The heir of his father’s estate under law was no different than a slave, though all was his, “does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all.” vs. 1c-d
 - a. The child as an heir had no authority to make decisions nor controlled the estate.
 - b. The child was simply fed, sheltered and clothed, like the slave.
3. The heir under law could not do as he wanted, “but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” vs. 2a
 - a. The word guardians “epitropos” refers to one who has the care of a child's person.
 - b. The person would be like an overseer.
4. The heir under law managed nothing being under “stewards”. vs. 2a

- a. The word stewards “oikonomos”, means a manager of a household with financial responsibilities, but owned nothing.
 - b. Jesus used it in the Parable of the faithful and wise steward at His return. Lk. 12:42
5. The heir under law was on probation, “until the time appointed by the father.” vs. 2a
- a. This illustration is more from Greek and Roman law, not Jewish.
 - b. The Greeks 7-18 were cared for by the father, then at 18 he entered into full responsibility as an adult.
 - 1) It took place at the festival of “Apatouria”.
 - 2) The child passed from his father to the state.
 - c. The Romans released a child at age 14 of the guardian, at 25 years of the steward.
 - 1) It took place at the family festival called “Liberalia”, held annually on the 17th of March.
 - 2) The young man was acknowledged and adopted as a son and heir, receiving a garment called “Toga”, becoming a citizen with full rights.
 - d. Phrygian law varied more in age, custodian function was at the discretion of the father.

B. The application of inferiority. vs. 3

1. The Jews as heirs under law were minor children spiritually, “Even so we, when we were children.” vs. 3a-b
 - a. Even so “we”, the Jews were children under the law. Paul included himself. Gal. 2:15, 17, 23, 25
 - b. The Jews were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterwards be revealed. Gal. 3:23
 - c. The law was a tutor to bring them to Christ. Gal. 3:24-25
2. The Jews as heirs under law were bound under the law, “were in bondage under the elements of the world.” vs. 3c
 - a. The Jews were in bondage “douloo”, means to be made a slave, not free. under the elements of the world.
 - b. The word elements “stoicheia” is a military term and means a row, rank or series of things, referring to basic principles such as ABC of the alphabet or rudimentary knowledge.
 - 1) It is used of the basic principles of the world opposed to God’s Word. Col. 2:8, 20
 - 2) It is used of basic principles of God’s Word for the Christian. Heb. 5:12
* Context determines the meaning.
 - 3) It is used of the physical elements to melt with fervent heat. 2Pet. 3:10

- c. Paul used the word referring to the elements of the law given at Sinai to the Jews that were the duties and methods prescribed, being preparatory and temporal to transition to what was to come and not an end in themselves. vs. 2
 * The word “kosmos” refers to the inhabitation of the earth.

Illustration

The inferiority of an heir under law was so because of his temporary and preparatory relation to the heir in Christ, much like a baby during the 9 month development and then was born.

Application

Sometimes people in the church get caught up with legalism of self-righteousness and begin to emphasize certain things as marks of true righteousness and true spirituality.

1. Some begin to impose vegetables, rather than meat as a sign of being more spiritual. Rom. 14:1-3
 - a. The principle is that we are to receive the one who is weak in the faith and not to dispute with them over doubtful things. vs. 1
 * Doubtful things, are those of personal conscience, which the Scriptures say nothing about and are not sin in and of themselves!
 - b. The second principle is that the one who eats all things is the stronger spiritually and the one

who is unable to eat the meat and only vegetables is the weaker spiritually. vs. 2

- * This is only if it is a choice due to the defilement of conscience, if it is by choice of health or a mere choice without attaching any spiritual superiority, then it does not mean they are spiritually weaker or immature!
- c. The third principle is that the one who eats is not to despise him who does not eat and he who does not eat, not judge him who eats; for God has received him. vs. 3
 * There is to be given to every individual room to grow and mature in Christ and what God judges most is our attitudes towards others!
 2. Some will always bring up the Sabbath day and how we as Christians are to keep it.
 - a. Reasoning that it is one of the ten commandments and we are to be called to keep.
 - b. Failing to see that the covenant of the Sabbath was made with Israel a perpetual covenant with Israel, to be kept forever. Ex. 20:8; 31:16
 * Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
 - d. The church was never commanded nor was it even mentioned at the First church council, when they discussed the fact of circumcision and what the Gentile Christians were obligated to do according to the law. Acts 15
 - 1) They said, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you

abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

“Acts 15:28-29

- 2) And the Pharisees said to Him, “Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” And He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Mk. 2:24, 27-28

The position of an heir under law was inferior!

II. The superior position of an heir under grace. vs. 4-7

* Superiority in that having a relation to the law it is the fulfillment of the law!

A. The explanation of superiority. Gal. 4:4-5

1. The heir under grace and God’s plan, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.” vs. 4
 - a. The plan of grace stands in sharp contrast to the law. “But when the fullness of the time had come.” vs. 4a
 - 1) The word “But” is a conjunction contrasting the probationary period of the law and the appointed time of grace for the transition.

- 2) The phrase “the fullness of time” is another contrast to the temporal time of the law. vs. 2
- 3) The phrase marks the end of God’s preparatory time through the law, the word fullness “pleroma” means the sum total or completion of the prophetic fulfillment.
 - b. The word time “chronos”, refers to linear or running time.
 - 1) We get our word chronology from it.
 - 2) Paul identifies the set and appointed time of God in salvation history of man for the New covenant of grace for Jew and Gentile to become one in Christ by the proclamation of the gospel that had arrived.
 - c. The various things present at the time confirmed the prophetic appointed time for the Messiah and to preach the gospel.
 - 1) The Scriptures had been gathered under Ezra under the Great Synagogue, establishing the canon.
 - 2) The synagogues were instituted to study the Scriptures, anticipating a Savior after the Babylonian captivity.
 - 3) The Greek language had been established as the common tongue or language by Alexander the Great.

- 4) Rome had united the empire by extensive roads for travel and communication.
- 5) Rome was in a time of unity and peace known as “Pax Romana” and the shrine of the god of war, Janus, was closed.
* The month of January is named after Janus.
- 6) The world was experiencing a time of a religious void.
 - a)) Time appointed by God the father of the heirs. vs. 2
 - b)) Paul told the Corinthians the end of the ages had come. 1Cor. 10:11
 - c)) The author of Hebrews tells his audience, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these **last days spoken to us by His Son.**” Heb. 1:21-a
- d. The phrase “God sent forth His Son” marked the Son’s commission. vs. 4b
 - 1) The phrase sent forth “exapostello” means out of one who sends another with a commission. Heb. 3:1
 - 2) The pre-existence of Jesus is not the intent of Paul in the context as some often teach, though it can be inferred, the intent is His deity. Mic. 5:2; Jn. 1:1

- e. The phrase “born of a woman, born under the law”, refers to his humanity and the method. vs. 4c-d
 - 1) The phrase born of a woman simply refers to a physical human birth.
 - a)) It is used of the birth of John the Baptist. Matt. 11:11; Lk. 7:28
 - b)) “Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.” Job 14:1
 - 2) Some interpret this to mean Jesus was born of a virgin, but it is foreign to the context, Paul is emphasizing the commission and method of His birth.
* Gen. 3:15; Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7-8; Heb. 2:9
- f. The phrase “under the law” reveals His mission to fulfill the Law through perfect obedience to end the probationary period.
 - 1) Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Matt. 5:17
 - 2) Jesus said, “I do always those things that please the Father”, “Which of you convicts me of sin?” Jn. 8:29, 46
 - 4) Paul said, “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, God sent His own Son, on account of sin: He condemn sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” Rom. 8:3-4

- 5) Jesus was made sin for us, yet He was born without sin to be our High Priest. 2Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26-27
- 6) Hebrews states, “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come--In the **volume** of the book it is written of Me--To do Your will, O God.’” Heb 10:7; “Ps. 40:7”
2. The heir under grace and God’s purpose, “to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” vs. 5
 - a. First to redeem those who were under the law, the Jews.
 - * The word redeem “exagorazo” means to buy out from the slave market in view of his freedom. Gal. 1:4; 3:13; 1Cor. 6:20; 1Pet. 1:18-19
 - b. Second to receive the adoption as sons, “we” the Jews first, then the Gentiles.
 - 1) The word adoption “huiiothesia” means the placing of a son.

- 2) The word was used in Roman law to give the place of a legitimate son to whom it didn’t naturally belong.
- 3) Paul uses it five times in the New Testament. Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5

B. The application of superiority. vs. 6-7

1. The heir under grace is an adult son, not a minor or slave as those under the law, “And because you are sons”, “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son,” vs. 6a, 7a
 - a. The word sons “huios” is an adult son, found four times in verses six and seven.
 - 1) Sons of Abraham. Gal. 3:7, 18
 - 2) No longer under guardians and stewards. vs. 2
2. The heir under grace has received the Holy Spirit, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. vs. 6b
 - a. Notice the entire Trinity is involved, “God sent forth the Spirit of His Son”.
 - 1) It is also called the Spirit of Christ and eternal Spirit. Rom. 8:9-10; Heb. 9:14
 - 2) The entire Trinity is present in our heart; our body is the temple of God. Jn. 14:16, 23; 1Cor. 6:19
 - b. The word heart “kardia” stands for man’s entire personality, intellect, emotions and will, the seat of passion and spiritual life.

- 1) Without God's Spirit man's heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, all manner of evil comes from it. Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19
- 2) With God's Spirit man has a new heart and divine nature to keep his heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Prov. 4:23; 2Pet. 1:3-4
3. The heir under grace has received a new and superior relationship, "crying out, Abba, Father." vs. 6c-d
 - a. The word "Abba" is Aramaic for daddy, a loving, confident intimate relation, found three times in the New Testament.
 - 1) Jesus used it in prayer regarding the Father. Mk. 14:36
 - 2) Paul says, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba Father." Rom. 8:15
 - 3) It is the Spirit that cries out not the person. Rom. 8:15
 - b. Even as it is the Spirit that makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, according to the will of God. Rom. 8:27
4. The heir under grace is an heir of God, "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a

son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." vs. 7

- a. The mediator is "through Christ."
 - * Paul says that through the person of Christ, we are joint heir. Rom. 8:17
- b. According to the promise. Gal. 3:29
 - * No works, not law, but faith and grace!
- c. Our inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven. 1Pet. 1:4
- d. Our inheritance is called an eternal inheritance. Heb. 9:15

Illustration

In his splendid book of anecdotes entitled Bible Windows, Ivor Powell tells the story of a rich man who died and left no heirs. When his household goods were auctioned off, an elderly lady dressed in shabby garments was the only one to bid on the picture of the dead man's son. It had been greatly cherished by the wealthy father because his only child had died at an early age.

But the crowd that had gathered for the sale showed no interest in it. When the woman who bought the portrait was asked why she wanted it, she said she had been the boy's nurse many years before, and had loved him dearly.

Later she examined the picture closely and noticed a bulge in the heavy paper on the back.

Making a small cut, she removed an envelope which turned out to be the man's missing will. The document very clearly stated that he wanted to leave his property to the person who still held dear the memory of his beloved son. #660 -Our Daily Bread

Application

1. If the covenant of grace had not been given to Abraham, there would still be a “wall of separation” and all would be lost apart from the Jews, who were given the promised covenant. Eph. 2:14
2. God did not redeem us by turning a blind eye to our sin or through mere religious motions, but He did it by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. Rom. 8:3; 2Cor. 5:21; 1Jn. 2:2
3. The deposit of God’s guarantee and sincerity to each of us is His Holy Spirit, as a pledge or downpayment, it could be translated an “engagement ring”. Eph. 1:14
* We have been betrothed to one husband, even Christ as a chaste virgin. 2Cor. 11:2

The position of an heir of grace was superior!

III. The inferior regression of an heir under grace to law. vs. 8-11

- * Regression is always inferior and progression is always superior, for the regression is going from Freedom to Bondage!

- A. The life of the Galatians in the past. vs. 8
 1. The Galatians were in spiritual ignorance, “But then, indeed, when you did not know God.” vs. 8a-b
 - a. At Lystra Paul and Barnabas were taken for gods Jupiter and Mercury and the priest was ready to sacrifice to them. Acts 14:8-13
 - b. Their ignorance is proclaimed, “why are you doing this thing”. Acts 14:14-16
* The Galatians worship by a religious system, but it did not reveal God or provide a personal knowledge of God!
 2. The Galatians used to serve false gods, “you served those which by nature are not gods.” vs. 8c
 - a. Serving worthless things. Acts 14:15
 - b. Material idols, not divine. Acts 17:29-30
 - c. Their essential character was after the nature of creation, not the Creator. Rom. 1:18-23
* The word served “douloo” means to be a slave to, in context ascribing supernatural power that can work for or against the person through Satan.
 - d. The Galatians had turned from their vain idolatry to the Living God by Paul’s preaching. Acts 14:15; Gal. 3:1-2; 4:13
- B. The life of the Galatians in the present. vs. 9-11

1. The Galatians were known of God, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God.” vs. 9a-b
 - a. The contrast is indicated by the word “but” and notice Paul supplements his statement to reveal both the divine and the human co-participation in salvation.
 - 1) God is the initiator of salvation, not man.
 - 2) Man is the responder, not God!
 - b. The term have known “ginosko” means to know by experience and the tense is the aorist active, a true and actual fact in the present by the preaching of Paul. Gal. 4:13; 3:1-2
 - c. The word rather “mallon” means more or better and could be translated “to a greater degree”, “are known by God”.
 - 1) That man knows God is one thing, but for God to know us, that is the great or better perspective!
 - 2) The word known “ginosko” means the same as before, to come to know by experience.
 - 3) The tense is now the aorist **passive**, a true and actual fact in the past and were still known.
2. The Galatians were turning from God, amazing Paul, “how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements.” vs. 9c

- a. They had been set free from ignorance of idols, but now wanted to turn again to weak and beggarly elements.
 - 1) The phrase “you turn again”, “epistrepho palin”, means to turn around anew.
 - 2) The phrase is a technical term for religious conversion or for apostatizing, like in our text.
 - 3) They had turned to Christ from their paganism in the past, but now in the present had turned from Christ.
 - 4) The tense is the indicative present active, they were in the process.
- b. The word elements “stoicheia” means basic principles as ABC, like verse three.
 - 1) The rituals and works of the law were being put on the same level by Paul as those they practiced as pagans prior to knowing God because they were as useless to bring justify them, Christ having come. vs. 3
 - 2) Weak because they were powerless to justify or redeem man.
 - 3) Beggarly because they were bankrupt to atone for man’s sins in comparison to the riches of grace in Christ.
 - 4) The law only spoke of shadows and things to come!
 - * Their choice had made them poor and paupers!

C. The Galatians were choosing bondage. vs. 9d-10

1. They thought to be progressing, but instead were regressing, “to which you desire again to be in bondage?” vs. 9d
 - a. They had served those which by nature were not gods. vs. 8c
 - b. The phrase “you desire again” is in the present tense,, the desire was in progress.
 - c. The adverb again “palin” marks their decision to revert to their unsalved state, compared to their former pagan state.
2. They now wanted to be in bondage to those things which were given to lead men to God, “You observe days and months and seasons and years.” vs. 10
 - a. They observed days, meant Sabbath days and Sabbaths of feast days.
 - b. They observed months, meant New moons.
 - c. They observed seasons, the feasts of Pentecost, Passover and Tabernacles.
 - d. They observed years, meant Sabbatic every seven years and Jubilee, the 50th year of release.
 - 1) The word observe “paratereisthe” means to stand besides and watch carefully and scrupulously, in the present tense, they had begun.
 - 2) The word is used of Jesus, to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. Lk. 6:7

- d. They had served those which by nature were not gods and now they were merely making a shift to legalism under the law like circumcision, only to ensnare them.

D. The Galatians were in danger. vs. 11

1. Paul expressed his concern, as their spiritual father, “I am afraid for you.” vs. 11a
 - a. The word fearful “phobeo” means to be put to flight, terrified.
 - * A fearful distress for them, not himself, in the present tense and middle voice!
 - b. This is the first statement of passionate concern is out of his love for them and others will follow. vs. 16, 19, 20
 - c. For three and a half chapters, Paul has been rebuking them.
 - d. The only word of affection has been “brethren”, but now, “I am afraid for you!”
 - e. They had deviated from total dependency on Christ. vs. 11a
2. Paul expressed his fear, “lest I have labored for you in vain.” vs. 11b
 - a. They had ignored the labor of Paul over them, the word labor, “kopiao” to labor to point of exhaustion.
 - b. The perfect tense indicates past ministry with continuing results.

- c. The apostle feared that the continuing result might stop by the word vain “eike”, without success.

Illustration

High atop the United States Capitol dome in Washington stands the statue of the stately “Freedom Lady,” almost 20 feet high. Her face is framed by a crest of stars. A shield of stars and stripes is in her left hand.

The sculptured Freedom Lady was brought from Rome during a fierce storm, and the captain ordered some cargo thrown overboard. The sailors wanted to include the heavy statue, but the captain refused, shouting above the wind, “No! Never! We’ll flounder before we throw Freedom away.”

-James C. Helley #1781

Application

1. One of the most radical statements any person can make is to say all who do not believe and trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, do not know God. Jn. 14:6
 - a. They may have known there is a God by evidence of the creation and conscience. Rom. 1:20, 2:15
 - b. They may know things about God, but that doesn’t mean they know God, this is the consistent evidence through the Scriptures.
* Jn. 1:10; 1Thess. 4:5; 2Thess. 1:8; Eph. 2:12

2. One of the most grievous things for a Pastor is to see people turn back to religion or the world.
 - a. They became insensate like their gods, blind, deaf and dumb. Ps. 115:4-8
 - b. They fail to see the obvious error. Is. 44:19-20
 - c. Paul called them worthless devices of men. Acts 14:15; 17:29
 - d. They worship devils or demons by idolatry. 1Cor. 10:20; Deut. 32:17
3. How sad and heart breaking it is to see people turn back to the world and live as they did before.
 - a. It begins by drifting slowly. Heb. 2:1-4
 - b. It moves to unbelief in the Living God. Heb. 3:12
 - c. It is said to be a most dangerous and fearful thing. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29
 - d. It is based on not exercising faith. Heb. 11:1, 6
 - e. It is bondage all over again, the latter end being worse than the first. 2Pet. 2:18-22
4. Be careful that you do not mix any religious practices as a means for righteousness.
 - a. Robbing you through philosophy, empty deceit and tradition, according to the basic principles of the world and not Christ, in Whom you are complete. Col. 2:9-10, 19-23
 - b. He who observes the day does it to the Lord. Rom. 14:6
 - c. No one is to judge you in food, drink, festival or new moon or Sabbaths which are shadow of things to come. 2Cor. 8-9; Col. 2:16-17

- 1) The Catholic religion there is Lent, a 40 day penitence of self-denial beginning with Ash Wednesday!
- 2) What are you allowing to be mixed with God's word and turning to bondage?

The regression of an heir of grace to law was inferior!

Conclusion

Paul revealed to the Galatians the difference between an heir of the law and an heir of grace by proclaiming three truths.

- I. The position of an heir under law was inferior and still is!
- II. The position of an heir grace was superior and still is!
- III. The regression of an heir of grace to law was inferior and still is!