

# GALATIANS

## Galatians 4:1-11 | "An Heir of God"

### I. THE LAW'S INADEQUACY TO PRODUCE CHRIST-LIKE SPIRITUAL SONS (v. 1-20)

#### BONDAGE UNDER THE LAW (v. 1-3)

(1) Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

(2) But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

- A. "child" - Gr. *nēpios* - "infant; minor; simple-minded; immature; baby"
  
- B. "tutors" - Gr. "guardians"
  - 1. These were those *guardians* of minors who would care for and oversee the children.
  - 2. We would use the word "nanny" as a similar word in our modern English.
  
- C. "governors" - Gr. "household-managers; household-stewards"
  - 1. The *steward* was a slave that was entrusted with the management of his master's affairs or estate.
    - a. He controlled the staff and issued the supplies.<sup>1</sup>
    - b. He took care of receipts and expenditures in dealing with his finances.
  
- D. The Apostle Paul is giving an ILLUSTRATION FROM THE CULTURE.
  - 1. Jewish culture:
    - a. Once a boy turns 13 years old, he would be Bar Mitzvah'd, which literally means "son of the

<sup>1</sup> William Barclay. 1 Cor 4:1-5 <http://www.dannychesnut.com/Bible/Barclay/First%20and%20Second%20Corinthians.htm>

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commandment," and would be considered an adult and would have the rights of an adult.

2. Roman culture:
  - a. When a boy was between the ages of 14-17, there would be a ceremony where he would put on an adult toga and give his toy ball to Apollo to show that he had put away childish things.
- E. **NOTE:** Paul is making the point that even in their culture, a boy was considered a "child/baby" in the eyes of the Law, even if he was the heir of his father's inheritance, *until the time appointed of the father.*
  1. Before a child comes of age, he/she cannot make any legal decisions and are not really in charge of their own lives yet. Everything is done and directed for the child, and so really has no more freedom than a slave.
  2. **Illust.** - The legal age of adulthood here in the U.S. is 18 years old. Some parents might feel that this is too young for their child to receive their inheritance, so they put instructions in a Trust that the child cannot access the assets until their 21, 25, or 30 years old (whatever the parents determine). In that case, in the eyes of the Law, they are still considered children as far as their inheritance is concerned. The child is still under the limitations of the Law as their guardian and manager of their inheritance *"until the time appointed of the father."*

### (3) Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

- A. "elements" - Gr. *stoicheion* - "basic principles; rudimentary principles; elementary rules"
  1. This word has the idea of the ABC's, or elementary knowledge.
- B. We were in bondage to these "elementary principles of the world."
  1. The ABC's and elementary principles of the world are:

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- a. You get what you deserve. If you're good, you'll get good. If you're bad, you'll get bad.
    - 1) Some call it karma.
    - 2) Some call it "you get what you deserve."
  - b. Our world lives under these basic principles: you do good, get good; you do bad, get bad.
2. That kind of living is "bondage." Living in the grace of God is the opposite of living under the "elements of the world."
- C. **KEY:** God does NOT deal with us on the principle of EARNING and DESERVING. He deals with us on the principle of GRACE.
1. Our good cannot justify us under grace; our bad cannot condemn us under grace.
  2. **NOTE:** Because this is such an *elementary principle*, it is so hard for us to shake this kind of thinking. But it is essential if we will walk in grace.
  3. **KEY:** When we live on the principle of earning and deserving before God, we live in "*bondage under the elements of the world.*"

### SONSHIP THROUGH CHRIST (v. 4-7)

**(4) But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,**

**"But when the fulness of the time was come,"**

- A. "*the fulness of time*" — this phrase has the idea of "*when the time was right*"
- B. Jesus came at JUST THE RIGHT TIME in God's redemptive history:
  1. The time was right POLITICALLY.
    - a. There was peace in the Roman Empire.

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- 1) The doors of the *Temple of Janus* were closed, which meant there was no war. When there was war, the doors would be open and the people would seek their gods for protection for the soldiers, but at this time there was universal peace.
  - 2) There was an incredible road system that connected the Roman Empire, making it easy for missionaries to take the gospel to the known world.
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2. The time was right CULTURALLY.
    - a. Greek culture and the Greek language were established in the whole world, which made the Gospel readily understood and accessible.
  3. The time was right RELIGIOUSLY.
    - a. The Old Testament scrolls were put together and translated into Greek (LXX).
    - b. Jewish synagogues were located throughout the Roman Empire which made it easier for Paul and others to come in and make initial converts and establish a church.
  4. The time was right PROPHETICALLY.
    - a. The prophet Daniel had predicted that the Messiah would come 483 years after the command was given to rebuild the Temple. That command to rebuild the Temple was given to Nehemiah on March 14, 445 b.c., and Jesus was publicly declared to be the Messiah on April 6, 32 a.d., which was exactly 483 years to the day ([Dan. 9:24-26](#))!!

### "God sent forth his Son,"

- A. "sent forth" - Gr. "commissioned out; sent on a mission"

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1. **NOTE:** This insinuates the PRE-EXISTENCE of Jesus Christ, thus His DEITY!
  - a. In order to be sent forth by God the Father, He must have ALREADY EXISTED before He became a Baby and born in Bethlehem!
    - 1) Cf. **Micah 5:2** - *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, **from everlasting.**"*
- B. "His Son"
  1. This speaks of the DEITY of Jesus Christ.
    - a. The phrase "Son of God" speaks of POSITION, NOT ORIGIN.
      - 1) In other words, Jesus did NOT BECOME the Son of God, but HAS ALWAYS BEEN the Son of God.
    - b. Cf. **John 5:18** - *"Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, **but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.**"*
    - c. Cf. **John 10:30-33** - *"I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and **because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**"*
    - d. Cf. **John 19:6-7** - *"When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, **because he made himself the Son of God.**"*

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- C. Cf. **Isaiah 9:6** - "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*"
- D. Cf. **Isaiah 48:16** - "*Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.*"
- E. Cf. **John 3:17, 34; 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 36-38; 6:28-29, 38-40, 44, 57; 7:16, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21**

### "made of a woman,"

- A. "made" - Gr. "*born; came about; became*"
  - 1. This word has the idea of "*to emerge, become, transitioning from one point (realm, condition) to another.*" Thus, this word clearly shows the PRE-EXISTENCE of the Son of God.
    - a. **KEY:** God the Son ADDED HUMANITY to His Deity, thus becoming a man Who was "*born of a woman.*"
- B. This is no doubt a reference to THE VIRGIN BIRTH BY MARY. It does not say born of a *man*, but born of a *woman*.
  - 1. Cf. **Genesis 3:15** - "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*"
    - a. **NOTE:** Women don't have seed. Men have seed.
  - 2. Cf. **Isaiah 7:14** - "*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*"
    - a. **KEY:** In the Gospel of Matthew, which was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he uses the Greek word for "*virgin,*" not "*young maiden*" (**Matt. 1:23**)!

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### "made under the law,"

- A. Jesus was a Jew, and grew up and lived under the Jewish Law.
  - 1. Cf. **Matthew 5:17** - Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."*
  - 2. Cf. **Luke 2:27, 39** - *"And he [Simeon] came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him **after the custom of the law**, ... And when they had performed all things **according to the law of the Lord**, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."*

### (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

### "To redeem them that were under the law,"

- A. "redeem" - Gr. "ransom; purchase; buy off; rescue"
  - 1. **Illust.** - A child gets abducted and held for ransom. Once the ransom is paid, the child would get released back.

### "that we might receive the adoption of sons."

- A. **Q** = Who was the initiator of this redemption?... (**v. 4**) "God sent forth His Son" — God the Father initiated our redemption!
  - 1. Sometimes we think that God the Father is angry at us and waiting to give vengeance to us, but Jesus rescued us and pacified the Father.
  - 2. However, the Father was the one that sent Jesus to accomplish this! He loves you and sent Jesus "*that we might receive the adoption of sons*"!!
- B. "adoption of sons" - Gr. *huiothesia* - "adult-sonship"

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1. The Greek word *huiothesia* is a compound word which comes from 2 Greek words: *huios* ("son come of age") & *thesia* ("a placing, or setting a person or thing in its place."), thus "placing someone as an adult."
2. The word "adoption" is an unfortunate translation, yet it is the best translation in the English language.
  - a. When we think of adoption, we think of a child not born to the parents becoming their own child by execution of legal papers and that child inheriting all the legal rights (inheritance, medical decisions of parents, etc.)
  - b. However, God's children are called *teknon* ("born-ones"). We are born into God's family.
    - 1) Cf. **John 1:11-13** - "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become **the sons [Gr. teknon - "born-ones"]** of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
3. **KEY:** We are *teknon* ("born-ones") when we are born again by the Spirit, and then we get "adopted" as an *adult son* with all the legal rights of an heir!

**(6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.**

- A. **Q** = Who sent "the Spirit of His Son"?... God the Father!
1. Cf. **John 14:16-18, 26** - Jesus told His disciples, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. ... But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
- B. "Abba" - Greek transliteration of Hebrew - "Daddy; Papa"

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1. Years ago, while in Israel, it was so neat to see the little boys and girls running to their dads saying, "Abba! Abba!" It was so sweet and endearing.
2. Though some have become irreverent in their approach to God ("my buddy; big guy upstairs"), He does want us to have that intimate endearing relationship with Him.
  - a. **Illust.** - When my kids were little, I would get home from work, and my kids would yell, "Daddy!!!" and run into my arms. Oh that would warm my heart! They felt so comfortable and know that I love them and I'm there for them.
    - 1) **Q** = How weird would it be if my kids talked to me the way that we sometimes talk to God in such a formal way?...
      - a) "Father, I come to thee with my request, and I petition thee to provide through thine vast resources..."
      - b) I would much prefer my kids come to me and say, "Dad, can I have five bucks?"
3. Martin Luther: "Let the Law, sin, and the devil cry out against us until their outcry fills heaven and earth. The Spirit of God outcries them all. Our feeble groans, 'Abba, Father,' will be heard of God sooner than the combined racket of hell, sin, and the Law."<sup>2</sup>

### C. "Abba, Father"

1. I think there's a balance here. We need to have the utmost respect and honor because of Who He is, "Father." Yet, at the same time He desires that we feel the complete freedom to approach Him as "Abba."

**(7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.**

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### "an heir of God through Christ."

- A. I've often daydreamed what it would be like to inherit a fortune.
  - 1. When I was 18 years old, my grandmother left me her mobile home and large TV, and by selling that mobile home, I was able to buy my guitar and pay for Bible College. What a blessing.
  - 2. As far as I know, I will not inherit a fortune from anyone. I know I won't inherit one from my mom, and I didn't from my dad when he died.
  
- B. I came to realize I am *an heir of God*. GOD HIMSELF IS OUR INHERITANCE.
  - 1. Cf. **1 Peter 3:18** - "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, **that he might bring us to God**, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*"
    - a. Once we were brought "*to God*," we received our inheritance, which is GOD HIMSELF!
  - 2. All of the inherent blessings and privileges of being a child of God are mine.
    - a. All of His resources are at my disposal.
      - 1) There's an old hymn "He Owns The Cattle On A Thousand Hills":

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills  
The wealth in ev'ry mine  
He owns the rivers and the rocks and rills  
The sun and stars that shine  
Wonderful riches more than tongue can tell  
He is my Father so they're mine as well  
He owns the cattle on a thousand hills  
I know that He will care for me

### DESIRE TO RETURN TO BONDAGE (v. 8-11)

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(8) Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

**"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God,"**

- A. The description of Gentile Christians before our conversion is "ye knew not God."
  - 1. Cf. **Ephesians 2:11-13** - "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, **having no hope, and without God in the world**: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

**"ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods."**

- A. Only Israel served the true God. All the Gentiles served and worship false gods, "which by nature are no gods"!

(9) But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

**"But now, after that ye have known God,"**

- A. The most important thing in this life is that you KNOW GOD.
  - 1. **Q** = Do you know God personally?...
    - a. Cf. **John 17:3** - "And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee the only true God**, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
    - b. Cf. **Jeremiah 9:23-24** - "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, **that he understandeth and knoweth me**, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and

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*righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."*

- c. Cf. [Hosea 6:6](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [2 Timothy 1:12](#)

### "or rather are known of God,"

- A. Maybe even more important than knowing God, is making sure the HE KNOWS YOU!
1. Cf. [Matthew 7:21-23](#) - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
  2. Cf. [John 10:22-28](#) - When Jesus was celebrating Hanukkah in Jerusalem, we read that He "walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and **I know them**, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
  3. Cf. [2 Timothy 2:19](#) - "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, **The Lord knoweth them that are his**. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

### "how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?"

- A. "weak" - Gr. "frail; feeble; insufficient; impotent; sick; lacking strength"

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- B. The Jews were in bondage of slavery to "*the elements of the world*" (regulations about food, drink, and all kinds of material things and outward actions) through the Law.
- C. The Gentiles were in a similar state of slavery to the pagan religions with all their material, cheap "earthly elements" of sacrifices, temples, ceremonies, etc.
- D. God's Son BOUGHT FREEDOM for Jews and Gentiles! (v. 5)
  - 1. **KEY:** The Galatian Christians, Jewish and Gentile, had, by faith in the Son, entered into sonship through this freedom! However, in turning to legalism, the Galatians were NOT turning to a new error, but coming back to an old one — the idea of a works-relationship with God.
- E. Warren Wiersbe: "One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a 'second childhood' of Christian experience."<sup>3</sup>

### (10) Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

- A. "days" = Sabbath days
- B. "months" = New moons
- C. "times" - Gr. "seasons" = Jewish Feasts
- D. "years" = Jewish Jubilees; following Jewish calendar

### (11) I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

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- A. The Gentile Christians thought they were more spiritual because they were observing the Jewish Law and its Feasts, and Paul is fearful that everything he worked so hard for was for nothing!
  - 1. **NOTE:** Sadly, many Christians think that if they go back to the Jewish observances that they are more spiritual.
  - 2. **KEY:** Gentile Christians are not more spiritual if they keep the Sabbath or Jewish Feasts! We already have the inheritance as children of God through Christ! (v. 7)
- B. Paul's work would have been in vain if all that he accomplished was to get the Gentile Galatians to exchange their old pagan elements and observances for the old Jewish elements and observances!
  - 1. **NOTE:** One of the fears that pastors have is that they have poured out their lives for God's people, but then for those people to get into legalism. It's make you feel like you did all that for nothing!

## II. CONCLUSION:

- A. Personal Application for you this morning:
  - 1. Realize that it is actually bondage to stay under the Law and have a legal relationship with God.
  - 2. Accept the fact that you are now a child of the King. The Creator of the universe is now your Father.
    - a. God made a way through His Son so that you can have personal access to Him as your Father.
  - 3. Develop a closer relationship with God as your Abba.
    - a. I encourage you this week to just talk to God like a Dad.
      - 1) You might have had a bad experience with your earthly dad, but don't carry that over to God. He loves you more than life itself and will never hurt you.
  - 4. Make sure that you know God, and more importantly, that He knows you.

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- a. **Q** = Have you personally received Jesus Christ into your life? Have you asked Him to forgive you of your sin? Have you received God's free gift of eternal life?...
- 1) There must come a definite moment and time in your life where you turn from your sin and receive Christ.
- b. **HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:**
- 1) Jesus died on the Cross to pay the penalty for your sins. He paid your fine, which was eternal death and separation from God.
  - 2) He was buried, but on the 3rd day, He came back to life and resurrected from the dead.
  - 3) He offers you the free gift of eternal life. All you have to do is repent and believe in Jesus Christ and what He did for you.
- c. **Q** = How can I know God and make sure He knows me?...
- 1) Admit that you are a sinner and that you need a Savior.
  - 2) Repent = turn from your sin and turn to God; stop running away from Him and change direction to run to Him!
  - 3) Receive Jesus into your life.
    - a) Cf. **John 1:12** - *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"*
    - b) Cf. **Romans 6:23** - *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*