

Freedom – From Slaves to Sons

9.20.26

Galatians 4:4-7

Sunday AM

Object Lesson: Walk out holding handcuffs or a short chain in one hand and a house key in the other.

Now, before anyone gets nervous – NO! The deacons haven't finally had me arrested.

Last week, we started a series entitled – Freedom – talking about what Jesus has set us free from and what it actually means to live free.

Now – when most of us think about freedom, we think about these coming off. In fact, if you were sitting in a jail and somebody walked in, unlocked the door, took off your chains, and said, “You’re free to go,” that’d be a pretty good day. That’s freedom.

But suppose the person did something more. Suppose he took the chains off, reached into his pocket, handed you a key to his house and then said - You're coming home w/ me. From now on, you're part of my family. You'll sit at my table, carry my name, and one day, everything I have will be part of your inheritance.

Now we're talking about something much bigger than freedom. B/c its one thing to be released from slavery and quite another to be received as a son. Yet that's what Paul was explaining in Galatians 4.

Most of us understand that the Gospel forgives our sin, break our chains, and set us free. But Galatians 4 says God had something even greater in mind. He didn't just want to get slaves out of bondage. He also came to adopt us into His family. Listen to Galatians 4:4-7:

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. B/c you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Now, you're no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir thru God. 4:4-7

In just (4) verses, Paul takes us on an amazing journey from bondage to belonging, from slavery to sonship, from fear to intimacy, and from having nothing to becoming heirs of everything God has promised in Christ. The Gospel doesn't free us from something; it brings us into something. Jesus didn't just come to release slaves. He came to make us sons/daughters – and reminding us of (4) incredible truths.

I Trust the **TIMING** of God

when the fullness of the time came.

The word – **fullness** – carries the idea of completeness – something reaching its intended measure. **IOW** – Jesus didn't arrive randomly or prematurely. He came at the precise moment God had determined.

In looking back, we can see how God had prepared the world for the coming of Jesus. Rome brought political stability and roads that allowed people to travel thru-out the empire. Greek was the common language thru-out the empire. Jewish synagogues carried the Scriptures, monotheism, and the expectation that God would one day send His Messiah. So, what looked like ordinary political/cultural, history was actually being woven together by God's providence.

This matters b/c there are times when it seems as if God is late. We pray, wait, and we wonder – *God, why haven't You stepped in?* Yet Galatians 4 reminds us that God's delays are never evidence of His inactivity but may actually be God filling the time for what He's already determined to accomplish.

Some of us are waiting right now. Waiting for healing, direction, forgiveness, opportunity, provision, or to a prayer we've had for years. We may not know when God will move, but we know the One who controls the clock. So, we don't interpret His faithfulness by our calendar but by His character.

Truth is – we get irritated if Amazon says (2) days and it takes (3) – so, maybe we shouldn't be surprised that we struggle b/c God isn't working on our schedule?

But here's the assurance: The God who perfectly timed Bethlehem can be trusted w/ the timing of our lives. He is never hurried, never behind, and never late.

II Rest in the **PRICE** Jesus Paid

God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, under the Law, so He might redeem those under the Law.

Notice Paul's precision: *God sent forth His Son*. Jesus didn't begin to exist in Bethlehem. He existed prior to being sent into the world. Even more – *He was born of a woman* – highlighting His humanity and incarnation - fully God and fully man – God in the flesh.

He was also *born under the Law*. Jesus entered Israel's covenant world and placed Himself under the very Law that condemns us. But unlike us, He obeyed it perfectly. We broke the Law; He fulfilled it. We stood guilty beneath its condemnation; He stood righteous beneath its demands. ***He placed Himself under what condemned us to rescue us from its condemnation.***

This is why Paul says we can be **redeemed**. The word carries the picture of purchasing someone out of the marketplace – buying a slave out of bondage.

Redemption means a price was paid for a captive to be released. This is what Jesus did for us. He didn't just offer advice to slaves or give a better set of rules – He paid in full the price necessary to set us free.

Biblical redemption contains at least (3) great ideas. ¹The price was paid, ²the curse was removed, and ³the captive was released.

That is – Jesus paid the ransom w/ His blood, took on the curse of the Law, and thru His finished work, released us from slavery to sin into grace.

This is where the Gospel stands in contrast to legalism. Legalism says – *I obey, so perhaps, God will accept me*. The Gospel says – *In Christ, God has accepted me, therefore I obey*.

From the outside, these two people look alike. Both attend church, serve, give, pray, and live morally. But one is working for acceptance while the other is working from acceptance. One is trying to earn God's love; the other is responding b/c he already has it.

Jesus didn't make the 1st payment on our salvation and leave us w/ the balance. He paid the price in full – *it is finished*. Our confidence doesn't rest in what we can do for God but in what Jesus has already done for us.

III Live from Your New **POSITION**

Paul then takes us beyond redemption: Jesus redeemed us *that we might receive the adoption as sons*.

This is one of the great surprises of the Gospel. If Jesus had only opened the slave market and said – You're free – that would've been more grace than we could ever deserve. But God didn't stop w/ freedom. He brought us into His family.

The word **adoption** means *to place as a son*. It was legal language describing someone being formally placed into a family w/ all the rights and privileges that belonged to an heir – teaching us that salvation is more than forgiveness. The Judge who forgives us is also the Father who adopts us. This doesn't occur naturally. It requires belief in Christ as our Savior by faith.

I think of Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9 as a picture of grace. As a surviving member of Saul's family, he came before King David w/ every reason to fear judgment, but instead David gave him a permanent place at the king's table. That's grace – it's a love that's not deserved and can never be repaid. That's us. ***We came deserving judgment only to discover that King Jesus has prepared for us a seat at His table.***

Roman adoption makes Paul's point even stronger. It meant a new identity, family, and inheritance. The old life no longer defined the son; his new father and new status did. In the same way, God's declaration over us in Christ isn't fragile or probationary – nor does our standing rise and fall w/ our performance.

This is why legalism is so tragic. ***Legalism is a son trying to live like a slave.*** It's someone who already belongs in God's house trying to earn the right to stay.

Yet a servant and a son may both obey, but for very different reasons. The servant obeys from fear; the son obeys from love b/c he knows he belongs.

God says – *son but we still think – slave*. God says – *accepted, but we still think – audition*. God says – *family, but we still think – employee*.

This is why many Christians are spiritually exhausted. It's b/c they're still auditioning for a family they've already been adopted into. They live asking – *have I done enough to keep God happy?* This isn't adoption – that's employment. If you're in Christ, you're not trying to keep a job; you're a child living in your Father's house under His loving grace.

Grace doesn't produce less obedience – it produces better obedience. We don't obey to become God's children; we obey b/c in Christ, we already are.

IV Walk in the **PRESENCE** of the Spirit

...b/c you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'

Notice the order. Paul didn't say if we live well enough, prove ourselves, or become super spiritual, perhaps God will make us sons. He says – *b/c you are sons*. Sonship comes first. Jesus secures our place in the family, and the H.S. assures us that we belong.

SEE – God sent Jesus into the world to achieve our redemption – and the H.S. so we can experience the intimacy w/ Him. This is b/c the Christian life can't be lived in our strength – but only thru the H.S.

This is why Jesus said: *Apart from Me you can do nothing*. The branch doesn't produce fruit by trying harder; it bears fruit by abiding in the vine. Likewise, we don't live the Christian life thru determination, discipline, or religious effort, we live it thru continual dependence on Jesus thru the power of the H.S.

The Christian life isn't a life we produce for Jesus; it's the life of Jesus being produced in us by His Spirit.

This is the difference b/w law/grace. The Law commands from the outside; the H.S. transforms from the inside. God places His Spirit w/in us to change our desires, motives, attitudes, and actions. So, the answer to legalism isn't try harder – it's abide deeper.

This means every day I have to surrender, trust, listen, obey, and allow the H.S. to produce in me what I can never manufacture on my won. Yet the H.S. doesn't just empower us to live differently – He enables us to relate more intimately – crying *Abba Father!*

This should change how we live:

- When I sin, I can confess instead of hiding.
- When I suffer, I can trust instead of assuming abandonment.
- When I obey, I can respond from love instead of trying to earn approval.
- When I face the future, I can live w/ confidence b/c I'm an heir.

WTM – Paul concludes – *You're no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir thru God.*

A slave is who we were. A son is who we are. And the H.S. enables us to live like who we are.

This is freedom. Not independence from God but freedom to be dependent on God w/out the bondage of trying to earn His acceptance.

YES – we were once slaves, but God sent His Son to free us. We were condemned, but Jesus paid the price. We were outsiders, but God adopted us. And we were powerless to live the Christian life, God placed His Spirit w/in us and called us to an abiding life.

So, stop trying to live the Christian life independently of the One who alone can empower you to live it. Abide in Christ. Depend on His Spirit. And live from the freedom of knowing you already belong to Him.

Pick up Chains/Key – So, maybe freedom is bigger than we thought. After all, Jesus didn't just take off the chains. He set us free and gave us a place in the Father's house. Even more, He then gave us the H.S. to enable us to actually live like we belong there.

So, stop living like a slave outside the house and start living like the beloved, adopted King's kid you are!