

God Sent Forth His Son

- Galatians 4:1-11
- Before we learn from this passage, we need to be reminded that in the book of Galatians, Paul is tying the three great figures of biblical history together, and explaining how God's plan was brought to fulfillment. The three are Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ. In the book he explains how Abraham was given the promise of God that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed. Then Moses was given the law of God, which did not overturn the promise but in fact gave us a greater desire for the promise, knowing that we cannot in our own flesh fulfill the law. Then when the fullness of time had come, God gave His Son, who came to fulfill the law so that anyone who is driven to Christ by the law will inherit the promise, which God first gave to Abraham. In Galatians 4:1-11, he tells the story again, and we can look at this text today under these three points: once we were slaves, now we are sons, who wants to be a slave again?
- **Once we were slaves** (vs. 1-3)
- Paul asks us to imagine a young boy, walking on his father's estate. He is his father's heir, and one day everything he sees, he will own. He looks out at the beauty of the landscape and sees the lakes and the forest and the open fields and he knows that one day this will be his. In fact, it is already his own in principle, but not in experience. He is still a minor. He is under guardians and managers who watch him and take him to school and tell him what to do. Because he is a son of the estate owner, he is already a lord of the estate, and a lord over those who tell him what to do every day, but he is a lord in name only. In reality, by experience, he is no better than the guardians and managers, who are servants to his father. But Paul is using the metaphor of guardian here to refer to what? What is the primary guardian of the children? The law. (**see 3:23-24**) That is the way it was with us, Paul says in verse 3, when we were under the law. We were like children, heirs of a great Father, but under bondage to the law. It is very instructive to see how the law is described here in verse 3: as the "elementary principles of the world." Paul uses the phrase again in verse 9, "weak and worthless elementary principles of the world." Why is the law called weak and worthless? Because as Spurgeon said, "the law can take us to Christ, and no further." It is weak in that it cannot save. It is worthless in that it cannot deliver on the promises of God. It can only take us to the One who can! The law is a wonderful servant but a horrible taskmaster. That's why if you notice, the word for elementary principles has a note on it, and it says it can also be translated elementary spirits. The elementary spirits were often associated with either the physical elements (earth, air, water, fire) or with the celestial bodies (sun, moon, planets, stars), which govern the seasons. And elementary spirits could also be a clear reference to demonic powers. Look at verse 8. You were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. This is an amazing statement! **Bondage to the law is like bondage to evil spirits.**
- John Stott points out an important truth about the law and continuing to act like a slave even after we have become sons. He says, "God intended the law to reveal sin and to drive men to Christ. Satan uses it to reveal sin and to drive men to despair. God meant the law as a step to man's justification. Satan uses it as the final step to man's condemnation. God meant the law to be a stepping-stone to liberty. Satan uses it as a cul-de-sac, deceiving (us) into supposing that from its fearful bondage there is no escape."
- **Now we are sons** (vs. 4-7)
- When the fullness of the time has come, **God sent forth His Son**. Have you figured up how much you spent or will spend on Christmas gifts this year? There's an amount, right? You add it up and it may come to the estimated national average per household this year of \$830 for Christmas gifts, still climbing out of the hole of 2008 when it dropped to \$616. No matter what we spend, we all have to set spending limits, don't we? I remember our first Christmas after we were married when Cindy and I each took a ten-dollar bill, split up at the mall, and went off to find that 'perfect' gift for \$10 or less for each other. That Christmas was just as happy as all the rest.

- God did not have a spending limit for the first Christmas. He spared no expense in creating the star that would be in place above Bethlehem at just the right time. He went all out in having Caesar Augustus plan a census for the whole Roman world to go to the city of their heritage so they could be registered. God did not skimp on birth announcements, either; He sent Gabriel, His best messenger angel to earth more than once. But all of that pales in comparison to what God actually gave the world. God sent forth His Son. His one and only Son. Forget Hallmark. God sent the very best. By the way, as an aside, but related to the star of Bethlehem, I would like to read this quote from John Piper which some of you read this past week if you are following along in his advent devotional:
- “I risk a generalization to warn you: People who are exercised and preoccupied with such things as how the star worked and how the Red Sea split and how the manna fell and how Jonah survived the fish and how the moon turns to blood are generally people who have what I call a mentality for the marginal. You do not see in them a deep cherishing of the great central things of the gospel — the holiness of God, the ugliness of sin, the helplessness of man, the death of Christ, justification by faith alone, the sanctifying work of the Spirit, the glory of Christ’s return, and the final judgment. They always seem to be taking you down a sidetrack with a new article or book. There is little centered rejoicing....But what is plain concerning this matter of the star is that it is doing something that it cannot do on its own: It is guiding magi to the Son of God to worship him.” (Piper)
- God did two things, then, to complete the promise given to Abraham and to fulfill the law, given to Moses.
- **First, He sent His Son.** Verses 4-5. Notice that his purposes are clearly stated. He sent His Son to redeem those who were under the law. He came to buy us back, to pay the price for our sin, to set us free. But notice that he had a second purpose that was just as important as the first. He came to adopt us. He didn’t just set us free and invite us to go out and live in the streets on our own, free from sin, but belonging only to ourselves. No, He sent His Son to adopt us, to complete the promise given to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed! He came to make slaves into sons, not just slaves into freedmen. How could Jesus do that? How could He accomplish what the law could NOT accomplish?
- **Because He was sent forth by God.** What does that mean? That Jesus already existed as the Son of God, eternally co-equal with God. He was not created by God to be our Savior. He was sent by God to be our Savior.
- **Born of a woman.** He had to be born of a woman so that he could take on human flesh and be the one and only God-man. He had to be “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)
- **Born under the law.** Like every person ever born, Jesus was born with the responsibility and duty to keep God’s law perfectly. Unlike every person who ever lived, Jesus did it! He submitted to every requirement of the law, obeyed His Father perfectly, even to death, even to death on a cross. Paul said in **3:13**, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us –for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” (and then verse 14!)
- **First, then, God sent His Son.**
- **Second, God sent His Spirit.**
- Verse 6. God sent twice! The Father sent His Son. The Father sent His Spirit. The Spirit came and by Him we are able to cry out, “Abba, Father,” which would be the first word for a little Hebrew boy or girl and the name by which they would call their daddy. It is the word Jesus used in intimate prayer with His Father, and it is the name by which God invites His children to use. Paul says it again in **Romans 8:15-16**.
- Do you see that? The Spirit of God testifies to our spirit that we are His children. We already have the status of a son when Christ redeems us. The Spirit gives us the experience of a son, the “knowing in our knower,” as some have said, that we belong. That we are accepted by God. That we don’t have to try and earn our way any more, and in fact that trying to earn our way is not just dangerous, it is

demonic. If we do that, we are falling back into bondage. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

- Verse 7: You are not a slave. You are a son. And because you are a son, you are an heir. Remember the promise? All that belongs to God will one day belong to His children, those who are His heirs, and co-heirs with Christ. But wait! That apparently is not enough for some.
- **Who wants to be a slave again? (Verses 8-11)**
- Paul makes his appeal. We were once slaves, in bondage to the elementary spirits and elementary principles of this world. But now we know God. Or better, we are KNOWN by God. (Last Saturday, in the second row at a concert by Steven Curtis Chapman; there were a LOT of people there who know SCC. But not personally. Know his music, know his face, know who he is. I have met him once; I have a friend named Larry, just like he does. I thought, how cool would it be if SCC recognized me and said, 'Hey, is that you, Mark?' But he didn't, even though he acknowledged me once in the Question and Answer time before the concert. He didn't acknowledge me because he doesn't KNOW me. Shocker.) **Bigger** shocker: GOD does know me. And you who have become sons, God knows you. Zaccheus climbed up a tree because he had heard of Jesus and wanted to get a glimpse. Imagine his surprise when Jesus called up to him, by name, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Jesus knew him by name, and more than that, Jesus was asking Zaccheus to be His friend. God sent His Son to redeem us, to make us sons, and to change us from enemy to friend. Amazing grace!
- Paul asks then, "Knowing this, that GOD knows you, how can you turn back to the same things that enslaved you before?" Whether it is the slavery that comes from license, living any way I want to to satisfy my flesh and my appetites without regard for Christ or holiness, or it is the slavery of legalism, the bondage of doing the right things with the wrong spirit, to try to earn God's favor: observing certain days, months, seasons, years.
- The story of Fred Craddock and Ben Hooper
- Where are you? Still a slave? Now a son? Back to being a slave?