

## Galatians 4:1-11

### “No Longer Slaves, But Sons”

Let's remember the purpose of God's Law. It's not to *remove* our sin; it's to *reveal* our sin. It's not a ministry of salvation/justification; it's a ministry of condemnation. It's not meant to give us a *big head* as we show God all that we've done, but it's to *humble our heart* as we realize it can't be done. Not truly, not as God intended it to be in reality.

You see, the problem is that we have a tendency to interpret the law physically; when it was meant (Rom 7:14) to govern our heart spiritually/inwardly. So that even though I come to church every Sunday & every Wednesday & it appears outwardly that God is my priority, when I place something other than Jesus on the throne of my heart, when I pursue something other than Jesus as the master passion of my life (even temporarily) I become guilty of idolatry. I've missed the mark. I've fallen short. When I say something to someone that isn't true, "How's it goin?" "Good, good!" When it reality my situation stinks, I'm a liar, I've bore false witness. When I want something you own I'm guilty of covetousness... on & on it goes. **God didn't give us the law to show what needs done, but to show us that meeting His standard of righteousness *can't* be done. It's not that there's a problem with the law, it's that there's a problem in me, I have a sin nature therefore I can't attain to sinless perfection (which btw is God's standard).**

So the law points out my flaws, draws attention to my failures & says, "You fall short of the glory of God." It leaves me in a desperate place realizing I'm a sinner & that I need a Savior. If I'm destined for destruction if left to my own capacity than I need Someone who can *save me*. It leaves me saying, "Is there any other way!?" Enter Jesus. What was it He said again? Oh yeah, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**<sup>1</sup>

You see, God made a promise to Abraham that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. He told Abraham that He would bring Messiah (Jesus) through his line & we read that Abraham "...believed God & God accounted it to him for righteousness." Abraham was made righteous in God's sight through simple faith; he believed the promise of His word (over 400 yrs before the law was ever given).

This is the premise that Paul has been developing; that the law doesn't annul nor alter the promise. But rather it points us *to* & prepares us *for* the promise. That the way Abraham believed God & was counted righteous, it the way we believe God & are counted righteous. We find justification by grace through faith in J.C.

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 14:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [He 9:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You see Jesus made us a promise didn't He? He said, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*"<sup>2</sup> He said, "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*"<sup>3</sup> Are you sensing a common thread here? Now if you believe *like* Abraham, than you're apart of the spiritual lineage of Abraham (Paul pointed that out back in Vs 7).

But even more than being a spiritual son (child) of Abraham, in Christ we become "sons of God." That's the principle that Paul was beginning to develop as our time came to a close last week; the superiority of the promise & the inferiority of the law. The promise is permanent & unconditional, the law was temporary & full of conditions. The law was bilateral in nature, (if man would do his part, God would do His part), therefore it had to fail because it rested upon man's ability (we've already developed the fact that man can't do it). *The promise however was unilateral, it's not based in any way upon man, it's predicated entirely upon God & His ability therefore it cannot fail (because God can't fail). Before Christ & under the law we're slaves, in Christ (through the promise) we're sons. Let's back up & get a running start here at Ch 4, look back at Vs 26 of Ch 3*

### Vs 1-3

Let me remind you that the Galatians, though they'd believed upon the Lord J.C. by faith initially, were being persuaded that to ultimately/truly be right w/God they needed to not only believe in Jesus, but they also needed to keep the law, observe the Sabbath. There were things they *should* do, other things they *shouldn't* do. *What Paul is doing is demonstrating that to come to Jesus & then base your standing w/Him predicated upon what you do other than on what He's done for you upon the cross; isn't to move forward, it's to move backward. It's to insult the Spirit of grace & say, "Thanks for all You've done for me, it wasn't quite enough I'll take up the slack."*

It's to contradict the fact that when Jesus said, "It is finished" as He hung upon the cross paying the penalty of our sin, we're effectively saying, "It's really not finished because I need to (fill in the blank... study diligently, pray fervently, sacrifice regularly) to seal the deal." *"I've got to do my part." But the promise isn't bilateral, it's unilateral, it has nothing to do w/what I can do, it has everything to do w/what Christ has done & me believing upon Him by faith.*

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 3:16] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 11:25-26] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So Paul is drawing upon this analogy of what life is like under the law (the system of do's & don'ts). He's speaking here of a Roman custom, but we can bring right up to speed where we're at.

Bill Gates has a child, & even though that child will one day inherit the entire Gates estate, while he's in kindergarten he can't go out & make investments of his father's fortune, sign million dollar checks or give direction in the Microsoft corporation. He's under watch by various guardians, stewards until such time as dad sees fit to bring him into the business & give him the trust of an adult. So though he's heir of all he has less authority (in reality) than his nanny or whatever. He doesn't direct her, Bill Gates has entrusted her to direct him/teach him even though he's destined to inherit everything.

& What Paul is saying here is that, that's what it's like for us before we're in Christ. The law watched over us, it was our guardian (we developed this last week) till we came to Christ. But it didn't free us, it pointed out our problems, kept us in check, demonstrated the fact that we were in bondage under the elements of the world. Jesus brushed on this topic in Jn 8. You might write it down & look it up (Vs 31-36). Freedom isn't found in the law, the law shows us to be slaves of sin, it's whom the *Son* (Jesus) sets free who will be free indeed. The law pointed to our sin & placed us in shackles.

So Paul's point here is that legalism (coming back under the law) isn't making *progression*, it's *regression*, it's not a step toward maturity, it's like stepping back into *childhood*. The law isn't God's final revelation; it was preparation for the final revelation in Christ. So under the law one isn't a mature son enjoying the liberty of the inheritance, he's a child under guardianship in bondage.

#### Vs 4-5

In these 1<sup>st</sup> 5 Vs we see the problem, the plan, the Person & the purpose. The problem is that we were (Vs 3) "in bondage". The plan was that God would send forth His Son (He's the Person btw) & the purpose was redemption & adoption.

Paul says, "But when the fullness of the time had come." What does that mean? In short it means that nothing happens coincidentally, that God doesn't do things haphazardly or randomly, He doesn't shoot from the hip. He's very orderly, meticulous & scrupulous regarding when, why, & what He does. The timing of the coming of Christ was premeditated, predetermined.

Peter refers to this when he says, *"He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."*<sup>4</sup> In other words the plan of God in sending Jesus to the earth that He might redeem us through the shedding of His blood; the laying down of His life upon the altar of the cross was set in motion before the world was ever created. It wasn't plan B, God doesn't have contingency plans; this *was His plan* before the world was ever formed.

Study the gospel of John; you'll see Jesus moving according to a Divine timetable all throughout it. You'll read that He was consistently saying things like, "My hour has not yet come." "Now the hour *is coming*." "The hour *has come*." Nothing was happening through a series of random events, God was moving things along keeping His redemptive plan right on schedule.

So when the fullness of the time had come, when things were right where they needed to be historically, politically, economically, linguistically, prophetically (the 483 yrs of Daniels prophecy [Ch 9:24-26]). When everything was as it should be according to God's sovereignty He sent forth His Son. (Now when was the young boy brought into maturity? Vs 2 "...the time appointed by the Father.")

When was Jesus sent forth into the world? The time appointed by the Father. Btw we do well to take note of the fact that the Father has appointed a time in which Jesus will come again into the world; not as a suffering Servant but as a conquering King. It won't happen randomly, God has appointed a day & an hour specifically in which Jesus will come again (& I for one can't imagine it being too far off).

Now notice Jesus was "born of a woman". Notice it doesn't say, "born of *man & woman*." Couple things coming into focus here. #1 We see a bit of a veiled reference to the virgin birth. "Born of a woman." But more so Paul is pointing out the dual nature of Christ. Being God's Son Jesus is fully God; being born of a woman He's fully Man. Being God He's perfect/sinless, being Man He's able to stand in the gap on behalf of humanity, to represent us collectively before the Father. As God, Jesus was "sent forth", as Man He was "born of a woman."

& We read that He was born "under the law", why? "...to *redeem* those who were under the law," Jesus meets us where we're at & lifts us up from there. Again as God He has the resources to redeem us, as Man He has the right to redeem us.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version, (1982). [1 Pe 1:20-21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Out of bondage (Vs 3) into freedom, out of sin into salvation; Jesus purchased us (redeemed us) out of the slave market of sin; not w/corruptible things like silver or gold, but at the price of His own blood. (Do yourself a favor, write this down & look it up later Eph 1:7-14). Jesus redeemed us by His blood... Why? Not in order to make us slaves of His own (which would be well w/in His rights), but to make us sons of God.

“...that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Think this through... Had Jesus said, “I’ve purchased out of the slave market of sin, now go your way.” That would’ve been more than we could’ve ever repaid. But He didn’t do that. He said, “I love you so much that I’m going beyond the place of making you free, I’m making you family.” That’s what God did for you in Christ. You’re not just free, you’re family, His son, His daughter...

Now there’s a couple things we need to make clear here real quick. #1 When Paul is talking about being adopted he’s not speaking of your “condition” but your “position”. You say, “What do you mean?” When Paul uses this word “adoption”. Don’t think of a family desiring a baby, going down & adopting a baby signing papers & taking the child home. **This word speaks of taking on the position/placing of an adult son. In other words, in Christ you have instant access to the resources of God. You can draw immediately upon His peace, His joy, His strength, the riches of His grace & mercy.**

But don’t be confused we don’t *enter* God’s family by adoption. We *enter* it by birth. The bible says we have to be “born again”; not physically but spiritually. We’ve been born physically, now we’re to be born again as by the Spirit of God (Jn Ch 3). **Unless a man is born again he shall by no means see the kingdom of God. How does that happen? Remember our introduction? Jn 3:16 we’re to believe in J.C. We’re to receive J.C.** We read in Jn Ch 1 **“But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**<sup>5</sup> So we’re born into God’s family, not physically but spiritually.

We *enter* God’s family through regeneration; we *enjoy* God’s family through adoption. In other words even though your *condition* may be a spiritual infant (you just gave your life to Christ 2 weeks ago), your *position* is the same as an adult son, you’re free & encouraged to draw upon the resources of your heavenly Father. **The riches of His glory, of His wisdom; the bible says (Col 2:3) that all the riches, the treasures of wisdom & knowledge are hidden in Christ. They’re yours (as sons & daughters of God) to seek out & draw upon.**

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version, (1982). [Jn 1:12-13] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Something else you should realize is that this adoption isn't something that's recovered in Christ that was lost in Adam. Adam was never adopted as a son of God in the way that believers are in Christ. So don't think of redemption as a restoration of what was lost w/Adam. You have more in Jesus than Adam ever had...

However we also want to realize that being sons of God *in* Christ doesn't put us in a place of equality *with* Christ. We may be *adopted* as sons of God, but Jesus is the *only begotten Son* of God, sharing in the essential nature of God. Big difference...

### Vs 6-7

You see the emphasis isn't upon earning God's favor legally; but enjoying God through a relationship of intimacy. You're not a slave, you're a son, you're a daughter; it's not about formality, it's about family.

Now notice the fullness of the Godhead involved in the work of salvation. We see God the Father, God the Son, & God the Spirit in Vs 4-6. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of *His Son* into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" You see, once the Person of the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our heart, we no longer see God as a Judge who sentences us legally, whom we cower before fearfully, but as our *Father* who loves us intimately.

The Spirit of God causes us to relate to God as a Father; how do you know you're a child of God? The Spirit of God will bear witness in your heart... In the book of Romans Paul put it like this, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,*"<sup>6</sup> If you're a child of God you *want* to be led by the Spirit of God. God's Spirit bearing witness in your heart... crying out "Abba, Father!" The word "Abba" isn't a word of infancy; it's a word of intimacy. It's the same word Jesus used in Mark 14:36 as He was seeking His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal.

& Notice the Spirit doesn't "whisper" Abba! He "cries out"! There's earnestness about this word, an intensity. It's the word used in Matt 9:27 of 2 blind men following Jesus "crying out", "Son of David, have mercy on us!" Let me tell you something, they weren't whispering; there was a sense of urgency... an intensity in their plea.

Paul says, “This is your position. You’re not a slave, you’re a *son*.” Why would you want to be in bondage as a slave once you’ve been adopted as a son? Check it out, a son has the nature of his father, a slave does not (in Christ God sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the law has never given God’s Spirit to anyone). The son has a father, the slave has a master; the slave deals on the level of formality, the son is family, there’s intimacy. The slave obeys out of fear, the son obeys out of love (the fruit of the Spirit is love), the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (the bible says [Rom 5:5]) by the Holy Spirit. **The son is rich (an heir of all things) the slave is not. All the riches of God’s grace, His glory, His goodness & wisdom aren’t found in the law, they’re found in Christ...**

### **Vs 8-11**

Now I suppose we could focus on a # of things here but I think we’ve hammered home the idea of the spiritual insanity of seeking to relate to God through works of the flesh when God has justified us *freely* by His grace.

Paul’s mind is blown that they (or we) would ever seek to return to the weak & beggarly elements of the law, or works righteousness. Weak in that there’s no power or strength given by the law to perform to it’s standards, beggarly in that it offers no eternal inheritance. All the law does is reveal our weakness & spiritual poverty, to trust in anything outside of Christ is to abandon liberty for bondage, power for weakness & wealth for poverty.

I want you to see one thing here & we’re done. Paul says, “I understand being in bondage before faith in J.C. ... *but now*, now that you have known God... (here it comes) or rather *are known by God*...how is it you turn again back to bondage.” **This is the critical key. Claiming that you know God isn’t really what’s important. What’s critical is that God knows you!** Leave Gal 4 & we’ll close in the familiar passage of **Matthew 7**. (Vs 21-23)

Preaching, prophesying, & miraculous works won’t save anyone. It’s not about religious formality, it’s about a relationship of intimacy/family. Jesus wants to *know* you & be known by you. He takes us from being slaves of sin to being sons of God, let’s not turn *from* Him, but trust *in* Him until the day that we see Him, *then* we’ll be like Him. Amen?

**Prayer Points:**

God you are so good, strengthen our faith. Help us that we steer clear of legal formality & enjoy the intimacy of family. You are our Father, may we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, may we be led *by* Your Spirit. Make us more like Jesus... & we'll give You praise.

Listen, if you haven't turned from your sin, placed your faith in J.C. than why not trust in Him today? God sent His Son into the world, that He might lay down His life *for* the world. You don't have to earn God's favor, the price has been paid, Jesus spilled His blood so that you could be forgiven of all your sin. Turn to Him, trust in Him; for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son... so that whosoever would believe upon Him would never perish but have everlasting life.