

## Galatians 4 pt. 1 v.1-7 - Read thru

Having brought the Galatians to the reasonable conclusion that the purpose of the Law is to serve as a type of schoolmaster or tutor over God's children, Paul continues to build on this illustration.

He will continue to do so through chapter 4 even returning again to speaking about Abraham.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is quite remarkable because he corrects the errant doctrine that righteousness comes through the Law by using that very Law as his proof!

In our text this morning Paul depicts the relationship between God and humanity as a Father-child relationship and the relationship between people and the Law as one of slavery.

This is important because there are many who misunderstand, and mischaracterize the nature of God.

There are some who depict God as a cold, distant, unconcerned being who may exist but if He does exist He doesn't involve himself in the affairs of humans anymore.

There are those who view God as a cosmic bookkeeper whose sole purpose is to keep account of our debits and credits and at the end of our lives to give us the balance. Those who espouse this view hope dearly that they strike positive balance.

There are those who believe God is a brutal dictator who conforms men into deluded or ignorant slaves through punishment and catastrophe.

Even still, there are those who believe that God is a capable broker who they can bargain with. They may say, "God, I promise to read my Bible, say my prayers, give to the poor, as long as you promise to take care of me financially and keep me from hardship."

Still more - some describe God as THE moral authority who concerns himself strictly with the moral conduct of men so that we can know the difference between right and wrong and if we chose to live morally then we will go to heaven.

There are many more riffs on this subject as well.

We have here deists, theists, agnostics, moralists, legalists, and on and on and on - a flavor for every persuasion, all incomplete, all quite distant from God.

God's word describes God's ways as unsearchable. [Rom 11:33 NKJV] Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out!

Though we would dedicate our entire lives to unraveling the fullness of who God is we would still not understand Him completely at the end of our days.

It is by His word, along with the instruction of the Holy Spirit that we can grow to know Him more. We can draw near to Him and He promises to draw near to us.

Why? Because God is described by the Bible, overwhelmingly, as a Father.

The relationship between the creation and the sovereign, almighty, author of creation is as a child to a Father.

Once we view God the way the Bible depicts Him, as a Father, then we can begin to better understand the complexities of who He is.

We can do this not because we are so great at being Dads, but because any good thing we know about being a Dad, is from Him, our Heavenly Father.

Now, I say all of that because this morning we continue to build upon Paul's exhortation to the Galatian churches, namely, that they are "heirs according to the promise," and "children of Abraham," because of their faith in Jesus Christ. (3:29)

This was what the Galatians longed for - to be part of the eternal family, but they had become distracted by ritual and law and they believed wrongly that in order to be part of the family they had to follow a load of extra rules.

Paul continues in chapter four to explain the nature of being a child in God's house.

We must approach this portion with the understanding that as believers we are exhorted and encouraged to pursue maturity - to grow up.

[Eph 4:14-15 NKJV] 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking

the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--

[Heb 6:1 NKJV] 1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary [principles] of Christ, let us go on to perfection...

We must also recognize that we WILL ALWAYS BE our Father's kids! Just like our own children are to us.

[Mar 10:15 NKJV] 15 "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

For this paradox I offer this question to consider as we study through our text: What if we could grow in maturity, wisdom, knowledge to look more like our DAD (spiritually speaking) -- all while maintaining our child-like faith, innocence, gentleness, and goodness?

V.1-2 Paul revisits the notion of what it meant to live in God's family, as the Jewish people did, with the Law as a guardian or steward.

The idea is that those who were born Jews, born into the blood family of God's chosen people, were being raised in God's ways by this Law that was over them.

You'll notice that they are described as children, but Paul says, even heirs when they are children have to obey slaves and guardians in the home - they have no rights to speak of, yet.

That relationship exists until such a time as the Father, the master of the house, determines that His children are prepared to responsibly keep their inheritance.

Irresponsible children lose their inheritances all the time, so its up to the head of the house to make sure the children are trained to care for what they inherit!

One source writes that, "Between \$1 trillion and \$3 trillion will be transferred to heirs every year through 2050...experts estimate that 33% of benefactors have negative savings within two years of inheriting wealth...a shocking 70% of high net worth families lose their fortune by the second generation."

V.3 The condition that Paul and the Jewish people were in under the law is here described as slavery.

The language that Paul uses here is remarkable.

A more illustrative reading based on the Greek text might sound like:

... “when we were (νήπιοι) infants under the first principles (the a,b,c’s) of the world we were (δεδουλωμένοι) enslaved.”

Paul is firmly placing himself among those subject to enslavement. He also states this matter of factly - this thing happened - enslavement happened and continued in the past for quite some time all while those enslaved were babies, infants, vulnerable to almost anything.

This was the reality that they lived in - child slavery, in a spiritual sense. Nothing about this has the tone of “everything is awesome, let’s get more people to join us.”

I must impart the gravity of this condition. Far too often in Christian circles we use the language of “bondage” to depict the human condition. (i.e. smoking, addiction, alcohol abuse, anger, depression, etc.)

This can have the effect of desensitizing us to such important language.

The enslavement Paul is talking about was divorced from human volition, it was the state they were born into - their lives were not their

own from the cradle to the grave unless they were released or had their freedom purchased.

Paul continues to drive home this idea to the Galatians that it is the infant, the child, most impacted by this state - with no recourse or defense.

So here the Galatians are at a cross-roads. Do you want to be a baby or do you want to grow up? The Galatians wanted to see themselves and depict themselves as mature because of their adherence to the Law. Paul says that those who do such things are immature, babies, and enslaved, not yet ready to keep their inheritance without the oversight of a guardian.

And this isn't Paul taking shots at people, defaming people for being immature - he lived that life! He knew the weight of that bondage, the struggle, and the lack of freedom.

Paul and his countrymen were both blood children in the family AND slaves (v.1 - no difference between a child and a slave) They did not know freedom from the Law.

About this condition of spiritual enslavement of Israel, who God delivered from slavery out of Egypt, Irenaeus (2nd century) writes,

“...when they turned themselves to make a calf, and went back in their minds to Egypt, desiring to be slaves instead of free people, they were consequently placed into a state of servitude suited to their wishes - a slavery that did not in fact cut them off from God, but subjected them to the yoke of bondage...”

People will obey the rules until the day they die, enslaved in dead religion, not because they love God but for a multitude of other reasons that do not bring freedom or life.

They may in fact cling to the Scriptures in such a way that brings bondage. This was what happened to Israel, and this happens today too.

[Isa 28:13 NKJV] 13 But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

Another common condition for those in spiritual slavery is rebellion. Having felt the heavy hand of religion, devoid of freedom, they forsake the heavenly family altogether.

V.4-5 BUT, God our Father purchased all of those children in slavery to be free.

He did not do so in order to bear down on us, to beat us, to hurt us. He did so in order for us to sit at His table, heirs to His kingdom, no longer under a tutor, no longer enslaved, no longer serving dead religion, but alive and well and in His kingdom.

God the Father adopted all of us as His children - this is the good news for all who have struggled under the oppression of religion and “be better” doctrine. We have a home that is characterized by freedom and liberty.

[2Co 3:17 NLT] 17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

In our Body we have step-parents, adoptive parents, and foster parents. That’s such an awesome picture of God’s heart towards humanity.

Some of these kids in our church were born into a legal system, with a stack of paper mounted against them that they didn’t even know about in their infant state.

But a Mom and Dad came along and said “I am willing to move that mountain of legal requirements, I am willing to wait until the fullness of time has come, I am willing to put up my own resources, so that you might become my child.”

That’s what God did for us by Jesus Christ - he purchased our adoption. It took everything He had, His very life, but He did not count that as too dear a price to remove the chains of the Law so that we might have an eternal Father-child relationship with Him.

V.6 The result of our adoption is our relationship with the Father.

In our adoption we are given a great gift, a unique gift to those who are Christ’s - the Holy Spirit.

It is this Holy Spirit, the very substance of the Father - who is Spirit, that dwells in us and works on us as we grow up in Him.

The Spirit causes us to look like our Father, to talk like our Father, to behave like our Father, to display His mannerisms, His personality.

Even as our earthly fathers imprint us with their image - so our Heavenly Father imprints His image on us AND continues to shape us

because we are forever children in His kingdom, constantly learning, and growing.

It is that Spirit that brings an insatiable desire to be with our Father, that cries out Abba, Father - just as Jesus cried. (Mark 14:36)

[Rom 8:14-17 NKJV] 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 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." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified together.

V.7 - Because of Christ we are free, we have a vast eternal inheritance set aside for us in our Father's Kingdom.

We can look back at our times in slavery and know how much we despised the weight, the requirements, and we can rejoice in our freedom as children of God through Christ.

Paul's words have a gravity to them that is hard for us to understand. When Paul wrote these letters slavery was a common condition.

People would understand clearly the illustration that Paul was making on a spiritual level.

People yearned, and longed for freedom. One thing hasn't changed - the human heart still yearns and longs for freedom. And through Christ you have: [1Pe 1:4-5 NKJV] ...an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

You are free loved one - nobody can take that from you. And I beg you, let nobody put you back in chains. Christ has purchased you, having become a slave for us, having brought us into the eternal family once and for all.