



Justification is by Grace not Law Galatians 4

Introduction

In Chapter 3, Paul emphasized that in addition to God's promises being given by grace and not Law, they also preceded the law by four hundred and thirty years. He used the example of Abraham who knew nothing of the Law but knew much about grace. Paul wrote that it is *by faith* believers are in Abraham's lineage. Paul severely chided the Galatians for being *bewitched* by those who would put them under the law. He cited their experience of grace and all that it had done for them.

Furthermore, in Chapter 3, Paul likened the role and purpose of the Mosaic Law to a tutor who prepares, disciplines and protects his pupil until adulthood. Lehman Strauss outlines Chapter 3 in this manner: Paul teaches by:

- I. Experience
- II. Example
- III. Explanation.

Chapter 3 is the first half of Section II, where Paul writes about justification by grace not law.

Chapter 4 is the second half of Section II and begins with the status of a son who, when a pupil, is no different from a slave. Chapter 4 ends with two sons who represent the twin opposites of grace and law, freedom and slavery.

OUTLINE OF GALATIANS 4

- I. The Son as a Slave Though an Heir - Galatians 4:1-5
- II. The Son as an Heir and Not a Slave - Galatians 4:6-7
- III. Trading One Bondage for Another - Galatians 4:8-31

I. The Son as a Slave Though an Heir - Galatians 4:1-5

- A. Dual Status under the Law- Galatians 4:1-3

The "son as pupil" theme is continued from Chapter 3. However, in chapter 4, the son's relationship to the father rather than the schoolmaster is in view. The son is the heir, though the only visible sign of this is his being under a schoolmaster during his pupil years. Otherwise his status does not differ from that of a slave, although his future differs radically. Who would choose the status of a slave if they could bypass it and be a son?

- B. Christ's Purpose to Redeem From Slave Status - Galatians 4:4-5

1. *When the fullness of time had come* - 4: 4

Christ's advent was timed perfectly. He was neither too early nor too late. He was right on time. Many have pointed out that the circumstances were right in three main ways:

1. The Greek language unified the Roman Empire as the official diplomatic language.
2. The Pax Romana enforced peace militarily throughout the known world.
3. Roman roads built by those master builders of the ancient world facilitated travel and connected the farflung provinces not only to the center, Rome, but to each other. Paul, Peter and the apostles used all of these for the benefit of the rapid spread of the Gospel.

2. *God sent forth His Son* - 4: 4

John says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son* (John 3:16). The writer to the Hebrews says, *God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son* (Hebrews 1:2). Peter says that the Lord Jesus Christ *received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'* (2 Peter 1:17). Do you join these in confessing Jesus as the eternal Son of God, pre-existent with the Father and sent to earth as the Redeemer promised from as early as Genesis 3:15?

3. *Born of a woman* - 4:4

Is not everyone born of a woman? Why does Paul mention a universal fact except to emphasize that Jesus was born from only a woman, affirming the miraculous conception described by Matthew and Luke (Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:30-35).

4. *Born under the law* - 4:4

Jesus was born of a Jewish mother in a Jewish home in Israel. Joseph was a Jewish carpenter. Even today a Jew is a Jew through his or her mother. Jesus was brought up to keep the law scrupulously.

5. *To redeem those who were under the law* - 4:5

Jesus *came to His own* first. (John 1:11) He taught them that the old wineskins (of Judiasm) could not

contain the new wine (of the gospel) (Mathew 9:17). Also, the law could not redeem anyone from sin. Why would anyone want to be that which Christ came to rescue others from being?

6. *That we might receive the adoption as sons*
- 4:5.

Under the law, God's covenant was with the nation Israel, and the Israelites were corporately God's people. However the idea of individual "sonship" was nonexistent. 'When Israel was a child I loved him' (Hosea 11:1). Israel is the nation God adopted. Adoption of individuals did take place, however. Abraham almost adopted his slave, Eliezer, as his heir. Jacob adopted his grandsons as his sons (Genesis 48:6). A Roman man might sire many children but he would officially "adopt" only those he would allow to bear his name. Mordecai adopted Esther, his young cousin.

We are grateful to Paul for the spiritual concept of adoption. No doubt the Holy Spirit gave it to him. (See also Romans 8:15-17 and Ephesians 1:5). Jesus refers to the same idea in the prodigal son's restoration by his father to a place of sonship and privilege. Adoption is the act of God in His grace whereby "We who have forfeited and lost our place and privileges as children of God may be fully reinstated therein through faith in Christ" (Merril Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary).

II. The Son as an Heir and Not a Slave - Galatians 4:6-7

A. Relationship of the Spirit - Galatians 4:6

No slave calls his master his father. But as the son freely calls his master "father," so the Holy Spirit urges us to call God "Father" as readily as a toddler says, "Daddy," "Papa" or "Abba". Do you enjoy calling God "Father" as the Lord Jesus Christ enjoyed relating to His Father?

B. Heirs at Last - Galatians 4:7

Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Sonship also means being an heir (Acts 26:18; Romans 8:15-17). Believers are heirs along with Jesus Christ. Believers have all the privileges which accompany sonship. Yet the Galatians were acting like slaves.

III. Trading One Bondage for Another - Galatians 4:8-31

A. Former Bondage - Galatians 4:8-10

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. Paul

likens the Galatians' infatuation with legalism to a regression to their former paganism. They had been delivered from the darkness of paganism (verse 8) with it's enslaving superstitions (verses 9-10). Their pagan religion had its organized system (4:3), as all religions have, and they were enslaved to it. Being enslaved to Judaism was no different. Are you enslaved to any system? To what are you enslaved?

You observe days and months and seasons and years (verse 10). The Galatians were trying to keep the Jewish sabbath and the Jewish feasts.

B. Former Joyous Love for Paul - Galatians 4:11-16

You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Paul gives a reminder of his labor to bring them to Christ, their acceptance of Him, their love and compassion for him and his for them.

C. The Current Strain on Their Relationship - Galatians 4:17-20

Paul pulls no punches in describing the wrong motives of the Judaizers, who wanted to enslave the Galatians as their personal followers. He contrasts their motives with his, to see Christ formed in them.

D. Law and Freedom Mutually Exclusive - Galatians 4:21-31

1. Ishmael and Isaac Allegory - 4:22-27

Paul uses Abraham's two sons allegorically. Ishmael was the son of the Egyptian slave girl, Hagar. His birth was fleshly in that it was totally of human invention and not the product of a marriage. It was a human attempt to make God's will work. There was nothing of God in it.

Isaac's birth, on the other hand, was through Abraham's wife, Sarah. It was of God. It was miraculous. Isaac was the child of God's promise, which only He could fulfill.

Ishmael and Hagar stood for Mt. Sinai and the Law. Isaac and Sarah stood for the spiritual freedom which is God-given.

Jerusalem, the earthly city, still stood for the Law and was the center of lawkeeping. Jerusalem continues to do so today. Paul also refers to a heavenly Jerusalem, *the Jerusalem above*. "Rabbinical teaching held that *the Jerusalem above* was the heavenly archetype that

in the Messianic period would be let down to earth (Revelation 22:2)” (footnote from NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, 1985).

2. Allegorical Application - Galatians 4:28-31

As Ishmael persecuted Isaac, who was younger and weaker, so the flesh persecutes and Spirit. The Judaizers were latter-day Ishmaels, persecuting the Galatian Isaacs who were Abraham’s true heirs through God’s promise of redemption in Christ.

As God told Abraham to cast out the bondwoman

and her son, which was hard for Abraham to do at first, so must all who believe in Jesus cast out, that is renounce, all the works of the flesh for they persecute, harass and inhibit the life of the spirit.

The Galatians could not live under the law and also by faith in Christ. Legalism destroys the freedom of the Holy Spirit in us. We cannot grow and develop freely when harassed by the flesh and its demands.

The chapter ends with Paul’s declaration that we are not slaves but free with the freedom bought by Jesus Christ.