

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 17TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

## NO LONGER BOUND (GALATIANS 4:1–11) GRACE IS GREATER THAN WORKS

In this portion of Paul's letter, he attempts to show the Galatians how **grace is superior to the law**. First, he uses the comparison of a child heir and a slave to reveal how their spiritual immaturity is keeping them in bondage to the law.

- **Our works** ("adherence to the law") **alone cannot create a closeness to God.**

## CHOOSING TO BE RULED

Paul speaks to Roman custom, where a child became an adult when the father thought they were ready. He compares a child (though an heir), still being ruled by their father and lacking freedom, to a slave.

- **"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things"** (1 Corinthians 13:11).

## GOING BACKWARDS

Using the comparison of a **child being under guardians and trustees** is in reference to earlier language in his letter (3:25), where Paul says **the law was given as a guardian until Christ came**.

- **They still act like children under the law instead of heirs under grace**—like an adult going back to childish ways or someone purchased into freedom going back into slavery.

## WHAT IS SHAPING US?

Paul says, **"when we were children, [we] were in slavery under the elements of the world."** "Elements" means a line of things, like a file of soldiers, but later came to mean the ABCs or any elementary knowledge.

- **As we spiritually mature, we should move away from our childish understanding and being shaped by the world.**

## A WARNING ABOUT ELEMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Paul, in another letter, warns Christians to **be careful not to be taken captive by false teaching based on the elements of the world** (Colossians 2:8).

- If we have died with Christ, then we have died to the elemental principles of the world, but **why do we continue to live as if we still belonged to the world** (Colossians 2:20). **Why are we quick to submit to regulations but not Christ?**

## WE ARE NO LONGER BOUND

When the time was right, **Christ came to redeem those under the law so we might receive adoption as sons.**

- Everyone is part of God's offspring, through creation, but **only those who are adopted as children of God receive the Spirit and the ability to cry out "Abba, Father" as Jesus did** (Mark 14:36).

## "I NEVER KNEW YOU..." (MATTHEW 7:21–23)

**Being known by God is more important than just knowing God.** Being known by God means that **we are in an intimate relationship with Him and are accepted by Him.**

- To not be known by God means we are not in a relationship with Him and may be trying to earn a right standing through works.

## NEVER FORGET (GALATIANS 4:12–20)

### IMITATE ME AS I IMITATE CHRIST (1 CORINTHIANS 11:1)

Paul begged the Galatians to return to the truth they once held and to **"become as [he is]."**

- Paul wants them to **become as consistent as he is**. They started out with the true gospel as he presented it to them, but many had strayed away. Paul wants them to **experience his freedom in Christ instead of returning to bondage under the law.**

## REMEMBER WHERE WE ONCE WERE

Paul relates to the Galatians by saying, **"I also have become as you are."** Paul was perfectly equipped to walk them out of legalism into freedom because of past experiences as a zealous Pharisee.

- **It would be good for us to remember where we came from and where we are now in Christ** (1 Corinthians 6:11).

## NOT SPEAKING FROM HURT OR OFFENSE

Paul reiterates that he is not writing this way because they have wronged him. In fact, they received him, treated him well, and **"did not despise or reject [him] though [his] physical condition was a trial for [them]."**

- **It's possible that Paul is referring to when he and his companions were persecuted and stoned almost to death** (Acts 14:19–20).

## REMEMBER THE GENEROSITY I WAS SHOWN

It seems that whatever the infirmity was, it affected his eyes. He uses hyperbole to show the extent of generosity he was shown, stating **they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him.**

- At this time, physical infirmities and illnesses were incorrectly viewed as divine displeasure or punishment, and **though Paul seemed weak and afflicted, they welcomed him.**

## REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO RESPOND

Not only did the people of Galatia receive Paul, but **they also responded to the message he preached of grace and God's love.**

- The Galatians should remember how they responded to Paul's teaching and **receive this letter with the same attitude, not thinking of Paul as an adversary for confronting them with the truth.**

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE JUDAIZERS

Paul warns the Galatians that **they are being "courted" by the Judaizers**, and though they are being "love bombed," **the end result is no good.**

- Paul indicates that **they intend to draw them away from him** and bring them into their group of "super-Christians" who observe all the Jewish laws and traditions as if that makes them holier than others.

## "MY CHILDREN..."

Paul rightly and affectionately considers himself a parent to the Galatians. Likening himself to a **"mother" who experienced labor pains in "spiritually birthing" them** as they came to accept the gospel, Paul says **he is experiencing similar pains as they attempt to depart from it.**

- Paul vowed to **continue to labor until Christ was formed in them.**

## CHILDREN OF PROMISE (GALATIANS 4:21–31)

### THE ALLEGORY OF ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

The Judaizers proudly boasted that they were Abraham's descendants, so Paul pointed out that **Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac.**

- Paul does not give a ton of detail surrounding the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah (Genesis 16) because **he assumes they were familiar with the story.**

### ISHMAEL WAS BORN AS A RESULT OF THE FLESH

Abraham's first son was Ishmael, who was born by Hagar, his wife's servant. Ishmael was **born out of unbelief and an attempt to accomplish God's promises on their own.**

- Hagar represents the covenant on Mt. Sinai (the law and 1st Century Jerusalem). **This covenant gives birth to bondage: what I can do and not what Christ has done.**

### ISAAC WAS BORN THROUGH PROMISE

Abraham's second son was Isaac, who was born miraculously through Abraham's wife Sarah. Isaac was **born out of faith and God's promise.**

- Sarah represents the covenant of Jerusalem above (the new Jerusalem in heaven). **This covenant brings freedom: Jesus has paid it all, and we do not have to—it's not about what we can do, but what He has already done.**

## WE ARE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Paul's solution to the problem is clear: We must **"drive out the slave and her son, for the son of the slave will never be a coheir with the son of the free woman."**

- **The blending of law and grace cannot exist as principles for our Christian life.** Paul knew what it was like trying to earn favor before God, but now he knew the freedom in Christ.

## INVENTORY

- **We do good to remember where we came from and where we are in Christ.**
- **As heirs, we should be crying out, "Abba." Is there something louder than our cries?**
- **Are we experiencing consistency and freedom in Christ?**
- **We need truth more than we need to feel good about where we are.**