

Series: Galatians

Title: After You are Known of God

Text: Gal 4: 1-11

Date: January 14, 2021

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Galatians 3: 29: And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye...heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 4: 1: Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2: But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3: Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. 8: Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9: But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10: Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11: I am afraid of [for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

Proposition: The power of God by which he roots and grounds us in love is the gospel of God's love and grace in Christ by which we have been made children of God and joint heirs with Christ.

When the churches of Galatia were being turned from Christ back to bondage, Paul did not use the law. The Judaizer's were speaking against Paul. Many of the Gentile believers had been made to question if Paul was even an apostle. It was hurtful to Paul because he loved them and had given himself to preach the gospel to them. But Paul did not use the law or any other means. He denied himself. He loved them to Christ. He reminded them what they were while in bondage under the elements of the world. Then he reminded them what they now are by God's love and grace. Then in light of the gospel he showed them their error and the danger they were in.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. When the Israelites were being bitten by snakes and dying the only thing they heard was a man tell them look to the brazen serpent and they would live. Can you hear them saying, "That won't work! These are real snakes with real venom and these people are really dying! Surely we need to do something in addition to that!" In every trial that God sends he is teaching us to look to Christ. Christ has saved us, is saving and shall save us. In each smaller trial that is the lesson God is teaching us so that we look to Christ to save us from our sins into his eternal inheritance.

In every situation—in the church service, personally with one another, in every trial—remember the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season.

WHAT THEY WERE (AND US TOO)

Galatians 4: 1: Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2: But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3: Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

First, Paul reminded the believers in the Galatian churches what they were by using an illustration. A father has chosen his son to be his heir. The father has made his last will and testament. The son is his heir. It is done, confirmed, and cannot be changed.

But while a child, even though he be lord of all, the father has put his child under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father. King Ahab had seventy sons and tutors and governors for each one (2 Kings 10:1). In that day, the tutors and governors appointed by the father ruled every aspect of the child's life. It was bondage for the child. They constantly commanded him and used strict discipline. As soon as the child finished one chore they give him another. The child had no rest. The governors were constantly watching, judging and correcting. The child, though the heir, was treated no differently than any other servant though he was lord of all. It was that way until the time appointed by the father. Paul says, "*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*"

In eternity, God the Father chose a people in Christ in sovereign, unchangeable love. He made his will and testament, making all his chosen children his heirs according to his promise, his will, his testament, his covenant. By Christ becoming Surety, God's testament was confirmed and no man can change it. But until the time appointed by God our Father, though we were his heirs, God made us servants under bondage to *the elements of the world*.

For God's elect in Israel, the old covenant law were the elements of the world. The old covenant was temporal, written in letter on tablets of stone. It said, "Do and live, sin and die." The moral law showed no mercy and gave no strength. It only commanded this do or die! The promises were *worldly* concerning temporal inheritance in the land of Canaan—it typified God's spiritual promise of eternal inheritance in glory. The old covenant had a *worldly* sanctuary—it typified Christ our Sanctuary, the True Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man (Heb 8: 1). The old law had worldly high priests which were subject to death who had to be replaced—they typified Christ who is our High Priest forever (Heb 9). The old law had carnal sacrifices which could never take away sins—they typified Christ the Lamb of God which took away our sins by his one offering (Heb 10: 1-18). For those born in Israel, the old covenant were the elements of the world: the rudimentary instruction, the a,b,c's, the school of hard knocks.

But we as Gentiles were in bondage under the elements of the world too. Whether we were religious or irreligious we all worshipped idols, the god of self. If irreligious we did not know true God but we knew there was a god: all sinners do. Romans 1: 20 says we could see God in creation so we were without excuse. We were conscious that some god existed. But we worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator—ourselves, creation, philosophy, etc. (Rom 1: 20-32). If we were religious, we all tried to come to God by our works: either man-made or God's old covenant law or gospel precepts. We even made the rest of faith into a work and we made love a legal requirement. We thought mortification of the flesh meant the body so we practiced *touch not, taste not, handle not*. It was will-worship and it only puffed us up in pride but did nothing to mortify our sin-nature (Col 2: 6-23).

We Gentiles all had the law written on our hearts. Our conscience told us, "This is wrong, that is right" so in our thoughts we accused or excused one another (Rom 2: 14-15). We only had a sin-nature so in religion and out we only produced envy, deceit, whispers, backbiting, pride, boasters, inventors of evil things—every other sin (Rom 1: 29-32). We used everything under the sun to convince ourselves we were better than others: better food, better stuff, more money. It was all pride of race, place, face and grace.

All the while we had this constant nagging, irritating consciousness of "the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." Yet we did them in our wicked religious deeds as well as our wicked irreligious deeds and we took pleasure in others who did the same (Rom. 1:30-32). But while we excused ourselves, we judged others. Doing so, we condemned ourselves before God because we were guilty of the same things (Rom 2: 1).

Yet, all the while, though we did not know it, all God's elect—you who now believe—were heirs of God our Father by his free and sovereign electing love in Christ his Son. And God our Father put us under that bondage on purpose to teach us the rudimentary, elementary lesson, that by nature we are sin, we only produce sin and only God can save us from that bondage!

GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE

Galatians 4: 4: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5: To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6: And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7: Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

After reminding them (and us) what they were, Paul reminds these Gentile believers (and you and I who believe) of God's sovereign grace and unchangeable love.

Imagine you wanted to adopt a few children. It is your choice. So you chose the ones you want to adopt. You do no wrong to pass others by. You chose the ones you set your heart on, the ones you want to be your children. But then you are told the children have committed serious crimes. They are guilty and in

jail on death row. Not only that they came from wicked parents. Their parents are in jail and all their children are wicked in heart just like their parents. All the parent's children ended up in jail. So they tell you, "You don't want these children! They are guilty criminals! They have wicked hearts! They will break your heart!"

That was God's elect—you and I who now believe on Christ by his grace. God the Father chose his elect and loved us in Christ by his sovereign grace. But we fell in Adam and became guilty criminals with Adam's wicked sin-nature. Yet, remember, that was all by God the Father's design. He put us under the elements of the world to be tutors and governors over us. God our Father, by his sovereign hand, put us in that bondage to teach us this elementary lesson: that we are sin and only God is able to save us. But from eternity, God the Father set the appointed time that he would redeem us and give us the Spirit of his Son. He chose us in Christ and predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself by his sovereign love and free grace (Eph 1: 3-6).

So first God dealt with our sin and guilt. He had to clear us of all our crimes and give us a righteous standing before he could release us from prison and adopt us. "*But when the fulness of the time was come*", the time appointed of God our Father, "*God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*"

Oh, the unparalleled condescending love of God. God the Father sent his Son, his only begotten Son! Oh, may the Holy Spirit shed abroad his love in our hearts. God sent his own only begotten Son for guilty, vile, God-hating children like us.

What amazing love! The Son of God came down and willingly was *made of a woman*. He was not of Adam, not of sinful flesh. God is his Father. He is that holy thing. Christ is the Son of God, the Son of man, the last Adam who came to be Head and representative of all God's chosen children.

What perfect love! The Lord Jesus willingly was "*made under the law.*" Think of his love! The law had no claim on Christ. The law was not made for a righteous man (1 Tim 1: 9). The GodMan is Righteous! But as Paul warned the Galatians "every man that is circumcised...is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal 5: 3). Therefore, when he was eight days old the Lord Jesus was circumcised and made himself a debtor to do the whole the law for his brethren. Then being sinless, the Lord Jesus presented himself to the Father and was made sin for us that he might be made a curse. He bore all the sin of God's guilty chosen children that God might be just to pour out wrath on him in our place. Christ, in perfect love to God and his brethren, suffered the darkness of God's wrath in separation from God that God might be just and justify all who the Father chose to adopt as his children. Christ poured out his very life's blood and redeemed us from the bondage of the law, making us the very righteousness of God in him (Rom 3: 26; 2 Cor 5:21).

Brethren, no one ever loved like God our Father and our Redeemer! God is love. He manifested his love for us by sending his Son to live, suffer and die in our place to free us from bondage that he might give us the Spirit of adoption according to his eternal purpose.

So then at the time appointed, God dealt with our sin-nature. "*And because ye are sons*"—we never were orphans, we just did not know it. "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*"

The Spirit of his Son is Life within us because of his Righteousness. He sent the Spirit of his Son into the seat of our affection and shed his love abroad in our hearts. He made us know the Father's love in making us his children by divine election in him. He made us know Christ's love in laying down his life for us. And by making us know his love, he made us love him. He made us realize our adoption. He taught us we are children of God. We began crying Abba, Father!

Christ sent the gospel and the Spirit of God entered our hearts and opened the jail cell and said, "*Prisoners, go forth!*" (Is 49: 9). He revealed in our hearts, "I paid all your debts, you are righteous. God is your Father! I have removed your prison rags and put new clothes upon you—within and without. You will never be seen by your heavenly Father in your filthy rags again. I have put away your sin and you are righteous in me. From now on I will fully provide all for you and give you eternal inheritance!"

His love and grace changed us from slaves into children. He removed the stony heart of slavish duty and legal fear of God and put in a heart of love and delight to please our Father as his children. God ceased to be a Judge we feared and became the Father we love and want to please.

But having this new love for their heavenly Father, the Gentiles were being tricked into error. The devil is always looking for a way to turn us from Christ to ourselves and bring us back into bondage.

THE ERROR AND THE DANGER

Galatians 4: 8: Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9: But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? 10: Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. 11: I am afraid of [for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

May God give us the wisdom to do as Paul did. Having reminded them of what they were, having reminded them of God's love and grace in Christ, he then told them their error and the danger.

Gentiles never were under the old covenant. But Judaizer's bewitched them into thinking that they would show more love to Christ if they observed old covenant law. The legalists did not say that it was to be justified by the works of the law—they never say that! But they told them they needed to observe the law for sanctification, for aids in worship, and for life.

Judaizers say things like, "Paul says the sabbaths were a shadow of Christ. Then it will help you see Christ more and show your love more if you observe the sabbath day. Paul says Christ is your Passover. Think how it will help you see Christ and show your love more if you slay a lamb and observe the Passover Day in addition to believing on Christ!"

Paul said, "Do you remember when you did not know God and you served idols that are no gods?" He said to them, "You are turning back from Christ to the same idolatry and bondage you were in by coming under the old covenant with its elements of the world. You are turning from Christ and liberty *back* to Moses and bondage." Brethren, the same is true when we turn from Christ back to our former sins. All sin is idolatry be it the wickedness of turning back to the old covenant law or turning to our sins. Either way we are turning from Christ to serve them that are no gods.

Brethren, we were in prison. We were in a cell, in shackles, on death row. God our Father sent his Son and set us free. We dare not go back to the bondage of prison! How foolish would we be?

So what are we do? God our Father says teaches his child to hear his Son, to rest in his Son by faith. Christ teaches us to believe on him and abide in him and follow him. He teaches us to love one another by laying down our lives for one another as he loved us. Christ promises he will provide everything we need out of his fulness like the vine provides for the branch (Jn 15: 1-17). He promises that he will be our Head and grows us and knit our hearts together in love (Col 2: 4-23; 3: 1-15). Christ promised that he will bring us home and not lose one because it is the will of his Father (Jn 6: 37-45). Knowing Christ, or rather being known of Christ, how absurd to turn from Christ back to bondage!

Brethren, *we know God and are known of God!* Whatever we need we are to cry, "Abba, Father!" He says draw near in full assurance of faith. Come to our High Priest at his throne of grace that he might give grace to help in time of need (Heb 10: 19-22; 4: 14-16). The Holy Spirit abides in us and shall keep us abiding in Christ and will comfort and strengthen us. We are children of God and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, now! But let us hold fast our profession and be prepared to suffer for Christ that we might be glorified together with him (Rom 8: 10-17).

This gospel of God's love and grace and forgiveness is the message the Spirit blesses to root and ground us in love. The gospel of Christ and him crucified is the power of holiness. It is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believes for therein is the righteousness of God revealed (Rom 1: 16).

The Pharisee's used law and judgment to bind, never understanding "*the law is the strength of sin.*" The law exposes our sins and aggravates and keeps the sinner in bondage. But God has given his children the victory through Christ Jesus (1 Cor 15: 56-57).

God our Father roots us and grounds us in love by forming Christ in our heart by faith (Eph 3: 14-21). This is why the Pharisee's were dumbfounded when Christ said things like, "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both" (Luke 7:42); "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:47); "The lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt" (Matt. 18:27). He declares concerning his children "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Ho 14:4).

Brethren, the gospel of God's sovereign electing, predestinating, adopting, redeeming, forgiving, preserving, glorifying love and grace is the power of God unto salvation to all his believing children. Under the law and the curse, a man lives for self and Satan. But under God's grace and love, God sets us free to live for God. The love of God our Father is in Christ alone. So believe on Christ, abide in him, speak to each other of him, and use this gospel to strengthen one another. Paul loved his brethren by declaring to them the love of God our Father and his Son Christ Jesus by whose love we are now children of God and heirs with Christ. May God give us grace to do the same!

Amen!