

Galatians 4

Sons and Heirs; Paul's Relationship with the Galatians;
Allegorical Application from the Old Testament

Chapter 4 key words: "faith, heir, slave, law, Spirit, son, free, promise"

Day 1

Read Galatians 4:1-7

Sons and heirs

FYI: "In the first three chapters of his letter to the Galatians, Paul musters his historical and theological arsenal against the Judaizers' false gospel and their accusations of him. In chapter 4, his tone begins to change - he moves from defending to exhorting, from challenging to complimenting, from refuting to remembering. Paul the vigorous apologist becomes Paul the loving pastor. He pleads with the Galatian believers, his spiritual brethren and children to return to the truth they once embraced."
- Charles Swindoll (82)

1. How is a child like a slave? 4:1-2

- How did the law guard and manage people? Proverbs 6:23; 2 Timothy 3:15

2. Why were we like children before Christ came? 4:3

IT'S GREEK TO ME: "Elemental things/basic principles" Strong's NT:4747 *Stoicheion*; something orderly in arrangement"
- Strong's Concordance

"The term came to mean fundamental principles or basic elements of various kinds. The context here suggest that it refers to the elemental forms of religion, whether those of the Jews (under the law, v. 5) or those of the Gentiles (under their old religious bondage, v. 8)."
- The NIV Study Bible (1785)

3. What do you think each phrase in 4:4 indicates about Jesus' birth?

- "when the fullness of time came God sent forth His Son"
- "born of a woman" (Compare Isaiah 7:14; Hebrews 10:5)
- "born under the law" (Compare Matthew 5:17)

FYI: fullness of the time "The time was fully prepared in God's program and also in his governance of the world. He had prepared the world for the spread of the gospel in many ways: arousing an expectation of the Messiah among the Jews; using the Romans to provide peace, security and an excellent road network; and establishing a common language, Greek, through the conquest of Alexander the Great."
- Africa Bible Commentary (1422)
"The time was also right because the 483 years prophesied by Daniel were drawing to a close (Daniel 9:24-26)." - David Guzik

4. What connection do you see between Jesus' being "born under the law" 4:4 to sinners "under the Law" (4:5)

5. Number or list the phrases in 4:5-7 that describe our status in Christ.

FYI: "For a child of God, there is a confidence and boldness every day. We don't walk in fear of anyone or anything; our Father owns the place!...Our sonship removes the fear of missing fulfillment or losing approval that is at the root of much of our disobedience."
- Timothy Keller (100-101)

6. What picture of prayer life does 4:6 give you? See also Romans 8:15, 26-27

FYI: "We are never commanded to ask for the Spirit's indwelling presence - rather we are given it at the moment we place our trust in Christ...If we are saved, the Spirit is at work in our lives, giving us the power new need to live the Christian life. And His presence within us seals and signifies our new familial relationship to God. We are now so close to the Lord that we can call Him Abba, or Daddy, the most intimate expression young Jewish children use of their fathers...Once liberated by Christ through faith, we are given all the privileges and blessings that any other child of God has. That's grace!"
- Charles Swindoll (76)

"God sent His Son that we might have the *status* of sonship, and He sent His Spirit that we might have an *experience* of it. This comes through the affectionate, confidential intimacy of our access to God in prayer, in which we find ourselves assuming the attitude and using the language not of slaves, but of sons."
- John Stott (107)

Digging Deeper

When does a person receive the Holy Spirit? Eph. 1:13

What assurance does that give? Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22

7. Underline the phrases that describe the inheritance that awaits us.

- Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. NIV
- 2 Corinthians 4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. NASU
- Ephesians 1:18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, NIV
- 1 Peter 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you, NIV

Applying the Word: What do you find most amazing about being called a son of God? Do you experience the intimacy with God that Paul writes about in 4:6?

Day 2**Read Galatians 4:8-12****Returning to bondage**

8. What kind of things were the Galatians formerly enslaved to and why? 4:8 (Compare Romans 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:2)

9. Why was the Galatians' return to "slavery" so incredible? 4:9a

Digging Deeper

What do the following say about being "*known by God?*"

John 10:14-15; 27-30

Luke 12:6-7

Psalm 139:1-4; 15-16

FYI: "***To know*** in the Bible means more than intellectual awareness. To know someone is to enter into a personal relationship with him or her... our knowing of God will rise and fall depending on many things. But God's knowing of us is absolutely fixed and solid...The great and central basis of Christian assurance is not how much our hearts are set on God, but how much his heart is set on us."
- Timothy Keller (106.107)

10. To what kind of practices were the Galatians turning? 4:9b,10 (What did these practices do to them?)

- Read Colossians 2:8,16-23. List the kind of practices that Paul warned against.

FYI: "***Weak and beggarly:*** "Paul was in effect asking the Galatians, 'Is it spiritual progress again to be enslaved to weak and beggarly rituals and observances (v.10)? How could you have known God and turned away to 'childish' (v. 3) things?' The Galatians had come to know God through faith in Jesus Christ...He had adopted them as His own sons, but they were turning back to the law that had once enslaved them"
- The Nelson Study Bible (1975)

"The whole point of Galatians is a warning not to adopt a Biblical legalism. The false teachers were not encouraging the Gentile Christians to ignore God's law, as they had in their pagan days. Rather, they were urging them to adopt all the Old Testament Mosaic law, in order to be justified and pleasing to God (Gal.2:14-16)...If anything, the idolatry and slavery of religion is more dangerous than the idolatry and slavery of irreligion, because it is less obvious. The irreligious person knows he is far away from God, but the religious persona does not. That is why Paul is in "fear for" the Galatians. They were taking on '*special days and months and seasons and years*' (v 10) - they were (literally) religiously observing all the festivals and ceremonies of the Old Testament."
- Timothy Keller (103,105,106)

11. How did Paul feel about His ministry to the Galatians if they turned back to these observances? 4:11 (Cf. 2:2,21; 3:4)

12. What plea did Paul make? 4:12a On what basis? 4:12b (Compare Acts 26:29)

- From 1 Corinthians 11:1, what reason did Paul give for following his example?

FYI: "*Become like me:* They can do this by becoming like Paul in realizing that the law is inadequate and trusting solely in Christ for salvation...He had become like the Jews who had been freed from the demands of the law, and like the Gentiles in that he no longer prized his Jewish heritage as making him superior to them." - Africa Bible Commentary (1422)

Applying the Word: What do you see as the reasons for why it is often so easy to be pressured into a legalistic view of God?

Day 3

Read Galatians 4:12-20

Paul's concern for the Galatians

13. Why do you think Paul wanted to assure did the Galatians of his feelings toward them? 4:12c (Compare 4:16)

FYI: "Paul has used pretty strong words with the Galatians. It would be easy for them to think he spoke just out of a sense of personal hurt. Paul assures them that this wasn't the case at all...We can feel Paul's heartfelt emotion in these verses. As Stott puts it, 'In Galatians 1-3 we have been listening to Paul the apostle, Paul the theologian, Paul the defender of the faith; but now we are hearing Paul the man, Paul the pastor, Paul the passionate lover of souls.'" - David Guzik

14. How did Paul's ministry in Galatia begin? 4:13

15. What kind of relationship had the people had with Paul? 4:14,15

- What had the Galatians lost? 4:15a (Compare Romans 4:6-8)
Why do you think they had lost it?

Digging Deeper

Consider the attitude of the apostles about trials.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Philippians 1:12-20

1 Peter 1:5-8

James 1:2-4

16. What does Paul's concern about his relationship (4:16) with the Galatians indicate about the kind of arguments the Judaizers might have been using against Paul?

FYI: "Why does Paul included verses 12-16? To show them that though he has not changed in his message or his ministry, the church's response to him has - since they are now under the influence of ministers who have a very different message from his, because they have very different goals and means."
- Timothy Keller (112)

17. What was the goal of the Judaizers? 4:17 (Compare Romans 16:18)

FYI: "**They zealously court you, but for no good:** Paul will admit that the legalists **zealously court** the Galatians; and legalism often comes wrapped in a cloak of "love." But the end result is **for no good.**" - David Guzik

"The Judaizers [were] trying to create a rift between the Galatians and Paul, so that the Galatians, too, will become zealous Judaizers."
- Africa Bible Commentary (1423)

"Paul realizes that false teachers desire people to follow them, not Christ. And although the Judaizers were showering the Galatians with compliments - a practice Paul deems good when done with the right motives (vs. 18) - these legalist were doing it to spotlight themselves and enslave the Galatians under the Law."
- Charles Swindoll (84)

18. How can we judge when zeal is good? 4:18 (Consider what Paul's misplaced zeal had led him to do. Acts 22:3-4)

19. In the following, underline good reasons to be zealous/eager.

- 1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. NIV
- Titus 2:14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. NIV
- 1 Peter 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; NIV

20. What was Paul's goal? 4:19 (Compare Romans 8:29; Ephesians 4:13-15))

- What do Paul's words/images in 4:19-20 convey about the feelings he had for the Galatians?

FYI: "Paul wants people not to become dependent on him, but on Christ...The false teachers want followers who glorify them; Paul wants partners who glorify Christ...He is telling them *"the truth"*(v.16) and is being vilified for it... If you love a person so selfishly that you cannot risk their anger, you won't ever tell them the truth they need to hear. ...But if you speak the truth with lots of love evident at the same time, there is a great chance that what you say will penetrate the heart and heal."
- Timothy Keller (113)

Applying the Word: What is the most valuable lesson you see from Paul's relationship to those he ministered? How can you apply this to your own life?

Digging Deeper
From the following, what picture do you get of Paul's ministry and his heart for those to whom he ministered?

2 Corinthians 7:2-4

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

2 Thessalonians 3:7-10

Day 4

Read Galatians 4:21-31

Hagar and Sarah

21. From the allegory in 4:22-26, list the things that "correspond" to a religion of works versus a relationship of faith.

Law	Faith
<p>Vs. 22 Bondwoman</p>	

FYI: "Under the law" Paul does not mean obeying the law here. To be 'under the law' means relying on the law for your standing with God."
- Tim Keller (117)

"They are not...the Jews or Judaizers to whom Paul was writing, but people whose religion is legalistic, who imagine that the way to God is by observance of certain rules...They suppose that their relationship to God depends on adherence to regulations. They are [thus] in bondage to them."
- John Stott (122)

"**Under the law**, it is what *you do for God* that makes you right before Him. Under the grace of God, it is what *God has done for us in Jesus Christ* that makes us right before Him. **Under the law**, the focus is on *my performance*. Under the grace of God, the focus is on *who Jesus is and what He has done*."
- David Guzik

22. How was Ishmael's birth (Genesis 16:1-5) a picture of unbelief and a result of the "flesh" / "the ordinary way?"

- How was Isaac's birth (see Genesis 18:11-14) a picture of faith and a result of the promise of God?

FYI: *"This is allegorically speaking/ these things may be taken figuratively"* "The 'allegorical' meaning does not do away with the literal meaning of the narrative. There may be more than one 'allegorical' meaning though, of course, only one literal meaning."
- Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"Hagar represents the old covenant delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. This agreement bound the Jews - citizens of the earthly Jerusalem - to the Law's statutes, sacrifices, and punishments (Gal 4:24-25). The new covenant, symbolized by Sarah, is based on God's promises, not His Law."
- Charles Swindoll (91)

"The Jerusalem above is free: This covenant brings freedom - it **is free**. It is **free** because it recognizes that Jesus paid the price, and we don't have to pay it ourselves."
- David Guzik

23. How did Ishmael, Hagar's son, treat Isaac, Sarah's son? 4:29 See Genesis 21:8-10

- What parallel did Paul draw between what happened to Isaac and what was happening to the Galatians? 4:28-30 (Which side of the chart would the Judaizers be on? The Galatians?)

24. What conclusion did Paul come to in 4:30? How would you reword that choice as it applies to grace versus law?

FYI: "Paul sees this [historical event] as an example of a pattern in which promise, freedom and inheritance go together. There is another parallel, too. There was conflict between Ishmael and Isaac, just as there is conflict between the Judaizers and those who believe in justification by faith."
- Africa Bible Commentary (1423)

Food for Thought: "There is nothing more debilitating in your relationship with God than to think you please God only when you keep your own little spiritual list of do's and don'ts or someone else's list which has been imposed on you. When you feel God will only bless you when you don't cross any of your man-made religious boundaries, you live in bondage to legalism or to the law.

If you belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ, then, my friend, you are a beloved child of God. You are His heir forever...You are not under condemnation. God's blessing for you is that of grace, not performance. You are an heir according to God's unchangeable promise. His Holy Spirit dwells within you and will never leave you nor forsake you. You will live with God forever and ever. You will never be cast out. So cast out the bondswoman and her son. You are under grace not law, and when you walk in that grace you will be all you should and can be. Grace doesn't make you lawless; it simply sets you free from bondage God's way, so you can live a life that is pleasing to God."

- Kay Arthur (33.34)

Applying the Word: *Is there any way that you are not trusting wholly in Christ to save you and/or to work in and through you? What is causing you to doubt or fear His ability or willingness to do that? Give that burden to the Lord now in prayer.*