

“Formerly, We were all Slaves to Sin”

Galatians 4:1—11

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I. Historical background and Biblical Context

The infant church was just beginning, and it was drifting away by degrees and at times almost unnoticeably toward its first great doctrinal crisis. As the church began to expand and the gospel began to take root there, questions arose regarding a Christian’s relationship to the law of Moses and to Judaism as a system. Were the church doors to be open to all? What about the boundaries, was it to be to every human race? Was it extended to the Gentiles? Was it necessary that a Gentile believer to observe the law of Moses to be a Christian?

Paul regarded the thesis of Galatians—salvation by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—as the indispensable foundation of Christian life and conduct. This Book of Galatians has in some resources been called the “Magna Carta of Christian Liberty”, and correctly so. Why—it rightly maintains that only through the grace of God in Jesus Christ is a person enabled to escape the curse of his/her sin and of the law and to live a new life, not in bondage or license, but in a genuine freedom of mind and spirit through the power of God.

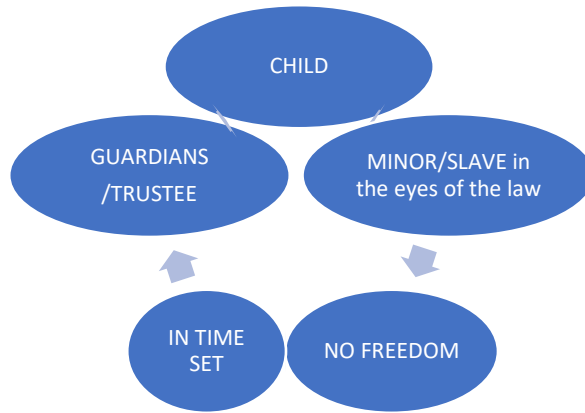
Are you on the point of departing from the faith because of your former sin? This lesson today liberates us from the law in a legal sense. Don’t succumb to traditions, rituals. Paul, the author in this Book of Galatians is filled with righteous indignation. He saw in a moment that the views of the legalizers was about to prevail but he stood his ground to boldly defend that grace and the cross of Jesus Christ would not be emptied of all value (5:2-4). Paul wanted to regain the Galatian churches and revive anew faith in the true God.

<h4>II. The Lesson: “Formerly, We were all Slaves to Sin” Galatians 4:1-11</h4>
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This lesson today shows what we were at one time slaves, in contrast to what we are now redeemed. He dwells on our status, showing that whereas we were previously slaves, we are now children/sons/daughters of our heavenly Father.

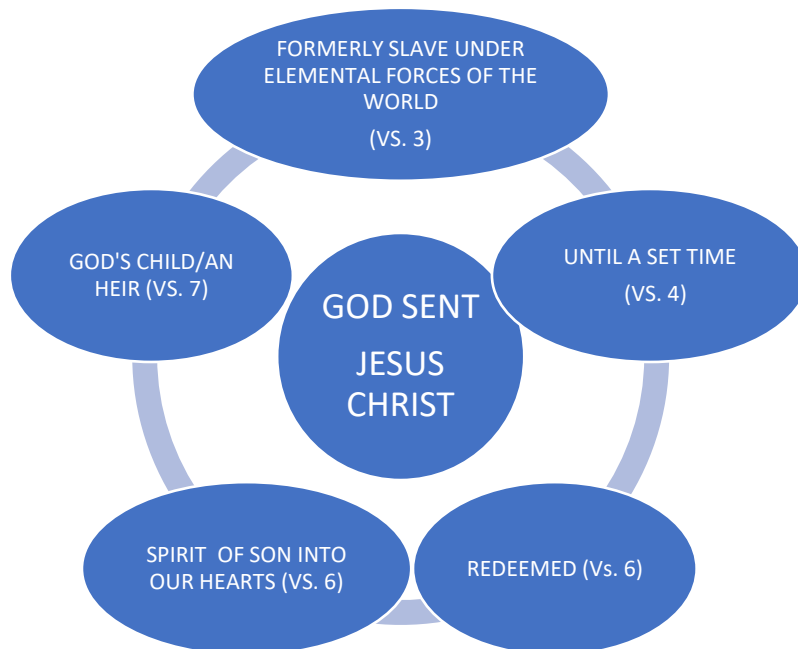
Verse 1-2: OUR STATUS BEFORE CHRIST CAME

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ²The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.



This is illustrated by Paul empowering us to understand our status as heirs of God. A child does not differ at all from a slave even though he is the owner and master of all the estate. An heir is no more than a servant until legally of age. Even so, we were children under bondage to the law until Christ came to redeem us from the law, that we might become adopted of God and free from the law.

VERSE 3—7: ³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.^[b] ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba,^[c] Father.” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.



This is Paul's meaning of elemental stages of our religious experience that we have gone through in the past; or our bondage (3:23) or in danger of falling under the world system (god/goddess/pagan festivals that honored gods). In Paul's mind these were demons (spiritual warfare against evil spirits). But God has set men free! He intervenes to set us free from bondage to Satan and evil spirits. Christ intervenes in a way that brings an effective and complete salvation. The world at that time was sunk in a moral abyss so low that even the pagans cried out against it and the spiritual hunger was everywhere evident and was a perfect time for the gospel to be preached. Paul was preaching why Jesus Christ had to redeem those under the law from the bondage of adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, quarreling, emulations (jealousies in business, society, religious rivalry), wrath, strife, seditions (parties/fractions/disorder) heresies, envying (pain, ill-will), murder, drunkenness, reviling (insults, obscene music, pleasures). These are seen in Galatians 5:19-21. This was done by two acts.

The first act is Who is the one through whom this great salvation comes? He is divine, for he is God's "Son". He is human, for he was "born" of a woman, born "under law"; that is, he was born into Israel and thus within God's historical plan of salvation of which the 66 books of the Bible profess to us throughout. God sent his Son which is done by hearing the Word being taught and preached.

God sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, the Spirit who call out, "Abba" -- Father. God the Father sent the Son and God the Holy Spirit redeemed us. The Spirit is the gift of God to every believer because we are his children. This is made present in our Christian experience that is know in prayer. Once we were alienated, but now being a child of God, we are permitted by God to cry, "Father, Abba Father". The English word is "Daddy" ...a word used habitually by Jesus in many of his prayers and he passed it on to those who through him became God's children.

Verse 7 sums up all that Paul has said previously. Formerly slaves! Paul is boldly having to look with confidence, not from looking to man, but from looking to God and from receiving through faith what he had done in sending the Lord Jesus Christ to die for the believer and in sending the Holy Spirit to live within him.

VERSES 8-11: THE APPEAL: DON'T RETURN TO BONDAGE!

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces^[d]? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow, I have wasted my efforts on you.

Paul continues to press and makes a lengthy appeal to the Galatians and to us today. You are to be reminded of your former bondages in those despicable past iniquities to

not return to such slavery (see the list in 5:19-27))! In view of this possibility, Paul fears as well as the man and woman of God of being slaves to bondage, don't make this preaching and teaching be in vain or a waste of effort or for no purpose! OMG!

For the third time, Paul speaks of the former enslaved state of the Galatians. It has already been shown that the (3:23ff., 4:1ff., and now) that indeed of all who are not yet Christians, was one of bondage and immaturity. That state was one of ignorance of the true God in which we formerly worshipped gods (paganism). To return to former bondage, is ignorance, astonishing, and totally incomprehensible. It can be translated like this: *"But how can it be that, on the one hand, having formerly been in ignorance of God and therefore enslaved to those who are not gods and, on the other hand, having come to know God or (which is more to the point) being known by him, you are now returning anew to those weak and bankrupt elements which once controlled you?"*

Here are three causes (1) Going back to what you had already been through-that is, not to a new error but to an old one; (2) turning from reality to nonreality (the true God revealed in Jesus Christ and the 'no gods'; (3) this was done after you had actually come "to know" God in a real way (intimately and on a personal level). It is not our own efforts, but the truth is that God comes to know us. That is, he takes the initiative in salvation with the result we come to know him only because we are first known of him! In other words, our spiritual depravity is weak, bankrupt they are "weak and miserable" ...no wealth by which they can provide an inheritance! We are heirs of Jesus!

Verse 10 demonstrates our struggle when we succumb to observances, rituals, traditions, and sins, wrongs, some things can be done away with when we become legalistic. You see the law is good and from God, but the law when distorted into a way of trying to earn salvation, can be used by Satan to increase mankind's bondage.

Verse 11 says, did we miss the point! Rom. 8:35-39 states the fact that nothing can ever separate the Christian from the redeeming love of God and this confidence is the work that has begun in the Christian by God will continue until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6). This not the same as saying a Christian can lose his salvation. Nevertheless, they are wavering ("turning"), and this wavering is inexplicable and inexcusable. It can only be as, Peter is later to write of other unfruitful Christians, that they are "nearsighted and blind" and have "forgotten" that they were cleansed from old sins (2 Peter 1:9).

CONCLUSION/APPLICATION

Don't be a fickle Christian and backslide to being in bondage to your past wrongs. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit's plan of salvation is to redeem us. He has manifested this in his Son Jesus Christ. The circumstances of Him being born of a woman proves this. His death redeemed us. His Son adopted us as an heir to all who believe, and the imparting of the Holy Spirit empowers us! Abba Father will equip you under the new covenant to be an overcomer, not a slave. David was renewed (Psalm 51). There is nothing made but that can be restored, revived, recast, refined. Let the revival begin in me and you! You can recommit your life and be made anew! Come to Jesus, start anew now!