



The Letter to the Galatians - Freed To Be Free.

Galatians 4:1-11, 28-31 - Children of Promise

From Chapter 3 to Chapter 4

- In the previous chapter, Paul contrasted the Promise God made to Abraham that we inherit by faith, with the purpose of the Law given through Moses, that reveals our sin and leads us to Christ, who frees us.
- The Law did not cancel the promise but made it more necessary and urgent. It is meant to drive us to our utter need for Christ.
- In this chapter, we will look particularly at the difference between being a slave of the Law and a true son and heir of the Promise of God.

Relationship of the Old Testament to the New:

1) Progressive revelation:

The Old Testament (Covenant) begins with creation and the fall of man, and traces God's mission to redeem people to Himself, beginning with Israel (through Abraham, Moses, King David, the priesthood and the prophets). It leads into the New Testament which sees the coming of God's Kingdom in Jesus, who brought about redemption by His death, and will usher in the new creation. *Matthew 4:17; Luke 24:27, 44-48; 1 Corinthians 5:20-26; Revelation 21:5.*

2) Promise vs Fulfilment:

Provision of Old Covenant law through Moses that reveals sin and outlines God's commandments, while promising a future Messiah.

Provision of New Covenant grace that delivers from sin, through the incarnation, passion and resurrection of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. *Exodus 19:3-6, 24:7-8; Deuteronomy 9:11; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; John 1:17.*

3) Flesh vs Spirit

The Old Covenant is an external conformity to God's law by human work.

The New Covenant is an internal empowering and fulfilment of God's law through faith in the finished work of Jesus with the coming of the Holy Spirit into believers. *Ezekiel 36:25-32; Acts 2:38-39, 13:38-39; 2 Corinthians 3:3-6;*

Galatians 4:1-11

- Paul discusses the true position of a person who is under the law (vs 1-3),
- Over against who we are in Christ (vs 4-7).
- And finally, he will make a passionate appeal to stay in Christ and the freedom he has won for us (vs 8-11).

Verse 1-3

Vs 1 – An heir who is not come of age is no better than a slave.

Vs 2 – Under temporary guardianship and management.

Vs 3 – “In the same way”, we who were heirs of the promise of Abraham were under ‘elementary principles of the world.’

“Elementary Principles” in Greek: στοιχεῖον *stoicheion* Lit. means "basic things," "first principles", possibly spiritual beings or basic philosophies that enslaved us (see vs 8 and 9).

Verse 4-7

Vs 4 – “But when fullness of time had come...” – It was a perfectly opportune time in history. Unified empire, language, roads, etc. Also prophetically (see Daniel 9:24-26).

Vs 5 – we were redeemed to be adopted.

"If He had not been man, He could not have redeemed men. If He had not been a righteous man, He could not have redeemed unrighteous men. And if He had not been God's Son, He could not have redeemed men for God or made them the sons of God."

John Stott, The Message of Galatians, (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1984), page 106.

Vs 6-7 – We have the Spirit who leads us to call God, “Abba, Father!”

Verse 8-11

- Vs 8-10: If you were set free by Jesus, why would you want to be a slave again? (cf Numbers 16:13)
- Vs 10 – It was the ritualistic duty of the law - to keep holy days and seasons.
- Vs 11: Paul is afraid that he has wasted all the time he spent with them preaching the good news

Galatians 4:12-27

- Paul calls them to be consistent and faithful to the original Gospel he preached to them, as he is. Here, we see Paul's genuine care and concern for the Galatians Christians. He calls them his 'little children', and that he is in the "anguish of childbirth" until they become fully formed in Christ again - not led astray by false teaching or Gospel.
- Gives an allegory based on events described in Genesis 16
- Vs 24 – Sarah and Hagar represent two covenants – that of law and grace/promise.

Abraham is our father, but whose our mother?

Ishmael, son of Hagar – Legalism	Isaac, son of Sarah – Faith in Christ
Child of a slave woman. Hagar (vs22)	Child of a free woman, Sarah (vs 22)
Ishmael: born according to the flesh (v 23)	Isaac: born according to God’s promise (vs 23)
Corresponds to earthly Jerusalem (vs 25)	Corresponds to heavenly Jerusalem (vs 26)
Many children (descendants)	More children (descendants) (vs 27)
Persecuting (vs 29)	Persecuted (vs 29)
Inheriting nothing (vs 30)	Inherits everything (vs 30)
Relationship based on law-keeping	Relationship based on trusting God

(edited from chart in <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/galatians-4/>)

Galatians 4:28-31:

- Vs 28 – Christians are children of promise. Like Isaac who represents freedom in Christ and unlike Ishmael who represents slavery to the law. **The point really is we are either born as Ishmael or born-again as Isaac!**
- Vs 29 - Those who are legalists like the Judaizers (circumcision party) are always going to attack and ridicule us.
- Vs 31 - But ultimately, we Christians are children of promise and spiritual descendants of Abraham. We will inherit through Jesus Christ, but the physical descendants of Abraham (the Jews) who reject Jesus and try to keep the law will instead be cast out, as Jesus Himself told us - Matt 8:11,12, Luke 13:28,29.