

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

In the 1700s, John Newton went to sea with his father on a merchant ship. He was only 11 years old.

He was an only child and his mother died when he was only seven years old.

Soon after his father retired, Newton was pressed into service on a warship.

Facing intolerable conditions, he deserted and later requested a transfer to a slave ship that was soon to set sail for Africa.

Newton hardened himself to the trafficking of human beings, and eventually he became captain of his own slave ship.

On May 10, 1748, however, his life was changed forever.

His ship encountered a terrifying, violent storm off of Newfoundland. Just as it seemed that the vessel would sink, Newton cried out to God for mercy and he found it.

That night in his cabin, he began to reflect upon God's mercy.

Through faith in Christ's sacrifice for him, John Newton experienced God's amazing grace in a personal way. In time, he left the slave trade and entered the Christian ministry.

Although he became a preacher of the gospel, he is most remembered for his much-loved hymn “Amazing Grace.”

What an amazing testimony of his own experience.

Let's pray...

Once again, we find ourselves in the book of Galatians

Paul is writing to a group of churches who were infiltrated by these Judaizers, these legalist, that insisted that Gentile Christians were not really saved unless they converted to Judaism first and started adhering to all the laws and traditions.

And for the past few weeks we have seen Paul expound on these three points.

- God gave Abraham a promise that through His Seed all the nations would be blessed.
- God gave Moses a law – the law didn't nullify the promise – it simply pointed out how important the promise to Abraham was.
- God fulfilled the promise – in the person of His son Jesus Christ so that those who seeing their sin in confronting the law might be drawn to Christ and make the discovery of all the blessings which accompany the promise to Abraham.

That was the point of the law – it was simply a tutor/guardian until we come to the point where we are justified by faith in Christ – and it is at that point that we exchange a relationship that was solely based on the law for a relationship based on love. Amen!

As we look at our text this morning, I want to remind us that when Paul wrote these epistles to the churches, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, he was not numbering the verses and including the chapter divisions.

This was done later by man in order to help us read it. In order to help us reference bible verses.

However, sometimes – these divisions are not always in the best place.

We shouldn't consider the beginning of this chapter as a break from what Paul was writing about at the end of chapter three.

Because when we read them together we see that Paul is simply linking together his thoughts as he uses several illustrations to continue his defense of the gospel.

In Galatians 3:29 the apostle Paul declared that if you are in Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, which means you are an heir of the promise.

What does it mean to be an heir?

When we hear the word heir, we think of children of royalty as being heirs to the throne.

If Queen Elizabeth were to pass away, Prince Charles is the heir to the throne – he is the next in line.

But being an heir simply means that we are in line to receive something.

Being an heir means that we have rights to the inheritance.

I want you to keep this concept in mind as we explore how Paul describes those who are in Christ.

[Gal 4:1-2 NKJV] 1 Now I say [that] the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.

Paul begins with an illustration of a young boy in a wealthy home.

The boy is the legal heir and future master of his father's entire estate.

One day, all of his father's land and cars and homes and servants – they are all going to be his.

He has an unlimited amount of resources but yet – because of his age, he has limited rights to those unlimited resources.

One doesn't give a five year old the keys to their Porsche right.

Even though one day it might be his or her car.

The child may one day be lord over all the servants, but while he is a child, he still has to do what his nanny says. He has to obey the servants that have been entrusted with his upbringing.

In chapter three, Paul uses the word tutor and here in chapter four, the Greek words that are used for guardians and stewards even though they are not the same word that he used before, they still have the same idea behind them and still refer to the law.

Now it says at the end of verse two, the **time appointed by the father**

Under the Roman customs of those days, the father would set a particular date for maturity for their children. The churches in Galatia were under Roman rule -

We do not have this custom today.

I do not determine the age of the maturity for my children when they will no longer be treated as minors.

But this is what would happen in the Roman culture.

And Paul uses this illustration from Roman society to show that this is the same situation for the world spiritually.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Before we came to know Jesus, we were in bondage to the basic principles of the universe that are stressed in all man made religions as well as Jewish law.

This is the ABC of the universe.

And that is the principle of cause and effect –

Some may call it karma, some may call it “you get what you deserve” or something else; yet it rules nature and the minds of men.

We live under the idea that we get what we deserve; when we are good we deserve to receive good and when we are bad we deserve to receive bad.

Paul told the Galatians to go beyond this “ABC of the universe” into an understanding of God’s grace.

Grace contradicts this “ABC of the universe,” because under grace, God does not deal with us on the basis of what we deserve.

Our good cannot justify us under grace; our bad need not condemn us.

God’s blessing and favor is given on a principle completely apart from the “ABC of the universe.”

His blessing and favor is given for reasons that are completely in Him, and have nothing to do with us.

Now, we don’t abandon this principle – we still strive to do good.

We are still to love one another.

However, we cannot base our relationship with God on this principle.

That is a false teaching and that is what the legalists were doing to the churches in Galatia.

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

The fullness of time is the perfect time that God the Father and His Son had set from all eternity.

This was the birth of our Savior.

This was the time appointed by the father – we saw that in verse 2.

The time of maturity.

It was no coincidence and it was no accident.

This plan of redemption was all part of a carefully planned, fully developed plan of God.

Notice that it says that it also states that Jesus was born of a woman and not of a man – alluding to His virgin birth.

When Jesus was born, He was a Jew.

And being a Jew, He was subject to the Jewish Law.

This whole issue of the Law isn't something that's incidental to knowing Jesus.

Jesus' whole coming and purpose is tightly wrapped up in the Law.

When you study the Mosaic Law, and its sacrifices and ceremonies, one thing is very clear, God was preparing mankind for Jesus.

Turn with me to the book of Leviticus 1,

[Lev 4:1-7 NKJV] 1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD [in anything] which ought not to be done, and does any of them, 3 'if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. 4 'He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD. 5 'Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting. 6 'The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. 7 'And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle

of meeting; and he shall pour the remaining blood of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

So according to the law, when someone sinned and wanted atonement for their sin, they would have to bring a male with no blemish – speaking of Jesus.

They would have to place their hands on the head of the bull – the reason they did this was to symbolize the sins from the individual be transferred to the bull – this is the same thing that happened to Jesus as he hung on the cross as all of our past, present and future sins were transferred upon Him.

The you had the pouring of blood on the altar at the tabernacle of meeting, the tabernacle of meeting was the place were God met His people. And the blood was their to cover up the sin so that they may have fellowship with God.

That is exactly what Jesus Christ did for us as the shedding of His blood allows us to have fellowship with God the Father.

The major difference is that He did it once and for all – we don't have to do it repeatedly like they did in the Old Testament.

And all the other offerings – they point to Jesus as well.

You see, the Law itself lays out the very reasons Jesus had to come.

It makes clear that we as men are sinful beings.

It makes clear that God provides for man's sins to be paid for in substitutionary atonement.

God allows for someone else to pay your ticket.

The pictures of lambs and all point to Jesus Himself.

Because Jesus is God, He has the power and the resources to redeem us.

Because Jesus is man, He has the right and the ability to redeem us.

He came to purchase us out of the slave market, from our bondage to sin and the elements of the world.

I asked you to make a note of the last part of verse 5 where Paul states that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Adoption is not the means of entry into God's family.

Remember, that Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, that we enter into God's family only by being born again.

Rather, adoption speaks of our privilege and standing within God's family.

The moment we were born again, we were placed in an adopted state as heirs, as sons of God.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the **Spirit of His Son into your hearts**, crying out, **"Abba, Father!"** 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Turn with me to Romans 8,

[Rom 8:12-17 NKJV] 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, **"Abba, Father."** 16 **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,** 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified together.

The proof that these Gentile Christians were indeed children of the promise is that God had given them the Spirit of his Son in their hearts.

We saw Paul make that point when we studied the beginning of chapter 3.

These Gentile Christians had already received the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promises of God.

These things did not come by the works of the law but hearing with faith.

This is what Paul has repeatedly reminded the church in Galatia,

You have everything in Christ.

You have equal access, equal blessings, and equal privilege before God.

You do not need the works of the law to have these things.

You are already in God's kingdom.

You already are a child of God.

You already are heirs of God.

You already are in covenant relationship with God.

You already are heirs of the inheritance.

You are already recipients of the promise.

And to top it off, you can have an intimate relationship with God.

I asked you to underline Abba Father,

In the Greek text, Paul uses two words that mean the same thing, Abba is the Aramaic word for father – that is usually only used in an intimate family circle.

Abba can be translated as daddy or dada.

There are only two people that have the privilege to call me that in this room – even though they haven't done it in years.

Because they have direct intimacy with me.

And in the same way, before Jesus came to pay for our sins, direct intimacy with God would have been impossible.

Our sins were too great.

But after Jesus paid for our sins, then to top it off, He gave us the Holy Spirit to give us the ability to even be able to relate to God in an intimate way.

Always remember that God is Spirit, and those who worship and relate to Him must do so in spirit and truth.

With the Holy Spirit inside of us now, we have the equipment to be able to relate to God in the most intimate ways.

I find it interesting that as the Spirit of His Son cries out Abba Father, it's the same thing that Jesus cried out in the garden of gethsemane, (read)

[Mar 14:36 NKJV] 36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things [are] possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You [will]."

One of the things we need to ask ourselves this morning is, “Do we have that intimate relationship with God?”

One where we can come to him as a small child would go to their father.

[Gal 4:8-9 NKJV] 8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how [is it that] you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

After reminding these Gentile Christians that they already have, through the Holy Spirit, a means of having an intimate relationship with God, Paul will now go to challenge them on why they would choose to return to legalism.

That is what Paul refers to here when describes the weak and beggarly elements – he is describing legalism.

And what Paul does here in verses 8 and 9 is that he equates their lives as pagans before they came to Christ and to the lives that they appear to want to choose which is to go back to adhering to the law.

In other words, before you came to Christ, you worshipped little “g” gods.

After you came to Christ, you want to go back to legalism,

Guess what??? They are the same thing.

How are they the same thing?

Because whenever the observance of the law takes the place of Christ as the basis of relating to God, it is as reprehensible as pagan worship.

Consider these two things,

1. Pagan religions are weak and miserable principles.

They are weak because they do not have the power to overcome the guilt and power of sin; they are miserable, poor and impotent because they cannot impart a new life.

In the same way the Mosaic codes are weak and miserable principles. The Mosaic law "declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin" (3:22), but it is powerless to set anyone free from the chains of sin. And the Mosaic law is not able to impart life (3:21). Therefore to substitute observance of the Mosaic law for complete reliance on Christ is just the same as returning to pagan worship.

[Gal 4:10-11 NKJV] 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

Evidently the Jewish calendar had already been instituted in the Galatian churches. They were planning to observe the regulations for weekly sabbath days, monthly new moon festivals, annual festivals like Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, and the sabbatical years.

They must have been led to believe that their observance of these holy days and festivals would draw them closer to God.

What foolishness! How could people who have already received adoption as children of God and are praying "Abba, Father" in the Spirit, people who know God and are known by him, start to depend on the observance of holy days for their relationship with God?

But church, that is the danger of legalism.

That is what happens when we as believers put an emphasis on keeping certain traditions rather than on growing in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

I opened up with a brief testimony of John Newton.

About his conversion.

One of the things I remember reading about him is that he put a bible verse in his home – I think it was above his fireplace.

And he put it there to remind him.

And that bible verse is Deut 24:18

[Deu 24:18 NKJV] 18 "But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

And I find it interesting that it is in reference to bondage that the Israelites suffered while in Egypt.

The problem that the churches in Galatia had was that they were simply turning from one form of slavery to another.

They were enslaved to idolatry, were set free in Christ, and now were enslaving themselves to the Law of Moses.

We are only set free in Christ.

How then can we turn away from God for the emptiness of this world?

Church, do not throw away your inheritance. Do not cast off our identity in Christ. Do not reject your access to God to call him Father. Draw near to God and love Him for He has redeemed you and made you His child.

Amen!

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

