

GALATIANS 4 – PART 1 – NO LONGER A SLAVE BUT A CHILD – Wed podcast



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

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. Galatians 4:1-7

Let’s pray. Move us with your Holy Spirit.

Today we’re going to hone in on what it means to have a heavenly Father. We are looking into an ancient culture. These were the traditions of turning 12 and on the first Sabbath after the 12th birthday, the young man would become “a son of the law”. He would then have the right to comment on the scriptures.

Paul is writing to gentiles who had a different experience. When they would get to a certain age they would have certain rights and privileges. In verses 1 and 2. Before that time, they had no rights or privileges. Even if they were an heir of maybe a huge estate, they had no right to make decisions concerning an estate until they reached a certain age. Paul is saying that at that age, they are really just like a slave. They have no control over anything. In verse three, he says,

In the same way, when we were before Christ, we were “children” who were enslaved in the “elementary principles of the world”. So, what does that mean? It means we were under the guardianship or being directed by the basic principles

of the world. A better translation is that it is the “spiritual forces of the world.” It is one Greek word that we don’t have in English. It is στοιχεῖα (stoikeia), means “elemental principles”. In ancient classic Greek it also described a part of a sun dial, and maybe it started out meaning the thing that you measured everything by, or something like that. But here Paul, is talking about “what makes you tick” or “what leads you and guides you.”

But Paul says that in the fullness of time, when Jesus came, we were redeemed and adopted as sons. When you’re a son, you’re going to be trained and directed not by the “elementary principles of the world”, but rather you’re directed by a heavenly Father who loves you, guides you, directs you, and now gives you a different set of rules.

Verse 6 says that because we are sons, God sent a gift of the Holy Spirit to rule in our hearts and lives. This moves us from being a person “enslaved to the rules of the world” to being a son who is ruled by the Holy Spirit that lives and dwells in us.

So what are some of the characteristics of being a son?

Over in Romans chapter 8, Paul is even more clear about this idea of “sonship”.

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 message we want to give today is that we have a GOOD FATHER. As adopted sons and daughters of a Good Father, we enjoy certain benefits. He is there to correct us, guide us, discipline us, instruct us, educate us, provide for us, and train us to be “just like Him”. What a joy to have such a Father in heaven. We’d like to just speak briefly about a couple of these attributes.

He lovingly corrects us. He does not correct us in anger. He is not the “big bear in the air” as some imagine Him to be. As a Good Father, God’s discipline (teaching) and correction are always done out of love. God’s Spirit corrects us in our everyday decisions and interactions with others, how we can feel Him prodding us toward decisions that reflect His love and truth, and how we feel convicted when

we choose to disobey. The writer of the Book of Hebrews speaks at length about this discipline.

The Discipline of God

⁵ *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:*

*“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*

⁶ *For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.”*

⁷ *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. v. ¹⁰ but He [chastens] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

He provides for our needs. God provides for our needs. A good human father is a provider, and God the Father provides for us as well.

⁹ *“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matt 7:9-11)*

He gives us His Fatherly wisdom. James the brother of Jesus says that if we lack wisdom, we can ask of God and He will give us wisdom in the paths to take in our lives. Being equipped with God’s Word is probably the best source of godly wisdom. As we read the word, the Holy Spirit brings it to live in our hearts and it produces a good effect.

He always welcomes us back. A good earthly father forgives his children when they mess up. Yes, there is correction and discipline, but there is always love and acceptance when we confess our weaknesses and failings. As a GOOD FATHER, He loves and accepts us and is the source of our value and worth. We all mess up, but our true Father is constantly on watch for our return, running to us with joy when we turn back to His family ([Luke 15:11-32](#)).