



# World Christian Fellowship

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## Galatians

### Lesson 35- Adoption of the believer

**Galatians 4:1-7**, *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,<sup>2</sup> but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.<sup>3</sup> Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

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

Apostle Paul dealt in this Epistle in details in chapter on the subject of Why the Law?

1. To define sin at its broadest level. Obviously, there is a law written in the heart of everybody, and we all have a conscience. So, everybody knows what is right and what is wrong. They know it because the law of God is written

in the heart. But that is not a complete law! God revealed His law to Moses fully to define sin.

2. God revealed His law to demonstrate to us that sin has ruined our relationship with God and Man. The violation of the law of God is an open rebellion against God. The law shows us that sin is not just a defect, but it is rebellion against God.
3. Law reveals any rebellion takes us to the sentence of death. Death comes to all men. The wages of sin is death. Everyone is a law-breaker.
4. Law could not save. Law was to demonstrate that the law could not save. The law was in the hands of the Jewish people who had the best opportunity to fulfil the law, to obey the law. They swore they would. They took a blood oath, back in Exodus 24, that they would obey the law.  
They did not obey the law. In fact, they violated the very first of the commandments, which was to have no other gods. They were idolaters, they violated the law of God at every point. Ultimately judgment fell on them, they were taken into captivity, and lost their own land.

So, the law of God has a purpose. Its purpose is to

- ✓ define sin,
- ✓ declare it as rebellion,

- ✓ pronounce death sentence, and
- ✓ prove historically by the illustration of Israel that the law doesn't save anyone.

That's the law.

The only thing that saves is faith, faith in God, faith in Jesus Christ. So, Paul is making that distinction between the law and its work, and faith and how it receives the promise.

**Galatians 3:24**, *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

The law becoming a tutor, a person intended to care for a child, someone who was kind of a personal guardian. The law was that guardian who had the task and the responsibility to lead us to Christ. The law is to show that hell as the inevitable reality for every sinner at the end of their life. Thus, in desperation people will be driven to Christ, whom they receive by faith and faith alone.

In chapter 4, Paul again contrasting man's condition when he's under the law, with his condition in Christ when he is the recipient of the promise, how he goes from slavery to the law, to freedom on Christ.

The absolute importance of gospel truth is at the heart of the church is still justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

We come to understand the doctrine of adoption, what it means to no longer be a slave, but to be a son.

We have done series of lessons on the doctrine.

Doctrine of Election,  
Doctrine of Redemption,  
Doctrine of Imputation,  
Doctrine of Justification,  
Doctrine of Adoption,  
Doctrine of Indwelling,  
Doctrine of Sanctification, and  
Doctrine of Glorification.

We have this wonderful doctrine of adoption!

**Ephesians 1:3-5**, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

The doctrine of election is for the purpose of the doctrine of adoption.

He chose us so that He could adopt us!

When you choose someone to be your child. That doesn't happen in birth, you just get what shows up. You didn't make a choice!

But adoption is where you choose, and you take a son that essentially comes from another family. That glorious truth is part of the display of the glories of our salvation. We were chosen by God out of a world of sinners to become His adopted children.

Galatians 4 we learn so much about the wonders of this work of God called adoption. We will call it "sonship."

## **Preparation for Sonship**

*V1-2, 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, <sup>2</sup> but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father*

Paul starts by saying, let us use a natural illustration to make the point. A child may be an heir, but he doesn't differ at all from a slave, even though he is the owner of everything. Because as an infant he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father when he can step into his inheritance.

In the Jewish world, a boy on his twelfth birthday was set to come to the first Sabbath subsequent to his birthday, and his father would take him to the synagogue. He would be delivered

to the synagogue, presented to the rabbi, and be told that he is now **'bar mitzvah'**, son of the law. He is now passed out of his father's hands and he is responsible to God for his adherence to the law.

The father voiced a benediction. This is what a Jewish father would say: "Blessed be You, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility of this boy."

Can you imagine turning your twelve-year-old son?

Taking your hands off your responsibility?

What the father meant by that was that not irresponsibility?

But, "He is now subject to You and Your law."

The boy then prayed the following prayer:

"O my God, and God of my fathers, on this solemn and sacred day which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto You and declare with sincerity and truth that henceforth, I will keep your commandments and undertake to bear the responsibility of my actions before You."

That was a true and ancient bar mitzvah!

People at that age would then contemplate marriage.

Its differently handled in Greece and its very different pertaining to Athenians.

The Roman Law family had a sacred festival called '*Liberalia*'. It usually happens when the boy is aged between 14 to 17 years old. The child was taken to the forum in Rome and introduced into public life. It was a definitive day. It was the end of childhood, it was the beginning of adulthood. The symbol of it for boy and girl was they brought their toys and they laid down all their toys, and demonstrably put away childish things.

Paul borrows that idea here.

Everybody in the ancient world knew there was a time when an infant stepped into responsibility. Up until that time, he doesn't differ from a slave.

He may be the heir on an incredibly wealthy estate. One day that power will be his, it is his by promise, but not yet in experience. He is still a child, and therefore he is still under guardians and managers.

Even though he is the heir, one day he will possess all of this as the legal owner. During childhood, he's no better than a slave. He doesn't command anybody to do anything, in fact they tell him. He is heir by right, but he is not heir in fact. As long as he is a child, he is under guardians and managers.

Guardians and managers would be like '*paidagōgos*', the tutor, they would be slaves.

A family trusted slaves who would be the caretakers for the children, very much like their mentors and their guardians. They watched over the child as the 'paidagōgos', mentioned in **Galatians 3:24**.

He can't receive his estate, he can't administer his estate, and he cannot take his inheritance. The promise is waiting, but it is waiting for his maturity. As long as he is a child, he is no different than a slave. He takes orders and he doesn't give them until the date set by the father.

Please do remember about very definitive times. The father would set the date and on this particular date when you become a man. You become accountable to the law, to the law of the land if you are a Greek or a Roman, to the law of the gods or to the law of the true God if you are a Jew. It was a set, fixed time.

This is the imagery picture apostle Paul had in mind.

**V3**, *Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

Now Paul moves from the illustration to the application.

This is true of Jews. Jews were given the promise.

- The promise came to Abraham.
- Through Abraham it was going to go to Israel and the world.

- It was reiterated through David.
- It was reiterated through the prophets.
- Prophets prophesy about the new covenant.
- The promise of salvation was given.
- The inheritance was waiting.
- Promise was not available to them because of their infancy.

An infant is in bondage to those that control his life. And Paul says, “While we were children, we were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.”

Bondage for the Jew was essentially defined by the written law of God, as well as by his father’s will.

Bondage to the Gentile was also by the law of God, but the law of God written in his heart, because he didn’t have a written law, also by the decisions of his father.

As fathers created bondage for their children, so the written law for Jew, the law written in the heart for Gentiles created a kind of bondage. We are never released from that bondage until we become mature sons.

What does this the elemental things of the world mean?

**Colossians 2:8**, *Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men,*

*according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*

**Colossians 2:20-23**, *Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—<sup>21</sup> “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”<sup>22</sup> which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?<sup>23</sup> These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.*

What are the elementary principles of the world?

They are the things in which you were held captive before Christ.

For Gentile it would be philosophy, empty deception, tradition of men, certain rules, decrees, don't handle, don't taste, don't touch. The appearance of wisdom in self-made religion, self-abasement, severe treatment of the body. There are religions that think holiness is achieved by beating and inflicting pain on yourself. That is a form of elementary principles of the world.

For the Jews the law is an elemental thing.

All religion, no matter how sophisticated it may appear, even Judaism, is really elementary.

There's no real maturity in any basic religion. The law was a form of religion that was elementary. The point was to get from there to Christ. In Christ comes full maturity.

The elementary principles of the world may be philosophy.

### **What do you mean by philosophy?**

Any godless idea raised up against the truth of God.

**2 Corinthians 10:5**, *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

Any godless idea raised up against the knowledge of God.

### **What is tradition?**

The pattern of the past continued endlessly into the present. That is a kind of A-B-C, 1-2-3, simple, simplistic, elementary form of religion.

Religion without Christ is elementary.

Religion without Christ is immature.

**Romans 1:22**, *Professing to be wise, they became fools,*

The law of God is holy, righteous, and good, and it teaches you the truth. If you are going to be in elementary school, it would be best to be in Judaism at least you know the truth. But all of us are imprisoned. We are held in bondage in our infancy, which

is our pre-salvation condition, unable to take our inheritance because we have not reached adulthood.

## **Realisation of sonship.**

*V4, But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

“When the fullness of time was come.”

God’s time was perfect. God is patient.

The law was around for two thousand of years. When Christ finally came, with Christ came freedom from the law and adulthood.

- The bondage was long.
- The bondage was hard.

But when the fullness of time came, the arrival of Christ, the messianic age.

That marks the culmination of human history. The bondage had been long and hard, waiting for a redeemer to set us free. The fullness of time, perfect time, exact time even from a human standpoint, it was perfect time.

The law was known by the Jews, and after the Babylonian captivity when they came back into the land, they never again worshiped an idol. Idolatry had been literally taken from them in their captivity.

So **religiously**, the Babylonian captivity had resulted in Israel's final turning from idols and focusing on the one true God. That cleared the way, in some sense, for the coming of Christ.

The Canon of the Old Testament had long been completed, and they had the Law and the Prophets and the Holy Writings. So necessary to understand Christ!

Jesus said in **John 5:39**, *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.*

**Cultural:**

Alexander the Great had made it a Greek world, which meant there was a common language stretching across all those multiple ethnic groups in the Mediterranean area. They all knew a common language, Greek, which then allowed for the New Testament books to be written in a language that everybody could read.

**Political:**

Romans, the sweeping power of the Roman Empire had built roads everywhere so that the gospel could then be taken to the

world. We read about that in the book of Acts. So, from even the standpoint of just looking at what was going on in the world, it was a great time.

### **God's Timing:**

More importantly than that, it was God's perfect time. He sent forth His Son. It doesn't say He created His Son, it says He sent Him forth.

He already existed.

**John 1:1**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

The eternal Son became man.

God sent forth His Son.

He is God.

He is the exact representation of God.

He is God in human flesh.

**John 1:14**, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*

The New Testament gospels make such a clear message of the deity of Jesus Christ. He did not come into existence at this point, He was already in existence, God simply sent Him.

**Luke 1:32**, *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.*

**Luke 1:35**, *And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”*

He is called the Son of the Most High. That is to say He bears the nature of the Most High God Himself.

During His Baptism He is called My beloved Son.

**Matthew 3:17**, *And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

**Luke 3:22**, *And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”*

God sent forth His Son. He is deity.

But not only deity, it says He was born of a woman, He was born of a woman, full humanity. He had to be God to accomplish the divine person, overpower sin and death but He had to be man in order to be the substitute for us.

Jesus had to be God to have the power of an everlasting and eternal life. He had to be God to conquer sin. But He had to be man to take the sinner's place. He is the perfect sacrifice. He is man, our substitute He is God who overpowers even sin and death for us.

He was born under the law.

When He came the law was still in place.

He adhered to the Mosaic law in every detail.

He was circumcised on the eighth day when He was an infant.

He was faithful to the law.

He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.

He fulfilled all righteousness.

He kept every law that God had laid out.

He was born under the law. As any man, any Jewish man, He was responsible like every other Jewish man to the written revelation of God's law, and He kept it perfectly. Even though He was innocent, became a curse for us, **Galatians 3:13**,

Died in our place as the perfect substitute for us.

**Romans 8:3**, *"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son."*

## **What could the law not do?**

The law couldn't save.

The law couldn't bring forgiveness.

The law couldn't remove the sentence of death and hell.

It wasn't the law's fault, it's holy, just and good, but the flesh is weak. God did, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin He condemned sin in the flesh so that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

He not only became accursed for us, but He fulfilled in His death. But in His life, He fulfilled the law for us. So, our sins are imputed to Him in His death, and His perfect life is imputed to us by faith.

He sent His Son.

## **Why?**

**Verse 5,** *"so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*

He wanted to redeem us, buy us back from our bondage, pay the price.

The word "under" appears a lot here.

"Under law," once in chapter 3, once in chapter 4.

"Under a curse," chapter 3.

“Under sin,” chapter 3.

“Under elemental things,” chapter 4.

“Under a tutor.” In chapter 4.

This describes the life of someone before Christ,

- under the law,
- under sin,
- under elemental things of basic religion,
- under a curse.

All of this reflects our bondage.

Our Lord was born under the law, but He kept it perfectly. That’s His active righteousness, His active obedience. Then He died in our place, and that’s His passive righteous obedience.

“And He did it to redeem us,” – buy us from the bondage of sin

“that we might receive the adoption as sons.” This is such an honourable privilege.

We were born in the family of God. We were regenerated.

Now we are adopted.

### **How can both be true?**

Because both are symbols of a salvation reality.

They explain two different aspects of our salvation. We were regenerated, we were given life, and we were also chosen and adopted. Both are true.

## **Adoption**

What's our former family?

**John 8:44**, *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

- You are of your father the devil.
- Sons of disobedience.
- Sons of wrath.
- Our home is the world system.
- We were in bondage to sin and death and hell.

Our father was the devil that was our family. This is the universal human condition.

But God displayed His glory through love and grace toward us. Galatians 3:26, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

**V 5**, *to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

We were regenerated, given life!  
We were declared righteous.

*God says, "I am moving you from the family of Satan into My own family, and I am placing you in My family, and so intrinsically into My family that I am placing you in union with My Son, in union with My Son."*

**John 1:12**, *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become the children of God."*

We have authority as the children of God.

**1 John 3:1**, *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God. How great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we will be called children of God."*

We were actually born anew so that we are new creations with new life. But we were also doubly put into God's family by then being chosen, adopted and taken out of the kingdom of darkness.

**Romans 8:17**, *"If children, you who are the children of God, if you're now children you are heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."*

This is what it means to be a son of God.

- If you live apart from the gospel of Christ,
- If you live apart from faith in Jesus Christ,
- Does Not matter how religious you are,
- how moral you are,

**you are in bondage.**

You are under the law, you are under sin, you are under a curse, and you are captive to the elemental things of this world.

No power to restrain or subdue your evil flesh and can do nothing but deliver you to eternal judgment.

You are a slave.

There is promise there, but you can't enter into it until you become a son, a fully mature son!

This happens only when you come in faith to Jesus Christ!

Staggering grace to sinners!!