

Message #13

Galatians 4:1-7

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln declared that all slaves residing in the territory, who had been in rebellion to the Federal Government, were free. Although this declaration did not end slavery immediately, it was a major first step in freeing all slaves because it was this decree that led to the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution on December 18, 1863. This famous declaration became known as the Emancipation Proclamation.

A little over 1800 years before Abraham Lincoln made his famous Emancipation Proclamation, the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians. In this great inspired epistle, Paul wrote his spiritual emancipation proclamation in Galatians 4.

Paul's big concern was how it would be possible for sinful man to be freed from his sin to the extent that he would be guaranteed everlasting life. Paul knew that the O.T. Law could not free a man from his sin, because he had tried that. Paul knew that religious rules and regulations could not free a man from his sin, because he tried that. Paul knew that the religious traditions could not free a man from sin, because he had tried that. **What Paul concluded is the only way a man may be set free from his sin is by the Emancipation Incarnation and the Emancipation Salvation that is found in Jesus Christ.** Jesus Christ, the God/man/Savior, was born into this world to redeem us from our sin and He is the only One and He is the only Way that one may be set free.

The Bible makes it clear that only God's sons will be in heaven. The big question is how do we become a son of God? Can we become a son of God by our works? Can we become a son of God by our attempts to keep the O.T. Law? Can we become a son of God by our religious traditions? That is the essence of Galatians 4:1-7. Paul's point is so clear:

THE SON-SHIP THAT GUARANTEES EVERLASTING LIFE IN HEAVEN DOES NOT COME BY OUR ATTEMPTS TO KEEP THE O.T. LAW OR BY OUR WORKS; IT COMES THROUGH THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST, WHICH BECOMES PERSONALIZED TO US AND APPLICABLE TO US BY THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THE MOMENT WE BELIEVE ON JESUS CHRIST.

John Wesley was an honors graduate of Oxford University back in the 1700's. He was ordained to the ministry in the Church of England. He was very active in doing good works. He regularly visited inmates in prisons in London and he helped distribute food and clothing to poor children and orphans. He read the Bible diligently and was involved in worship services on Sundays and some services during the week. He was a very generous man who gave money to the church and he helped the poor. He prayed and fasted and from all outward appearances he lived an exemplary moral life. He traveled to America to become a missionary to the American Indians in what was then the British Colony. He spent several years doing that.

He later wrote a journal and in the journal he wrote: “I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God.” It was not until he went to a little meeting on Aldersgate Street in London that he said he finally trusted Jesus Christ and Christ alone to save him from the law and his sins.

John Wesley came to the place where he realized that his works could not save him. He finally woke up to the fact that the only way out of his sin problem was to cast all of his faith upon Jesus Christ. When he did that he was saved.

That is the very point Paul is driving home in these verses—Emancipation from sin is only found in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Freedom from sin is found in Jesus Christ. He was born into this world to set you and me free from our sins.

This passage really drives that point home. In these verses Paul presents three key Incarnational realities:

INCARNATIONAL REALITY #1 – Before Jesus Christ came into this world, all were slaves to sins, not sons of God. **4:1-3**

It has been observed that it is only the Apostle Paul who is so negative about the O.T. Law. The big question is why? Why is Paul so negative about the O.T. Law? The answer is because that law cannot make you right with God. It cannot justify you and it cannot sanctify you. Martin Luther said when it comes to the subject of justification we must learn to speak as contemptuously of the Law as we possibly can.

It does not matter how religious a person may be, if that person has not come to faith in Jesus Christ, God sees that person as a slave to sin. One could be a very religious person but that person is in slavery to sin and there is no possible way that a person can somehow work his or her way out of that classification.

Now before we look at these verses, I want to point out that Greek word “child.” That word is used in **verse 1** and again in **verse 3**. The word is “napios” which refers to a baby or an infant that is at a very young age and is not able to think properly.

Paul’s point is this—if one thinks he can save himself by his works or by his keeping of the O.T. Law, one is not a son of God and is a baby in his thinking. In fact, that one is a slave to sin. In **verse 3**, Paul says this baby is under the “elemental things.” Those words refer to the basic sounds of the alphabet. This refers to the basic letters of the alphabet. The alphabet is designed to produce words. The Law was the basic instruction book that was designed to bring us to Jesus Christ. This is the process of moving from the infant status to the son-ship status.

Now this helps to put things into proper perspective. The O.T. Law is the infant level of things. The food and drink restrictions, the clothing restrictions, the places, the times, the temple, the feasts and the washings and the baptisms and the sacrifices and the laws and the ordinances are all elemental things because they cannot make us righteous in the sight of God.

This text clearly says if you think you can be spiritual by the O.T. Law, it is time to grow up. Now in **verses 1-3**, Paul wants to make this point by using the imagery of a child and slave. Back in the Roman world, a child born into a family was not officially a legal child until he went through what was called the Toga Virilis, which in Jewish culture is called the Bar Mitzvah. Until the child went through this ceremony, he was not viewed any differently than a slave. He was the heir or “owner of everything” (**v. 1**), but he was under the care of guardians or managers until the father set a date to make him the legal owner (**v. 2**). So one could be born Roman or Jewish, but until one had that ceremony he was considered to be no different than a slave.

In our culture, if a father dies the child must wait until he is of age before he can get his inheritance. He may be an heir de jure (by right), but he is not an heir de facto (by fact) until he is of age.

Now here is the point of all of this. Until a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, he is not a son of God. The Father has set a date to get you out of your sin and that date was the day His Son died on the cross. Until a person comes to personal faith in Jesus Christ, he is not legally entitled to heaven. In fact, until a person comes to faith in Christ, he is a *napios*, that is he is underage in his ability to think and is a slave to sin. Paul said in **Galatians 3:26**, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

That O.T. Law was never designed to justify anyone. It was given to show that we cannot measure up to the standard of God. The truth is we cannot even remember all of the laws. Until a person admits this, he is a *napios*, one who is not able to think right any more than a baby. In Romans 10:4 Paul said, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

INCARNATIONAL REALITY #2 – When Jesus Christ came into this world, He made our Son-ship possible. **4:4-5**

In these two verses are five precious realities given to us about the Person and work of Jesus Christ:

Reality #1 - God the Father sent God the Son at a very precise time. **4:4a**

The actual time that Christ came to this earth was a moment determined by God the Father and I am not sure whether or not we can figure out all of the time ramifications for this. But we can make some observations about this.

We know according to Daniel that a key power that was predicted to come into existence would be Greece (Dan. 8:21), who would rule over the world (Dan. 2:39). There would arise a mighty king who would become a dominant figure (Dan. 11:2-3). About 200 years after Daniel made that prediction and about 300 years before Christ, Alexander the Great surfaced from Greece and conquered this part of the world and he established the Greek culture and language as the common language of the people. Since the New Testament was written in common language Greek (Koine Greek), we must assume that this was part of God’s fullness of time moment.

We also know that Daniel predicted that after Greece would come another power that would crush all powers and dominate the world. That power was none other than Rome (Dan. 2:40). Rome was a dreadful and terrifying power and one of the things Rome did was to build roads, making travel in the Middle East possible by foot, horse, donkey or mule. That opened the door making it possible for a certain freedom of religion.

The Jews had a temple and they built many synagogues for worship, which seemed to somewhat turn things from idolatry toward wanting some real relationship with God.

So we would conclude that part of the “fullness of time” chronology included what was accomplished by Greece and Rome. When Jesus Christ came into this world, it was at a very precise time.

Reality #2 - Prior to God the Father sending His Son to the world, Jesus Christ was classified as His Son. **4:4b**

This is an extremely important theological point. Jesus Christ is not a Son of God like we may become a son of God, through adoption. Jesus Christ has always been the eternal Son of God from all eternity past. He has always been fully God and fully the legal Son of God. This verse establishes Christ’s deity.

There is a Trinity spelled out in these verses that you cannot miss. God the Father is seen in **verse 4**; God the Son is seen in **verses 4, 6**; God the Spirit is seen in **verse 6**.

Those who deny the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ are destined for hell. Jesus Christ is fully God (John 1:1). This is the whole point of our salvation, God the Father sent God the Son to be our Savior. He must be God to save us.

Reality #3 - God the Father sent forth His Son to be born of a woman. **4:4c**

This verse establishes Christ’s humanity. This verse proves Jesus Christ was really and truly human. He was “very man of very man and very God of very God.” Jesus Christ was a real human born of a real human woman. He was an actual Jew, born to an actual Jewish woman.

When that Samaritan woman saw Jesus Christ, she said, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?” (John 4:9). It is obvious that Jesus had been really born of a Jewish woman, whose name was Mary. As John said, “the word became flesh” (John 1:14).

Reality #4 - God the Father sent forth His Son to be born under the Law. **4:4d**

God demanded that Jesus Christ be born under the O.T. Law system. He was born at a time when He was responsible to completely obey God’s law or else He would be a sinner like the rest of us.

The O.T. Law makes us all guilty, but that same O.T. Law did not make Jesus Christ guilty. He kept the Law perfectly and met all of the requirements and then offered Himself as an acceptable sacrifice for us. It is the resurrection that proves He accomplished all of this. In fact, when we examine a text like John 8:1-11, in which a woman in adultery is not condemned by Christ, we must conclude that He did not come to bring condemnatory law, but to offer free grace.

Reality #5 - God sent forth His Son for a specific stated purpose. **4:5**

There are two stated purposes revealed and two distinct actions recorded:

(Purpose #1) - God sent forth His Son for the purpose of redemption. **4:5a**

Now again Paul uses the Greek verb “exagorazo.” Now the statement is that God actually sent His Son to redeem those under the Law. The word “redeem” means He sent His Son to get us completely out of the Law.

Do not miss this point. That O.T. Law assaulted Jesus Christ. That O.T. Law nailed Him to the cross. He willingly went to that cross and paid the price of His own blood (Heb. 9:12) to save us out of the Law. Any person who wants to go back into or under the Law is making mockery of the cross-work of Jesus Christ.

Let us say that someone comes to you and says I am going to the bank and I am paying off your mortgage and you are set completely free from all debt for your house. The person says I am going to sacrificially pay it all off for you. Now let’s say this person does this on Friday. On Monday you get up and say I am going to the bank to make my own payment on the house. You walk into the bank and they tell you your debt is gone, you don’t need to come here anymore. But you say I am going to keep making some payments. The bank would say you are out of your mind.

That is what God says if you try to keep the Law. You are foolish and out of your mind. The Law is done. It is nailed to the cross. Jesus Christ paid the full price to take you out of the Law. Don’t you dare go back in it.

(Purpose #2) - God sent forth His Son for the purpose of adoption. **4:5b**

The Apostle Paul is the only writer who uses this great metaphor of adoption. Adoption in Biblical times was a little different than in our day.

In our day an adoption changes the personal legal status of a child outside of the child’s natural parental blood lines. What happens in our adoption is that a child leaves the natural family and legally enters another family. In Biblical adoption a person is actually born into His family. There is a real blood line connection and the moment a person is born into that family, he is a full, legal, real son.

Now the point is no one can get into God's family as a legal son by their works or by their law-keeping. The way one becomes a legal son of God is by faith in Jesus Christ. God sent His only real Son into this world to make it legally possible for you to actually be born into His family by blood. This will never happen by works or by O.T. law, but only by faith in Jesus Christ.

INCARNATIONAL REALITY #3 – Because Jesus Christ has come into this world, the Holy Spirit is what makes our Son-ship actual. **4:6-7**

Please do not miss this. You may have a brilliant mind and you may have a wonderful career. You may study history and archeology and languages and all kinds of things. You may be a very religious person who loves religious stuff, but know this—the only way you can get into a Son-ship relationship with God is by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit must be sent to your heart.

In the early days of the Church the Spirit was sent in a visible way, but now it is sent into the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

God the Father must send God the Spirit into your heart in order for you to be saved. This is what will give you real, true, actual Son-ship. This is what will guarantee you that you have eternal life and that you are not under the Law.

Now how do you get this Spirit into your heart? You cannot get it by your works, by your law-keeping, by your goodness, by your religion or by your promises to try real hard to be a good boy or girl. You cannot get the Spirit by your pleading, begging or striving. **You get this Holy Spirit into your heart one way and one way only—by faith in Jesus Christ.**

The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit that cries “Abba Father.” Now we want to clarify this because we do not think that this actually means the Holy Spirit cries “daddy” like so many say.

The noun “Abba” is Aramaic for the word “father.” The Greek reads that when one has the Spirit of God in the heart, the Spirit continually cries out or calls out “The Father *is* Abba” or “Abba *is* the Father.” **So we understand this to mean that when a person has the Holy Spirit in his or her heart, there is a constant realization in the heart that “God the Father is our Father” and we have become an actual child of God and legal heir of God through faith in Jesus Christ.**

The Holy Spirit continually cries out that we are not under the Law nor are we a slave to sin. We are a child of the Living God.

Now if you are under the O.T. Law, there are only a couple of possibilities:

- 1) You do not have the Spirit of God in you and you are not really saved.
- 2) You do have the Spirit of God in you but you are so dominated by either law or sin you don't see it or sense it.

There are those devilish people and religious who will tell you that you cannot really know whether or not you are saved.