

Title: Paul's Theological Defense: A Son Comes of Age or "It's Time to Grow Up."

Text: Galatians 4:1-7

Theme: In coming of age the son receives his status as heir.

Notice the immediate backdrop to 4:1-7. Because "faith has come" (3:25), I lost the tutelage of the Law and thus no longer under its authority.

As such . . .

- I am a son of God and there is Privilege (3:26)
- I have been baptized into Christ and there is Identification (3:27)
- We are all one in Christ and there is Unity (3:28)
- I belong to Christ and there is Ownership (3:29a)
- I am an heir and there is Inheritance (3:29b)

Paul now spends the next seven verses explaining the imagery of 3:25.

Introduction:

"Not being satisfied to conclude his argument with this intellectually convincing case, Paul presented the scheme again in more affective terms. He emphasized that God's love for his people throughout the redemptive-historical process paralleled a father's love for his children. Paul insisted that God employed the Law as a good, necessary and temporary steward over his immature children, but that the Law's usefulness ended when the children reached maturity – which maturity they reached in Christ (4:1-7). Over those who believe, the Law has no claim. Further, it has never been, and will never be, the means of salvation."

http://www.thirdmill.org/newfiles/ra_mclaughlin/NT.McLaughlin.gal3.ps.pdf

(Receiving the Abrahamic Covenant Blessings in Christ: An Exegetical Evaluation of Galatians 3:25-29, by Ra McLaughlin)

Paul methodically moves his audience from where they were under the Law to where they now are in Christ. In Christ they are adopted sons and full heirs to the Father's riches.

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/Application

Its Eternal Value:

Too many believers still live in slavery under the Law. Too many believers fail to enjoy their position before the Father. Too many believers do not live as heirs to the Father's riches. Paul wishes for every believer to fully recognize what they have in Christ.

The Problem:

Our current problem is that although sons and heirs we still live as slaves under the Law.

The Storyline:

This paragraph clearly depicts the movement of God from Law to Christ.

Questions:

1. What connection does our present paragraph have with the preceding paragraph?
2. What makes an heir equal to a slave?
3. What is a child under?
4. Who sets the date for a child's advancement?
5. What are the "elemental things of the world?"
6. What did God do when the fullness of time came? What is meant by the statement "but when the fullness of time came."
7. How is His Son described in verse 4?
8. What is the significance of "born of a woman" in verse four (Gen. 3:15; Lu.1:34-37; Matt.1: 18-21)?
9. Notice how the deity and humanity are both stated in verse 4.
10. Why was the Son "born of a woman, born under the Law?"
11. When does the heir become a son?
12. What are the privileges of a son?
13. Are the children of God slaves under the Law?
14. In what ways are Christians made free?
15. How would you explain that Christianity is not a religion but a relationship?
16. What blessings do you receive as God's son or daughter that others do not get?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know we are heirs and sons.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Christ over the Law.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of God's Father relationship to His children.

Outline:

- I. Paul's Illustration (vv. 1, 2 ["heir-child-slave-owner of everything"])

The "child" literally 'not-speaking' thou an heir and 'Lord of all' are like a slave until the Father grants him his status as heir. Even though we were elected as children, we were still no better than slaves. However, there is an appointed time by the Father that moves us out of our past status and puts us into our present standing.

Verse two begins with **alla**. The idea of “guardians and managers” is no different than that of 3:23-25, “custody and tutors.” Prior to Christ we were “under guardians and managers” (v. 2), “under the elemental things of the world” (v. 3), and “under the law” (v. 5).

Notice the power statement, “until the date set.” It is used only here in the entire NT and means, “Fixed beforehand.” Friend there is an appointed time set by the Father for your day of deliverance. “The Father appoints the time.” God has everything under control. You might ask the question, “If it has been set, then what must I do?” How do you find your appointed day? By believing. You can only know “the date set by the Father” after the fact.

II. Paul’s Application (vv. 3-6)

As Paul unfolds for us the meaning of his illustration he makes three primary points.

Notice verse three, “Elemental things of the world.”

The Greek word translated “basic principles of the world”(NIV)/ “elemental things of the world”(NASB) in verse 3 is **stoicheia**. It was “used of the letters of the alphabet, the ABCs, and then, because the learning of the ABCs is the first lesson in a literary education,” it came to be understood as “the rudiments” or “first principles” [SOURCE: <http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/gal/deffin/gal-10.htm>]. The term is sufficiently general/vague that commentators have differed about the specific nature of these “basic principles of the world.”

I believe Paul is making reference to those who are still in bondage to the Law. In context this makes complete sense. See also Galatians 4:9 and Colossians 2:8, 20.

Galatians 4:9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to **the weak and worthless elemental things**, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to **the elementary principles of the world**, rather than according to Christ. 20 If you have died with Christ to **the elementary principles of the world**, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as,

The Law had done its work and God now continues to unfold His eternal purpose.

A. There was an appointed period (v. 4 [“In the fullness of the time”])

Mark 1:15 and saying, "**The time is fulfilled**, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Ephesians 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to **an administration suitable to the fullness of the times**, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him 11 also **we have obtained an inheritance**, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

After 400 years of silence in what we call the inter-testamental period between Malachi and Matthew God speaks. He says . . .

- Behold, a virgin . . . (Matt. 1:23)
- Behold, a Lamb . . . (John 1:29, 36)
- Behold, my servant . . . (Matt. 12:18)
- Behold, a greater than Jonah . . . (Matt. 12:41)
- Behold, a greater than Solomon . . . (Matt. 12:42)
- Behold, the king comes . . . (Matt. 21:5)

With the rule of Rome,

- There was a universal language (Greek)
- There was a universal peace (**pax Romana**)
- There was a universal road system. This was, indeed, the time appointed by the Father for the sending of His Son.

When Jesus was born of a virgin it was at the exact time determined by God.

B. There was an appointed person (v. 4)

1. The divine initiative (“God sent forth His Son”)

The word “sent forth” is a compound word. It means, “To send with authority and mission” (**exapostellw**). The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that God sent forth His Son to be the Savior of the world. Please note just a handful from John’s writings (John 3:16, 17; 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36, 37; 6:38-40, 44, 57; 1 John 4:9, 10).

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 5:38 "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe **Him whom He sent**.

John 7:29 "I know Him, because I am from Him, and **He sent Me**."

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but **He sent Me**.

1 John 4:14 We have seen and testify that **the Father has sent the Son** to be the Savior of the world.

Why did God send forth His Son? God was moved by His love to make His own and only Son a propitiatory sacrifice for me. That is a manifestation of His great love wherewith He loved me (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10). Can you not hear the echo of Galatians 1:4, “Who gave Himself for our sins?”

The One sent by the Father is “that One Who was, and from eternity had been, the Son of God.” (C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 184).

Notice the uniqueness of the statement when it speaks of God’s Son being made of a woman and placed under the Law.

2. The divine incarnation (“Made of a woman, made under the Law”)

Jesus was “made” or “became” these things. It is not something He was prior to the incarnation. This again is the consistent message of the NT (John 1:14; Rom. 1:3; Phil. 2:7).

Luke 2:10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David **there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

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

Romans 1:3 concerning His Son, **who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,**

Philippians 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and **being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man,** He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

1 Timothy 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: **He who was revealed in the flesh,** Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

The phrase “under the Law” only appears in three books (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians) and is used eight times. Half of those occurrences are in the book of Galatians.

Gal. 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody **under the law,** being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born **under the Law**,

Gal. 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were **under the Law**, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not **under the Law**.

Remember, Jesus never violated the Law, not once. He was never under the Law's curse until He voluntarily and as a substitute became the curse for us.

C. There was an appointed purpose (vv. 5, 6)

1. In order to redeem slaves (v. 5a)

The word choice is telling. It means, "To buy out of or to buy back." Relating this to salvation gives us a tremendous picture as we see Christ's words on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). "It is finished" is the translation of one word and receipts during Christ's time often had this word written on them to indicate, "PAID or PAID IN FULL." When Christ said, "It is finished" (paid in full) our redemption (to buy back from/out of sin) was complete.

Christ did not make us redeemable. He redeemed (this is an aorist); there is certainty, design and fulfilled intent in the word.

Remember 3:13, "**Christ redeemed us** from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." Matthew 20:28 tells us that **He gave His life a "ransom"** for many. First Timothy 2:6 stresses this same truth. Revelation 5:9 tells me that **the ransom price is His blood**. It is for this reason 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23 says, "**For you were bought with a price.**" Christ, by being the infinite God-man, exhausted the penalty of the broken Law by being our substitute. **Christ born under the law met the demands of the law that He might free us from the law.**

Eph. 1:4 In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 **In Him we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us.

Tit. 2: 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 **who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed**, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

1 Pet. 1:18 knowing that **you were not redeemed with perishable things** like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 **but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.**

It is not the Law perfectly kept that redeems us from the Law's curse, but the death He died. Both are essential to the redemption of His people. This two-fold act of our Lord is called the active and passive obedience of our Lord. It is His perfect life and propitiating death that redeems us from the curse of the Law.

Notice how this passage has a strong Jewish tone whereas 3:10-14 has a strong Gentile tone.

2. In order to adopt sons (vv. 5b-6)
 - a. The divine initiative ("God sent forth the Spirit of His Son")

Notice the Trinitarian involvement in the securing of me as a Son and heir. Considering this to be one of the first, if not the first, New Testament document, the reference to the idea of a Trinitarian God is amazing. It is interesting to note the parallelism in God sending the Son and now Him sending the Spirit.

- b. The divine residency ("Into our hearts")
 - c. The divine enablement ("Crying, Abba! Father!")

Romans 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but **you have received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "**Abba! Father!**"

"The proof that we are sons comes from the instinctive cry of the heart. (William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 35).

"The idea of adoption is here preferred to that of birth, which has served hitherto, in order to distinguish the sonship of the believer from that of the Lord Jesus, and to remind the reader that the relationship in the former case is the result of an act of God in grace. Adoption is thus 'the assumption into sonship by an act of God's grace, as distinct from the sonship that results from birth.'" (C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 184).

We have the assurance of our salvation due to the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit who constantly reminds and convinces us we are saved. Our confidence due to this ministry of the Spirit causes us to see God as our Father through faith in Christ.

"Abba" is a distinctively domestic term by which a father was called in the affectionate intimacy of the family circle." "This is the language of the children, and a daily but polite form of address to the father." (*Rogers & Rogers*, 428). "F.F. Bruce feels that only Jesus used Abba when addressing God (and now we as believers)." (F.F. Bruce, *Galatians*). It is used three times in the NT (Mk 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

“To call God, Father means more than merely to address Him by that name. It means that he who so invokes Him trusts and obeys Him also. It is the word of communion, the confidence and obedience of the son meeting its response in the [contented] love of the Father.” (C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 195).

The “therefore” of verse seven means, “with the effect that.” “Here it marks the climax of the argument and introduces a direct and personal application thereof to those to whom it was addressed.” (C.F. Hogg and W.E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 195).

III. Paul’s Conclusion (v. 7 [Making the Transfer])

“In the last verse of this paragraph Paul suddenly shifts from the second person plural to the second person singular. ‘You,’ he says, pointing a finger at the reader: you, not the person sitting next to you; you are no longer a slave, but a true child and heir.” (Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 47).

Notice Paul’s Jewish emphasis with a Gentile application.

“The childhood which belonged to the law should be past; the freedom of manhood has come.” (William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 35).

A. I am a Son

I am no more a servant **alla** a son (John 15:15, 16).

15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

By the way the word “appoint” in verse 16 is half of the compound word in Galatians 4:2, “day set.”

It is common, almost a cliché, to state that “Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship.” Explain the distinction between “a religion” and “a relationship.”

B. I am an Heir

This is the same conclusion Paul came to in 3:29. I am an heir and as such I have all the rights and privileges of an heir, but an heir of what?

- I am an heir of His glory (Rom. 8:15-17).
- I am an heir of eternal life (Titus 3:7).
- I am an heir of ‘all things’ (Heb. 1:2).
- I am an heir of the kingdom (James 2:5).

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

What do we lack that we already have in Him? How much more do we need in order to be content? If you answer with anything other than Him, you will never be content. The problem with being an heir of a large sum is two-fold. **First**, you have to believe it and **Second**, you have to act upon it.

“Don’t you think it would be next to impossible to forget about or lose track of one of your bank accounts? How about not remembering a safety deposit box crammed with stocks, insurance policies and jewelry? Millions of Americans do forget about their accounts. Once an account sits dormant for a number of years it gets handed over to the State. Each year, billions of dollars in cash and property go unclaimed, sitting idly in state government offices waiting to be accounted for. The state serves as custodian of this money until the rightful owner claims it. The state never takes ownership of the money, there is no time limit for making a claim and no fee is charged. In Florida, the state has more than \$700 million in unclaimed property. The estimate is that one in seven Floridians has unclaimed property. New York has \$4 billion in unclaimed property.

If you wish to search to see whether or not you have an unclaimed money reserve you can visit www.missingmoney.com. (I picked up this info from the web at www.bankrate.com.)

Friend there is another website you should visit and its www.galatians4:7.com. It is high time we come of age and start living like His people. Let us claim our rightful ownership of being the Sons of God.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Are you still living under the Law as a slave?
2. Are you enjoying your status as an heir and thus a son?

“The answer to legal bondage is discernment. If you’re a believer, you’ll undoubtedly come in contact with people who want to put you under a law of dos and don’ts. They will say that unless you keep these rules, God won’t be pleased with you. In fact, they may add that the road to full justification and sanctification is through obedience to this legal code. Don’t believe them! They may be sincere, well-meaning people, but they are wrong – dead wrong. Certainly, God wants us to keep His commands, and yes, they aid our growth in godliness and are an expression of our faith (John 14:15, 15:10-11; Phil. 2:12-13; James 2:14-26). But rule-keeping is not the way to righteousness either before or after conversion. Christ alone by faith alone is the only way to become right and stay right before God.” (Swindoll, *Galatians*, 77).