

## GALATIANS 4

Galatians 3 concluded with these four points necessary to understand Galatians 4:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

That we are “heirs according to the [God’s] promise” is the salient point and the one carried into the logic of chapter four.

### The Fullness of Time

#### Galatians 4:1-7

*4 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. 3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 in order that He might 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 our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*

An heir, who is a child, is no different from a slave though he is heir and master. He stays in ward until the time appointed by his father. Mankind were heirs of promise under ward to the law and held captives by the elements of the law until the fullness of time—that is when God sent forth his son. The fullness of time was established by Jesus at the advent of his preaching, according to Mark 1:14-15:

14 And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Paul agrees in Ephesians 1:10-11 that this was the “the fullness of times:”

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 upon the earth. In Him

With the heir—Jesus—came our redemption and adoption as sons. As his sons, we have his Spirit in our hearts. Thus, here and in Romans 10:15-17, we cry out, “Abba, Father:”

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!**" 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**, 17 and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God** and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Christ himself used the term from the depth of his despair in the shadow of the impending cross in Mark 14:36:

36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what you will."

According to Vine, *Abba*, which is *Father* from the Aramaic mother’s tongue of Jewish children and *Father*, which is from the everyday Greek language, *pater*, combine to express love and

intelligent confidence (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.) Today these emotional differences are represented by *father, dad, daddy*.

Therefore, by the Spirit of adoption we are children of God in the very same sense that Christ was the only begotten child of God, with the very same inheritance.

## Fears for the Church

### **Galatians 4:8-11**

*8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. 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? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

Chapter four, verse eight begins a two-fold argument:

1. The Galatians turned from godless idolatry, but after knowing and serving God, they return to bondage under the elements of this world. Galatians 4:8-11.
2. The Galatians accepted Paul and received him as they would have received an angel from God, even as Christ, and then treated him as an enemy because he told them the truth. Galatians 4:12-16

It was not that they were returning to idol worship, but it was that they accepting the teaching of those who would bind the law of Moses on Christians, being once again in bondage to beggarly elements of this world: observing days and months and seasons and years. Paul made this exact same point to the Colossian Christians in Colossians 2:14-17:

*14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

*16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.*

Whether people keep the empty practices of godless idolatry or the empty practices of the law, of Moses, now nailed to the cross, they are in bondage to the weak and beggarly elements of this world.

### **Galatians 4:12-17**

*12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong; 13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. 15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?*

Paul urges them to be like him, who turned his back on the weak and beggarly elements of the world, whether of idolatry or Judaism. They had not always rejected him for their perverted form of the gospel (Gal 1:6-10). For when he had come to them, they accepted him totally including his physical weaknesses, for which they would have plucked out their eyes for him. Many think this

refers to a conditions of blindness or a least partial blindness. In 2 Corinthians 11:30-31, he spoke of his infirmity:

30 If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

And in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, he spoke of his thorn in the flesh:

7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

The idea that Paul was to a degree blind is also supported by the closing statement of the letter to these Galatians in Galatians 6:11-12:

11 See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. 12 Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

However, verse 13 in this context, forces one to think that Paul was otherwise sick when he first came to Galatia:

13 but you know that it was because of a **bodily illness** that I preached the gospel to you the first time; 14 and that which was a trial to you in my **bodily condition** you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.

The important point is that his former reception “as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ,” offers stark contrast to Paul’s current situation with them: “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”

#### **Galatians 4:17-20**

*17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them. 18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*

The contrast extends to the issue of whether they will be zealous for the false (Judaizing) teachers or zealous for Christ and the gospel that they had first received. Their position creates doubts about them concerning their faithfulness. Their departure is to such a degree that Christ who has left them must be formed in them again.

## **Two Covenants (Gen 21:8-21; Isa 54:1)**

### **Children of the Bond Woman**

#### **Galatians 4:21-27**

*21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written,*

*"Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear;  
Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor;  
For more are the children of the desolate  
Than of the one who has a husband."*

There is no doubt that the covenant gives birth to bondage; thus there is no way one should want to be under the Law of Moses. On the other hand, the Jerusalem above is mother of us all. Therefore, we are children of the free woman. Our Jerusalem is the New Jerusalem of Rev 3:12:

12 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

The Jerusalem above is the holy city of Rev 21:1-2:

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

The Jerusalem above is the church, now and eternally, in Heb 12:22-24:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

### **We Are Children of the Free Woman**

Galatians 4:28-31

8 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say? [Genesis 21:10-12]:

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son,

For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

### **Symbolism of This Passage Is an Extended Metaphor**

<b>Children of the Bondwoman</b>	<b>Children of the Free Woman</b>
Hagar	Sarah
Ishmael	Isaac
Born of the Flesh	Born of the Faith and Promise
Covenant of Mount Sinai—Bondage	Gospel of Christ--Freedom
Jerusalem That Now Is, Bondage with Her Children	Jerusalem Above, Now Free with Her Children
Heir (Ishmael) according to the Flesh	Heir (Christians) according to the Spirit