

**BOOK OF GALATIANS
LIVING AS CHILDREN OF GOD
GALATIANS 4:8-12**

Introduction

Last time we talked about how **we all become God’s children by means of being born again of the Spirit of God—that takes place BY GRACE THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH!** Remember how the first seven verses here show that at the same time we enter the family by our new birth, **God places us as adult sons into His family by means of ADOPTION!**

The significance of this is that we can immediately access the SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS we have in Christ as being HEIRS OF GOD AND JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST JESUS!

Next we see that as **ADOPTED children, are to grow up in God’s grace!**
We got into God’s family BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH!
We are now to GROW and WALK the same way—BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH!
And we have the MEANS TO GROW AND WALK by the INDWELLING SPIRIT OF GOD and our place in the family as ADULT SONS!

We’ve seen in our previous studies how Paul establish this truth with the Colossian Church too!

Colossians 2:6-8 6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The Jewish Galatian Believers had allowed themselves to be spoiled or deceived by the Judaizers **to go back to their old way of life under the Law, returning to their bondage that they had been freed from by the Gospel of Jesus Christ!** Instead of living as “sons” they were lapsing back into “slavery.”

The Gentiles had also been hoodwinked into trading their old bondage of sin for the new bondage of trying to keep the Law which they could not keep!

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e.g. They had the problem that many slaves had at the end of the Civil War. When the Civil War ended, the slaves were emancipated...they were free! But after they had been declared free, many still lived like slaves and acted like slaves because all they had known was slavery! They didn’t know how to live as free men!

Those who embrace the Gospel and then try to place themselves under the Law are returning to the very slavery and bondage that Christ has freed us from!

This passage is all about learning to live as God’s children, in the freedom of grace and in the love of the Father.

In these verses, Paul opens up his heart to these who were his spiritual children, the Galatians. He speaks to them as a shepherd, as a father, and even using the language of a gentle mother.

Even though Paul has rebuked them earlier, the language is of friendship and family here:

- “Brethren, I beseech you... ” (v. 12), “brethren” (28, 31)
- Mother: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again...” (19)

IN ORDER TO GROW IN GRACE WE MUST KNOW OUR IDENTITY AND LIVE IN IT!

Listen, we Believers ARE the CHILDREN OF GOD—We need to learn to live as CHILDREN OF GOD! (4:8-12a)

I. PAUL REMINDED THEM OF WHO THEY WERE BEFORE! (Vs 8)

They were *servants* or *slaves* to that which **could not** give them life!

1. The Jews were “*servants*” of the law that condemned them!
2. The Gentiles were “*servants*” to dead idols that could not save them!

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II. PAUL REMINDED THEM OF WHO THEY ARE NOW! (Vs 9a)

A. They Had Known God!

This is **NOT** the same as **KNOWING ABOUT GOD!**

Experientially they had known the saving Grace of God and been delivered from their sin!

B. They Were Known Of God!

It is important to Know God and be Known of God!

III. PAUL QUESTIONS THEIR ACTIONS IN LIGHT OF THIS! (Vs 9b)

How can you return to those former things?

They were giving up **the power of the Gospel for the weakness of Law, and the wealth of the Gospel for the poverty of Law.**

What is amazing about this verse is that Paul equates living under the Mosaic law with pagan idolatry. He equates the false gods, to this religious system.

Keeping the rituals of the Law is no better than paganism to a lost sinner! Both pagan idolatry and trying to keep the Law are forms of slavery! **Neither can bring salvation to a lost sinner!**

Application: Let's bring this into the present.

Many people go to a Church of some sort, they may sing songs, they may pray prayers, they may study a holy book, or otherwise submit to a religious system and “do good things” to earn righteousness!

By doing these things in and of themselves – they are no different from the other religions of this world...

- “I Pray”: So do those in the Islamic faith – 5 Times a day
- “I Worship”: Hindus worship all day long
- “I Study”: Jehovah’s witnesses do it more than most
- “I do Missions”: So do Mormons

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These acts by themselves do not merit acceptance before God; in fact they can be forms of slavery. Paul wrote to Timothy about those...

2 Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Matthew 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The Pharisees were VERY RELIGIOUS and did many religious acts and deeds! But they missed the most important thing! They missed out on the Christ!

Christianity is not rule keeping rules and rituals to be right before God.

Let me give you one analogy of how religious people are in bondage to false religion: *John Wesley (evangelist, founder of the Methodist church, historical hero of many). He was involved in a holy club at Oxford. He was the son of a minister, he was ordained as a minister. He was orthodox in beliefs, religious in practice, upright morally, and did good works. He visited prisons, and provided street kids with food and clothing. He observed Saturday and Sunday as Sabbath. He took communion, read, fasted and prayed. He went on a mission trip to Georgia (America)... But he was shackled to religion because he was trusting that he was earning his way to heaven by performing these religious acts, instead of trusting in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. But he eventually woke up. After his trip to Georgia, Wesley said, I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.” (When he returned he read Luther’s preface to Romans) and said this,*

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“I came to trust in Christ, in Christ only for salvation. And an assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death” ... “[Previously] I had the faith of a slave, though not that of a son.”

Christianity is not about being a slave to religion; it is about being a son or daughter in a relationship with God.

III. PAUL’S POINT IS THAT BELIEVERS ARE NOW CHILDREN IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HEAVENLY FATHER—WITH GOD! (4:9, 12a)

This changes **EVERYTHING!** It’s **NOT** about going through rituals! It’s **NOT** about earning righteousness! **We ARE RIGHTEOUS through Christ and Christ alone!**

We are sons and daughters who are right with God because of Christ! We don’t have **TO DO** anything in order to be **ACCEPTED!**
We are already ACCEPTED IN CHRIST!

We’ve been placed into God’s family as **ADULT SONS** with all the rights and privileges that entails as an **HEIR OF GOD** and a **JOINT-HEIR WITH CHRIST JESUS!**

We have **THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD** living within us!
Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

We have **ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS** in Christ!
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?

We have **ALL WE NEED TO GROW IN CHRIST!**

This all comes through **RELATIONSHIP!**

- Religion is external, **a relationship is personal!**

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- Religion is man-made, **a relationship is supernatural!**

- **Relationship means that we “know” God (Vs 9)**

The word “*known*” here isn’t intellectual, it’s personal.
John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

- **Relationship means that God knows us! (Vs 9)**

God knows us in that He graciously chose us in Christ and loved us and adopted us.

- Sometimes we might have had thoughts of, “*Wouldn’t it be cool if this person knew me?*”

But listen Believers, we both **KNOW** and **ARE KNOWN** by the **GOD** of the universe! **It don’t get any bigger than that!**

IV. PAUL USED HIMSELF AS AN EXAMPLE OF HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD! (Vs 12a)

“Be as I am; for I am as ye are” - Paul used an imperative here calling them to action. What does it mean?

Paul came to Christ the same way! By grace through faith!
Paul had the same relationship they had!

He knew God!

He was known of God!

He had the Holy Spirit living within!

But Paul had left the things he had previously embraced behind!
(i.e. The Law and trying to please God through it!)

Philippians 3:2-10

Paul went from religious bondage to a real dynamic relationship with God through Christ, that was about KNOWING HIM PERSONALLY, PASSIONATELY, POWERFULLY, PROGRESSIVELY! Do you have such a relationship with God? It can only come after you are BORN AGAIN and walk by faith!