

In the Fullness of Time

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Bible Text: Galatians 4:1-7
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Alright, Galatians 4. As it has been my tradition for many years, I try to take a few Sundays around Christmas to preach on texts that deal with the Lord's birth and this is one of those. I actually had forgotten all about it and it just kept coming to my heart this week so I jumped back on this text. Here we go, Galatians 4, beginning in verse 1 and we'll go through verse 7 this morning.

1 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.

Here's how he builds the analogy, verse 3,

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 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 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.

Now you remember quite well after your conversion to Christ that you probably had a mountaintop of victory concerning some strongholds of sins or even sinful thoughts, but a little more time went on and you found that there was a warfare and a battle going on inside of you that you tended to fall back into some old fallen or fleshly thinking or behaviors and that's our pilgrimage. That's why Paul says in Romans 7, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" And in the preceding verses he talked about how, "I hate the fact that I keep struggling with the fallenness, worldliness, lustful sinfulness of this old flesh package I'm encased in." Well, that's what happened to these Christians Paul is writing to here. They're truly saved, truly converted, they belong to God through faith in Jesus Christ but false teachers crept into the church at Galatian and, by the way, that's still true in our day. We have to be vigilant as church elders and primarily as the preaching pastor, to continually combat, hold off and refute false notions that creep into the church.

So they're doing that here and Paul functioning as their pastor is vigilant. He's a freedom fighter as he fights to keep his people free from false doctrines and false perspectives and keep them, if you will, anchored in truth. So they've been saved by grace through faith but these false teachers called Judaizers crept in and began saying something like this, "Now what you've done is wonderful, believing on Jesus, that's a great thing, but now you must add to your faith in Jesus some of the old works of Judaism and then you'll have grown to full maturity before God, then you'll have spiritually grown up." Oh, it sounded so good and so logical because that's where all of these people come from. They're all aware of the Jewish faith and the law of God and so, "That sounds good. That sounds logical. That's natural. That must be right." And Paul says, "No, it's completely wrong."

So let's look at it. So first he starts out by talking about their pre-conversion condition. Here's what you're like and here's what we were like before Christ saved us. Now subpoint A, he says, "You're like children without adult privileges." He's using an analogy of childhood in the ancient Roman culture to be a parallel, if you will, of our spiritual experience or our progress spiritually, I should say. In verse 1 he talks about how, "I say, as long as the heir is a child," a minor, if you will, "he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything." He says while spiritually you were a child, you hadn't come to maturity yet, you functioned as an old slave would in a household. Now a child here is one who is not of adult age, one who is still immature, and in the ancient Roman homes if you had a little boy born in that home and you had a young man who was a slave in that home, well, both of them had about the same rights. The child had to do what he was told when he was told to do it, the slaves got to do what he's told and when he's told to do it. He said while you're a child, you just about function like a slave in your households. Now the child differs in that he's a full and rightful heir to his father's fortune. His name is on the inheritance deed, but yet being a child, he doesn't apprehend that, certainly does not yet appreciate that and doesn't enjoy any of that. He's pretty much like the slave in the home.

In verse 2, he continues developing the analogy. He says this child while he's a young boy in the home, "he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father." That was a common practice in the well-to-do families of the ancient Roman culture that children were placed under the watchful care and under the oversight of a guardian until an age reached and that age within a parameter time but it was set by each individual father, and then when they reached that particular age, then they were declared an adult and at that point they could really enjoy the fact that they were their father's son and enjoy the inheritance and the wealth their father owned. In the Roman culture, when a father set this official age, he had a ceremony and when the child reached that age, they would have this ceremony and he would put on that child the toga virilis. The toga virilis was an outer garment in Roman culture and that was a statement to all he is now an accepted and respected adult of my lineage and of my household.

He says, now Paul says in verse 3, "So also we," in other words, this is a perfect analogy, Paul is saying, of what we experience spiritually in coming to know God, "while we were children," while you were not yet fully embracing what God has for you in Christ, "were

held in bondage under the elemental things of the world." So let's go on to our second subpoint, not only were we children without adult privileges, we were slaves in bondage, and specifically he says in bondage to the elemental principles, in other words, things that are the basic conclusions in society, the basic viewpoint that generally all men have. He said, "That's where you lived. You just lived the way most people looked at things and most people felt or thought about things." That's the way we think spiritually before the Spirit of God illumines us and changes us, we just are prone to bring spiritual truth into our natural thinking and organize again our thoughts the way we would naturally organize most things.

For example, in the world the natural, elemental thinking is that you work, you merit something and then you get it. You go to school, you work, you study, you do your assignments, you get the grade, you get a diploma. Or any other place in your work environment, you go to work, you show up on time, you respect your authorities at work, you do your job, you get your paycheck; maybe you even get a raise, you get a promotion down the road. In athletics you show up, you do the work, you pay the price, you stay on the grind and you achieve and you're successful. Now these things are proper in the world. They're good. Christians still live by these things in this world, of course. As a matter of fact, the Bible says we should be excelling in these things.

Can I just say a side note here as your pastor? We have almost no tolerance for a man in this church who does not work hard and take care of his family. Now we have people under discipline from time to time. No, we don't broadcast that. Again, all discipline should be kept strictly confidential until there is no other choice. But we ought to be working hard and we ought to be meriting what we achieve. That's what the Scripture teaches about these things.

So these things are proper, they are needful and they are essential in this world, but what Paul is saying is, this is not the way you find God. While you're immature in your thinking, you think that's the way you find God but when you grow up in your thinking, you realize the truth is not like that at all. This is not the approach to finding God. As a matter of fact, look at verse 9 of this chapter, in verse 9, the last phrase he says these are "weak and worthless elemental things." Now in the world they're important things but when it comes to knowing and finding God, i.e. finding salvation, these are worthless things. It's elementary, it's basic thinking in the world, but it's worthless and useless to finding God. These are all of those things that look logical; they're things that seem wise unto a man but the Bible says the end thereof are the ways of death. They seem logical but only to the immature, only to the ill-informed. So now he's in a way setting these guys up because they've already fallen back into this nonsense and he's trying to illustrate to them how foolish this is.

Let's remind ourselves again the kind of truths that Paul would teach over and over as he would pastor these churches and write these epistles we have in our New Testament, he would continually remind them, "Remember the moment you were conceived in the womb of your mother, though you were a living biological being, you were spiritually a dead being." We're born dead in trespasses and sins. Spiritually speaking, our heart, our

disposition, our proneness is to evil and is to wickedness. As we've said 101 times, you don't teach a child to tell a lie, they'll do that on their own. You have to teach a child to tell the truth. We have a natural bent toward iniquity and rebellion in our hearts. Spiritually we come into this world totally bankrupt. The Bible tells us very clearly naturally speaking we are all rebels. We go our own way. None of us seeks for God on our own, the Bible says. That's why you must raise your children and you must raise your grandchildren in an environment of strong, healthy, Spirit-anointed, Bible preaching because that's God's means to enlighten and awaken their hearts to see the truth of their real condition. You cannot be saved unless you know your condition. It's so essential and important and we've been teaching this here for decades, but conversion almost never happens in just a moment, in just a three minute testimony or a witness, conversion usually comes over weeks and months and years of the truth being poured into a child, mom and dad, Sunday school teachers, those elders who lead the children in youth program, then of course, the pulpit ministry pouring it in, pouring it in, and the Spirit of God uses the truth. Our goal – listen, church – our goal must never be to give a child just the minimal truth to get them to check their ticket into heaven. It's not the minimal amount of truth, it's the greatest amount of truth we want to give a child or even an adult, that the Spirit might work with all of that bringing them to that place of conviction about who they really are and come to faith in Christ. I'm chasing a rabbit there but I couldn't help it.

Spiritually speaking, we're dead. Spiritually speaking, our hearts are desperately wicked. Spiritually speaking, we do not seek for God on our own. Therefore, again this is all wrapped up in his teaching to the Galatians, Ephesians and others, of course, Romans, therefore it's not improbable but impossible to come to God by works or by merit. How can you take a dead man whose heart is spiritually wicked, who on his own doesn't seek for God and tell him, "Okay, do all these good things and God might accept you and you'll get into heaven"? It's not improbable that a dead, desperately wicked being could perform that, it's impossible that he could perform those things, but what Paul is saying, what he's been articulating through his illustration here of the natural world, he said in our lostness, in our spiritual blindness, in our spiritual darkness, we naturally conclude that we can find God and we can know God and we can achieve salvation through merit or through works, and most always, not only just good works but we find all kinds of ceremonial, sacramental or ritualistic works.

As I was talking about the candles earlier, Pam and I were in Romania some years ago and we visited one of the oldest churches in Europe, it was a Greek Orthodox church in the mountains of Romania. It was radically bizarre what those people were doing and on that particular day on whatever it is in the Greek Orthodox calendar, they were lighting candles and giving offerings and praying prayers to get their deceased loved ones out of purgatory. So the ritual of the candle lighting and the other things was something they placed their hope in. It was a work. It was a merited thing and Paul says in our natural condition, we just kind of fall into that. We develop these man-made religions.

Now fathers of your households, heads of your households, listen to your pastor. I want to say something to you very clearly: I'm convinced you could have had a better pastor

but I'm convinced of this also, I have a clear conscience that I have labored diligently to inform you fathers of the truth so that you can raise your children and grandchildren properly in the Lord. So I'm challenging you men to be discerning because this false teaching always comes out with Christian terms associated with it. They use so many of the same Christian terms, so much of the same Christian terminology we would use. They use some of the same songs we would use. They quote the same Scriptures we would quote but they're coming from elemental principles, not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Be discerning.

The religious philosophy that they purport and that they promote is of the elementary principles or conclusions of the world and not that which comes down from heaven, the true Gospel. It's simply basic worldly or human principles in Christian garb. It's humanism in sheep's clothing. That's what was beginning to happen in Galatia. They held to Christ, they talked about Jesus, they quoted the Scripture, but they began to embrace works or merit or ritual-based salvation and Jesus Christ. By the way, whenever you use that conjunctive term, every time you put an "and" on Jesus, you lose Jesus. It's not Jesus and anything. It's not Jesus plus anything. It's Jesus. He is our hope and he is our salvation. So we have through the years and through the decades, through the centuries, all of these man-made Christian-looking religions with Christian apparel on them but their substance is elemental principles or works salvation. Two of the more prominent ones would be the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Church of Latter Day Saints or the Mormons, but there are many others.

But a person who's following these elemental principles, as Paul points out here in verse 3, they're in bondage. He says, "That's the way you were before you came to Christ, you were in bondage to that stuff." His point is why go back to that? If you've come to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and he's purchased your pardon, he's granted you life, he's given you full liberty, why would you go back to the old elemental principles of the world and go back into bondage? I can tell you one reason why: p-r-i-d-e, pride. We want to feel like we're doing something. "Well, you say you know Jesus but I say I know Jesus. I'm better than you because I know Jesus like you know Jesus but I am doing some of the old works of Judaism, I'm ahead of you. I'm above you. I am spiritually superior to you." That's the kind of thinking that was going on. "We all know Jesus but I add these things onto my life." And we can do that in a good sound church, by the way. "I have an accountability group." Well, I designed the accountability group structure here and it's good for us but it doesn't necessarily make you more spiritual. I mean, you cannot miss a quiet time for five years but I guarantee you, you missed God sometimes. It's not about the ritual. It's not about the work. It's about your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

This concept of bondage that he mentions in verse 3, he says, "You're in bondage if you go back to that. You're in bondage if you're thinking that way." It's being hopelessly bound in a system that cannot save because it's a system with a false foundation. Any concept of salvation by works is a false foundational system. So, again, the Galatians thought, "Man, we're enlightened now. If we take Christ and then also add on to Jesus works, then we're accelerating into maturity." Paul says, "No, let me correct you on that.

You haven't accelerated into maturity, you've diverted and digressed back to immaturity and childhood, spiritually speaking. You haven't gotten ahead, you've gone backwards." So when you talk to some of your friends or work with some of these folks or maybe go to school with some of these folks and they want to add this and add that, "But you've got to go here and you've got to do that," when they do that, though it's not maybe showing outwardly, what they're doing is they're swelling up. "We have the more superior way. We have accelerated into adulthood."

Now look, a lot of the times, folks, you don't need to argue, you just need to smile and be sweet and go and do something else, okay? Don't always argue and fight. Now maybe somebody is really open to discussing things and you might can be a witness, but look, that kind of stuff usually doesn't get very far. Most of the time it's better just to....and here's what I like to do, I love doing this, I love looking them in the eye and saying, "You don't understand something. Do you know what a rotten, deplorable, wretched, wicked sinner I am? When you throw on me, 'Do this and that,' I'll mess that up every time. I'm just not capable. If Christ alone doesn't save me, I'm sunk." And they'll just look at me. So they walked up wanting to show their spiritual superiority and I just admitted, "Well, according to how you defined it, you are superior, you are doing more works, or you hold to more works than I hold to." But now what Paul is saying, he refutes all that and says, "No, you didn't actually advance, you actually have come down."

You see, when you hold to works, any form of works salvation, that's the A, B, C's of spiritual maturity. You have to start at the law. You have to realize you're a law-breaker. You have to realize God's law is holy and just and good and we all fail it. That's good but that's the starting point. You don't stay there. Coming to Christ is not the A, B, C's, coming to Christ is Encyclopedia Britannica. It's where you really get knowledge. Those who say they've embraced Christ but they hold to ritual and works salvation, they're like a man who goes into a library and every time you look at him, he's just saying his A, B, C's. "A, b, c, d, e, f, g." And you think, "Well, that's weird. He just keeps focusing on his A, B, C's. He ought to be reading some of this great literature." Well, that's what Paul is saying here. Don't go back to the elemental starting point, grow up to mature and embracing and joying in salvation by grace through faith alone. Alone.

II. So he talks a lot about their pre-conversion condition, you're like a child who doesn't really get anything yet. You may be the heir of all things but you don't know what the truth is yet. You're like a slave in bondage if you're holding to those elemental things and we all do before conversion. Listen to me, every single person before they're saved holds to works salvation of some kind. Every person. I don't care who you're talking about. Every person everywhere in the world before they are genuinely converted to faith in Jesus Christ, they hold to some type of works salvation. Why? Because that's elementary. That's just natural. Look, the highest form of worldliness, when you're most like the world is when you hold to works salvation because that's centered in what the world thinks and is. Now as I said before, be balanced. There's a place for that in the world, amen? We've got to be that way in the world but when it comes to knowing God, we depart from that concept.

Alright now, our post-conversion condition. Subpoint A, rescued and redeemed by Christ. You say, "Pastor, I thought you said this had something to do with Christmas?" Well, everything about Jesus has got to do with Christmas. The whole Bible is about Christmas because it's all about Jesus, but specifically he points to the coming of Jesus here in verse 4, "But." What a great conjunctive word. At this point in verse 4, all that other is true, we were in bondage, we were children who didn't know what we had, but God stepped in and did something. "Come and see what God has done," have you ever heard that song before? "But when the fullness of the time came, God," did something. Here we were as children and immature spiritually, here we were as slaves in bondage to elementary thinking, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

What a phrase "in the fullness of time." In other words, when Jesus was born, it wasn't an accident, it was an appointment. You see, there was a set time when God made Adam and Eve, there was a set time when Adam and Eve sinned and God clothed them and covered their shame with the sacrifice of a third party. There was set time when wickedness was so great on the earth that God destroyed all the earth except Noah and his family with the flood. There was a set time when God confused the tongues of those men who had built a tower to reach God showing them that you can't get here that way. There was a set time when God called a pagan out of all the other pagans on the earth, Abram, from Ur of the Chaldees. There was a set time when Abraham believed God, the text says, and it was counted to him as righteousness. There was a set time when God marked out Isaac to be the son and the lineage of promise. There was a set time when God marked out Jacob to be the son and the lineage of promise. There was a set time when God changed Jacob's heart and in correspondence to his changed heart, changed his name to Israel. There was a set time when God used Joseph to become the Prime Minister of Egypt and preserve the Israelite nation in the progeny that would lead to Jesus Christ. There was a set time when his brothers settled in Egypt and the nation of Israel grew strong within Egyptian slavery. There was a set time when God led them out of Egyptian bondage. There was a set time when Joshua led them in victory across the Jordan. There was a set period of time when God led his people through judges, and a set period of time when God led his people through kings. Then 400 years passed and then in the fullness of time, the virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit in her womb. In that fullness of time, she and Joseph in the providence and sovereignty of God traveled to Bethlehem. In the fullness of time, she gave birth to a son, Jesus. In the fullness of time, that son grew up and began his earthly ministry. There was a set time when he set his face like flint toward Jerusalem to go and be the sacrifice for the children's sin. There was a set time when he died on the cross. There was a set time when he rose again, and there was a set time when he ascended back up into heaven to begin his ministry of intercession for the children.

You know, why does God do it this way, in this particular order, at these particular times? Think about it, if soon after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, if God sent the Redeemer then, there would not have been time enough for sin to have blossomed into its full and hideous bloom so we could see sin for what it really is. There would not have been enough time for man to be totally proven as an absolute failure to find God or to reach God on his own. But now that sin has run its course and man has demonstrated his weakness and inability, then God did something, sent forth his Son, born of a woman,

born under the law. By the way, it certainly wasn't coincidence that the Romans ruled the whole known world at that time and they had built these beautiful perfect roads going in every corner of the Roman Empire and they changed the people's language so everybody spoke basically the same language. What a setting to spread the Gospel easily to the ends of the earth. God knows what he's doing. In the fullness of time. In the fullness of time. By the way, there is a set time when he's coming again. Nothing is going to stop it. Nothing is going to deter it. Nothing is going to postpone it. It's coming. It's coming. It's coming.

He uses the word "redeem" here in verse 5, "so that," after he sent the Son in the fullness of time, born of a woman, born under the law, "that He might redeem," of course, that's that word we spent a lot of time on that in recent weeks in our series on sovereignty, that he might purchase back, we're bought back out of the elemental things, we're bought back out of bondage and slavery, we're bought of this spiritually immature thinking into the freedom of the sons of God and into spiritual maturity and understanding.

He says here back up in verse 4 again, by the way, that he's "born under the Law." Jesus came born under the law. I want you to listen and if you don't hear anything else I say this year, hear this: the Father did something to his Son, Jesus, that he has not done with any of his other children, he had Jesus born under the law. Now you're a child of grace. You were not born under the law, you were born under grace. Only Jesus of all of his sons, of all of his children only Jesus was born under the law. God put him under the law both the ceremonial law, the ritual of Judaistic religion, and the moral law of God. He was put under all of that. That's why Matthew 5:17 reminds us, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." As the theologians sometimes say, what that means is he took the perfect law of God and in his person and in his behavior, he fulfilled it completely. It's filled full. Everything the law demands – now listen – and everything the law predicted about the Savior, he filled it full. Jesus was born under the law. He had to reach the standard of God's immutable and holy law. None of us were asked to do that.

Then there was this radical reversal where the Father completely changed his view of his Son. On the cross, the Father changed from viewing him as, at the cross, you see, when Jesus began his ministry, the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." The infinitely holy God of heaven said, "This Son, this is my only Son who has been under the law and he's completely perfectly fulfilled it. I am well-pleased." But then a reversal. Jesus goes to the cross and God the Father looks upon Jesus on the cross as a sinful, miserable, depraved and wretched sinner worthy of wrath. That's why 2 Corinthians 5:21 reminds us, "He made Him," Jesus, "who knew no sin," he never knew sin, he never committed sin, "He made Him to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Jesus came under the law and fulfilled it that we might come under grace. Jesus was born under the law that we might be born under grace. If I could stretch this out a little bit and I'm confident in the balance of all biblical systematic theology I'm correct here, you see, listen, you were never – are you listening to me, child of God? You were never under

law. You were a child of grace before the foundation of the world. You were born a child of grace. It was just a matter of time before God in his sovereign purposes sent the Gospel and the Holy Spirit to regenerate you so that you could grasp with adult spiritual thinking what you are and what you have. Jesus was placed under the law that you might come into this world placed under grace. What a trade-off. That's what Christmas is about, by the way. Christ came and purchased us from that slavery and we're received into sonship.

So in the context of this letter Paul writes to the church at Galatia in the Roman Empire, he's saying to them, "How absurd of you that you would go back to embrace works salvation and thinking in doing so you're obtaining maturity. That's not obtaining anything, it's a step toward immaturity. It's stepping out of the blessed liberty you have in Christ." Under the law we're like immature children, but under grace we are sons with an adult understanding and with an adult standing in the family.

Subpoint B, exalted to sonship and a divine inheritance. He says in verse 5 here, he says we are adopted as sons. Then he continues on in verse 6 and says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Therefore you are no longer slaves to this elemental thinking to a law or works system but you're a son. If you're a son in a household, why would you volunteer to be the slave in the household? That's not who you are.

"And if a son," he says, "then an heir through God." As a son, listen, the moment you believe on Jesus Christ, you're an adult son of God, you're an adult child of God. You enjoy all the benefits of the family. You have all the liberties of an adult. You are a full heir of all that your Father has. Why would you trade that in for anything else? That's his point.

The Trinity is at work in our salvation, of course. The Father sent the Son. The Son came and procured our salvation and died for us. The Spirit, then, is sent by the Son to regenerate us and live within us. In the truest sense, we're not God's possessions as servants, we are God's sons, precious sons who now from our hearts long to honor him. Don't ever come to me with a notion that, "I'm to live under this woeful duty and obligation that I've got to do these things or I might go to hell and fry like sausage one day." No, hell's a lot worse than frying like sausage, trust me. But we're not under this woeful burden, "I've got to do these things and check these things off and go through these motions. If I'm in a certain kind of church, they have these three or four things and I'm in another kind of church, there are these three or four things and it's just this woeful..." No, no, no, no, you're born again by the Spirit of God. There's been a change in your heart. You're no longer under a master in bondage to this woeful obligation, you're a son who is learning to enjoy honoring your Father and his work. A big difference there.

Again, these Galatians Paul is writing to, they wanted to go back to that old position and they wanted their Father to accept them as a servant when Paul is saying, "Don't go back there. You're really already a son." Now the contrast between sons and servants is very easy to see. I have five points here. Real quick, I'll just read them. First of all, he says as a

son you have the same nature as your Father but a servant, of course, does not have the same nature. You've got to understand, you were changed when God saved you. You were born again. You were regenerated. You're made anew. You're made alive, the Scripture says. You now have the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4 tells us. You can keep the law all you want but it's not going to change your nature, only the Gospel and the new birth changes the nature and makes you a son.

The son has a father, the servant a master. He says here in our text that once we become a son, there's something new in us where we begin to grasp this oneness, this personal love relationship we have with our eternal God the Father whereby we can cry, "Abba! Father!" It really means poppa or daddy. Nobody that's just laboring under the law ever looks at God as poppa or daddy. When my grandchildren, they call me deedee, when they come to deedee, they're not looking for, "Okay, give me the works I can achieve today so that I might be welcomed as your servant." No, they know they're already welcome. They cry Abba, deedee, Father. That's the way we approach our God now that we're born again.

Thirdly, a son obeys out of love, a servant obeys out of fear. The fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22 reminds us is love. Look, do you walk in the – listen to me, listen, don't you think about this afternoon, listen – do you walk in the absolute confidence of God's unconditional love for you? "Yeah, but you don't know..." I don't care. I don't care. Don't tell me about your stupid sins. I don't care. God doesn't slay you because you sin, he slays you when you realize he loves you despite your sin. That's what brings us to our knees. You're his son. You cannot out-sin the love of God. Now listen to me, here's where the legalists jump in and want to beat us up. You'd better watch out, I'll beat right back. You say, "Yeah, but you teach that and people will live in sin." No, they won't. The more that love grabs them, the more they want to please him. That's the way it works. God doesn't want coerced slaves, God wants joyous, glad children to serve him. He says in Galatians, "Why would you go back to that? Look at the scribes and the Pharisees, look at the elites of the Jewish religion, what kind of cold, dead, legalistic nonsense when you've become a child of God."

4. The son is rich, the servant is poor. The son is born as a joint heir of everything his father has. Remember the Bible tells us about the riches we have of grace. The Bible speaks of our riches in glory. The Bible speaks of the riches of his goodness toward us. The Bible speaks of the richest of his wisdom toward us. Then the Bible just puts it all together in comprehensive fashion and says we have all the riches of God in Christ Jesus. Woo! That's good news, folks. All the riches of God.

You see, we're babes in Christ only in our understanding of what we are and what we have, not in the sense of attaining. You're not a babe because you haven't quite got your salvation yet, you're a babe because you haven't apprehended all that you have in Christ yet. You haven't understood it all yet and that's my job to keep preaching it and preaching it and preaching it until one day you'll go home and say, "Pastor, it's too glorious! It's too good! It's too wonderful everything I have in Christ!" And I'll say, "Phew, great. I finally got you there." That's my hope. That's my hope that we would all

just become so enamored with the greatness and goodness and glory and wonder and love of Christ. Intoxicated with his love, goodness. We're like a son who is the full heir of his father but we've been away from the home and from the family land so we can't yet put our hands on it yet, we can't yet enjoy it but it's fully ours. That's what you are. You haven't got it in your hands yet but it's fully yours.

5. A son has a future, a servant does not. Now we do know that in this old Roman culture, it was not too unusual for slaves to be provided for by their masters in old age, but it was not required that a master provide for his slave in old age, but a father always provided for his son as he grew older.

Well, that's why we have Christmas. That's why he came. That's why Jesus was born, that you might be released from the bondage of works and the law to apprehend and embrace the joy and the grace of adoption as a full son of God and a full heir of God all through the merits of Jesus Christ. But there is a sense in which your adoption is not fully complete. In the Roman culture, there were two ceremonies. One wasn't so much of a ceremony but a requirement that you had to go through certain procedures to secure the adoption of the child, and then later on there was a ceremony where the child was presented with the toga virilis put on him, "This is my full child." Do you remember my sermon on glorification? On that day, we will be presented clothed in his glory. Glorification. That's when our adoption, it's full and sure now but that's when it will be unveiled, if you will, of what we really are, his children. It's ours, we haven't just quite gotten our arms around all of it just yet.

So the Son of God became the son of man, that's Christmas morning, so that the sons of men become the sons of God, and that's fully realized on resurrection morning in the fullness of time.