

Galatians 3:23-4:7

I Just Want To Grow Up!

One of the things you'll notice with children is that while they are very young they are content with being a child and under the authority of others.

When my kids were 3 or 4 they didn't say "I wish I was grown up." "I'm tired of living by all these rules." They hadn't quite figured out that when you grow up you get to make decisions about how your own life is to be run. As little children they were completely satisfied with letting some one else they trusted make the rules. They may have tried to buck the rules once in a while, but they didn't equate growing up with running the show.

Something begins to happen as a child gets a little older. They experience some of the freedom that goes along with maturity. Mom & Dad may still be the authority but now they can make some choices on their own. That's a good feeling. In time they come to the place where they'd like to be able to make all of the choices.

And so they say, "I wish I was grown up."

With adulthood comes freedom. But freedom isn't always that easy to live by. With freedom comes the responsibility to think and reason and make intelligent decisions.

There's a lot of people who grew up age wise, but they're still immature in their approach to life. In the Bible, God lays out His program for freedom. Under the Old Testament economy God treated his people like little children. But all of that changed with Jesus Christ.

Open you Bible to Gal 3 pg 1035

In our study last week we saw how the Apostle Paul reviewed 2,000 years of Old Testament History from Abraham to Moses to Christ. He also showed how these great biblical names are related to one another in the unfolding purpose of God; how God gave Abraham a promise, and a law to Moses, and how thru Christ he fulfilled the promise which the law had shown to be essential. The law of Moses condemned the sinner to death. It gave no reprieves while the promise offered justification and eternal life.

The law of Moses demonstrated the reality of sin. It was an objective standard to clearly show every Israelite that he could never get to God by his own works because he could never uphold God's righteous standards.

Only Jesus Christ ever upheld the standard. Only Jesus Christ fulfills all of God's divine commands. And its only when we trust in Him, when we are identified with hIm by faith, that we can be accepted by God.

As we move through our passage today I want you to keep in mind Paul's use of personal pronouns. I've heard a lot of very sloppy interpretations of Scripture that were based on a total disregard for the distinctions that he uses in several of his letters.

Remember, the problem in Galatia was one of false doctrine. Men of a Jewish heritage who claimed to believe in Christ had come into Galatia and taught these Gentile believers that they could only be saved if they first adopted the practices of Israel.

Their argument was this, God clearly said to Israel, "Here's my law. Here's how my people are to approach me."

So they said, if these non-Jews wanted to come to God they were going to have to do it by keeping the law of God.

Paul's purpose is to explain that that just isn't so. And so he's going to talk about "we" Jews and "you" Gentiles. And you'll find this is a consistent designation. If you ignore that distinction it leads to a whole bunch of confusion.

So with the context and that distinction in mind let's look at our passage for today.

Remember first of all. "An immature person needs strict guidelines in life because He can't handle freedom."

And so that's what God did with His law.

Read vs. 23

People have always been saved by faith in every dispensation. Abram, Moses, Paul - every person of every age that has been forgiven of their sin has been forgiven because of faith.

The basis of salvation has always been the cross of Christ. The means of salvation has been faith. The object of that faith has always been God.

The difference is that Abraham and all the other saints of the Old Testament looked forward to a coming redeemer.

The New Testament saints were able to look back to a redeemer who had already come in the flesh, had carried out his redemptive program on earth and had returned to heaven.

When Paul says, "before faith came" he means before faith in the Christ of history arrived.

Before Christ came and that fullness of understanding of faith, the Jewish people were kept under guard by the law.

The word translated "under guard" is the same word that II Corinthians uses to describe how the governor guarded a city with a garrison to keep Paul from escaping. It means "to protect by military guard."

Then, he says, "kept for the faith." That word means "confined." Actually here the King James is even more literal than the NKJ. It translates this word as "shut up." *sugkleio* means "shut together" as prison doors.

This is really powerful imagery.

God intended His law to do two things for Israel.

#1. It confined them as prisoners who had violated its standards. The Jewish people lived behind bars, condemned to death because of sin, law breakers and rebels against God's perfect standard of righteousness.

But #2. A prison isn't merely a place of captivity - it's also a place of protection from outside influence.

And so the law preserved the Jews from the contamination of pagan vices and religions. Over all, as a people, it kept them monotheistic. In fact, Judaism turned out to be the only monotheistic religion in the entire ancient world. And so God uses the law to guard His people and to point them to the redeemer.

Therefore vs. 24 - Read

The translation of "tutor" or "school master" is really unfortunate here. It really misses the point of verse 24. The word that Paul uses literally means "a child leader" "a leader of children."

It was a term that was applied in the ancient world to a trusted slave who was given the custody of his master's male children.

His job wasn't to educate them. His job was to make sure they were in school and to oversee their behavior.

He was an escort, an attendant, he was a disciplinarian. The boys weren't allowed so much as to step out of the house without him before arriving at the age of manhood.

He was often harsh to the point of cruelty. He was usually depicted in ancient drawings with a rod, or a cane in his hand.

The discipline that he exercised was often so severe that those placed under his guardianship would yearn for the day of freedom.

Now think what the Bible's saying here...

1st, the Jewish people weren't born through the law, but rather brought up by the commandments. The slave wasn't the child's father; he was his guardian and disciplinarian. The law of God didn't give life to Israel; it regulated life.

2nd, and even more importantly, the work of the guardian was preparation for the child's maturity. Once the child came of age, he didn't have a guardian anymore.

So the law of Moses with its thou shalts and thou shalts nots, was a preparation for the nation of Israel until the coming promised seed, Jesus Christ. The demands of the law reminded the people that they needed a Savior, the types and symbols of the law (like Passover, sacrifices, the priesthood) all were pictures of the coming Messiah.

There's a great example of the purpose of the law in the account of the rich young

ruler in Matthew 19. Here is a young man that had everything anybody could desire, but he still wasn't satisfied. He'd tried to keep the 10 commandments all of his life, but still something was missing.

The sad thing is that the young man refused to be completely honest as he looked into the mirror of the law. He wouldn't admit to that last commandment "thou shalt not covet." And he went away without eternal life. The law has performed its purpose. The Savior has come and the guardian isn't needed any longer. It's tragic that the nation of Israel did on a national scale, what the rich young ruler did individually. Israel didn't recognize the Messiah when He came.

And God had to finally destroy the temple and scatter the nation, so that today it is impossible for a devoted Jew to practice the faith of His fathers.

He has no altar, no priesthood, no sacrifice, no temple, and no king. All of those have been fulfilled in Christ.

Now, we're going to come back to verses 25 - 29 of Chapter 3 in just a minute. But before we do go down with me to chapter 4 for a moment. In Chapter 4 Paul goes on to develop this concept of immaturity in the first 3 verses.

Read 4: 1-3

A young boy in a Roman family, even though, he was actually heir of all, really didn't differ from the servants. He had no more authority to spend the family wealth or make decisions than they did.

In fact, he was even subject to a slave.

The guardians and stewards of the house also were almost always slaves. They were probably upper class people who had been taken into slavery during a war, but they were still slaves. The son in the family was subject to a slave because of the fact of his childhood.

His immaturity, his inability to handle life, meant strict guidelines until the time appointed by the father.

The Bible applies this to spiritual things in vs. 3. Just as an immature child is governed by rules and regulations, so is a person without Christ.

The Jews were like little children, in bondage to the "elements of the world." The word "elements," *stoicheion*, means the basic principles, the ABC's.

For 15 centuries Israel had been in kindergarten and grade school learning their spiritual ABC's so they'd be ready when Christ came. Then they'd get the full revelation. Jesus Christ is the alpha and the omega - He's the A to Z. He encompasses all of God's revelation to man. He is God's final word.

One of the great tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when in reality it's babyhood. The Judaizers had bewitched the Galatians into thinking that God's law would make them better Christians.

Their old nature felt an attraction to the law because the law enabled them to do things and to measure the external results.

As they measured themselves and what they had done they probably felt a bit of pride.

They thought they were going forward when actually they were regressing.

Legalism is not a step toward maturity at all. A person that has to have supervision and outside direction and strict guidelines that spell out every move is immature.

The law wasn't God's final revelation; but it was the preparation for that final revelation.

You know, it's really important for us to know our ABC's. They are foundational for understanding all of our language. But a grown man who sits there over and over singing his ABC's isn't showing that he's mature and wise. He's showing that he is immature and unlearned.

To be under the Mosaic Law was to be under bondage, not adults enjoying liberty.

See an immature person needs strict guidelines for life because he can't handle freedom. But, a mature individual can handle freedom.

Back to 3:25 Read 25 & 26

The time finally arrives when the kid's no longer a kid. The rules governing every

aspect of his life aren't needed any more. The rod can be laid aside. The slave who was his guardian can be given another job.

After Christ came the purpose of the Old Testament law had been fulfilled.

Now, see how in verse 23 - 25 where Paul's statements were only true of Jews he uses "we and our?" The law wasn't a guardian for the Gentiles, it was given to Israel. In fact it distinguished Israel from the Gentiles.

But now, in verse 26 - 29 where his statements are true of all believers regardless of race or religion Paul easily changes to "you."

The conclusion of this needs to be applied to the Galatians.

Israel stood in a covenant relationship with God before Christ came. The Gentiles did not. But now, whatever their former condition, anybody who trusts in Christ, is brought into a relationship with God that's superior to Israel before Christ came.

And in verse 27 He tells why.

Read 27

When a Roman Youth attained manhood, he wasn't only finished with his guardian but he literally changed his wardrobe. He took off the garments of his youth and put on what was called the *toga virilis*, "the garment of manhood."

At that point he became an official Roman citizen.

He had all the freedom and privileges of a Roman citizen.

He took his place in the councils of his family as a decision maker and a vital member.

God's law could never justify, it could only condemn. Christ justifies - He declares us righteous before God.

God's law could never give a person oneness with God - it separated man from God.

There was a fence around the tabernacle and a veil covering the holy of holies.

Faith in Jesus Christ baptizes us "into Christ." Baptism of the Spirit identifies anyone who trusts Jesus Christ for forgiveness and makes Him part of his body.

Water baptism, is an outward picture of this inner work of the Holy Spirit.

Through faith we put on Christ. The garments of our youth are laid aside and the garments of maturity are put on.

Because of that **vs. 28 - read**

The law created distinctions and differences: between individuals, nations, foods, days, years. Jesus Christ came to unite, not to divide.

This was amazing news for first century believers. If you think our society is fragmented today - it was 100 times worse in the 1st century.

In the Galatians society slaves were considered pieces of property (60 million in the Roman empire). Women were often kept confined and were disrespected, and Gentiles were sneered at by the Jews.

The Pharisees would pray each morning, "I thank you God that I'm not a Gentile, not a slave and not a woman."

Jesus Christ wiped out those distinctions. They don't have any value. They're a handicap when it comes to our spiritual relationship to God thru Christ.

So then **verse 29 - read**

Paul is saying "If your members of Christ's body through faith, then you're Abraham's seed and your in on the promise, so don't let anybody come along and tell you your not."

Now, just wrapping this all up and pulling it together - how did God accomplish all this?

Chapter 4: read vs. 4-5

Galatians at just the right time God sent His Son. He was a human being who died. He was a Jew who fulfilled God's Law.

Through his death on the cross our Lord Jesus Christ brought back those who were under the law so that the Jews could be made adult sons.

Taken out of that position of immaturity and placed in a position of maturity.
Taken out of that position where every thing was dictated - into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

And now listen, Because God has done that for us Jews, you Gentiles benefit directly.

vs. 6 -7

God puts us all in the same position. Before the cross the Jews were like children under the law and the Gentiles were like slaves. This is how the Bible describes Gentiles before the cross, Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

That's a pretty bleak picture.

So for the Galatians to revert back to their old pagan religions would be to go back to slavery. But for the Galatians to put themselves under the law would be to go into immaturity. It would be doing an about face and heading in the wrong direction. When all the while, by faith, they're Sons of God and heirs of His Kingdom.

Listen, if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you can say to God "Abba, Father."

Abba is an Aramaic word, but you'll find an equivalent in almost every language. In English we say "Daddy. "

Interestingly, in the Talmud, which was a second century rabbinical commentary on the traditions of Judaism, it says that slaves are forbidden to address the head of the family where they served as "Abba."

Slaves can't but we can.

"Abba" is like Daddy, the words of an child. It expresses trust that's the outcome of feeling, rather than knowledge. Simple unreasoned trust.

"Father" is the word of maturity. It's the expression of a relationship that's thought out and understood.

What's really awesome is, for us both are appropriate.

God is special to us. Like Daddy. There's intimacy and endearment there.

He's also father. One that we communicate with on the level of maturity.

There's a real challenge to all of us here today from this passage of Scripture.

It's a challenge that's really two fold - 1st of all its a challenge to examine your relationship with God.

Larry Moyer writes: "God let them sneer at Him, strip Him, scourge Him, twist a crown of thorns and jam it on His head."

"God let them spit on Him, strike Him, mock Him, and throw dice for His clothing."

"God let them nail Him to a slab of wood between two thieves. Surely this man must have earned His punishment, for God to allow this to happen. No this was God's Son and He was innocent."

"Why? If God is all powerful and in control, why did He allow His only Son, His innocent Son, Jesus Christ to die an excruciating, degrading death, nailed to a cross between two thieves?"

Well, the answer Larry Moyer's question is that we are sinners. We are guilty and God sent His Son to die as a complete and final payment for our sins.

That's the good news of the Gospel. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins."

So, challenge one is, examine your relationship with God.

Second of all it's a challenge to those who are God's children to live out the position of maturity He's place us in.

Adulthood means freedom and responsibility. Some people never grow up. They're adults and so there's no one to tell them when to get up, when to go to bed, when to go to work, how to spend their money, and in the end all that freedom becomes their down fall.

They don't have enough character development and self control to make wise decisions and their life ends up in shambles. And it seems like they are in one mess after another.

Some Christians never grow up either. We're not under God's law which spelled out every nook and cranny of life so we need a handle for living. We need something to hold on to. To guide us as we navigate through life.

That handle is to know the principles and concepts of the Bible and then have the commitment to put them into practice daily. To die to self and make Christ Lord of all and to live for Him.

Have you come to that point yet in your Christian life? If not, why not commit yourself today to live up to your position in Christ. By God's grace begin to study the Bible. With God's help begin to spend time in prayer. Look for the fingerprints of God as you live your life. As you do you'll get to know God so intimately that you'll get to know God so intimately that you'll become mature in Him and in the knowledge of His will.