

Galatians Chapter 4

by Chip Brogden

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living under grace rather than the law, and the goal of ministry is to see Christ formed in people and to see them growing up spiritually.

Duration: 31:17

Scripture: Galatians 3:28 - 4:1, Galatians 4:20, Galatians 4:22, Galatians 4:30-31

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of law and grace in the book of Galatians. He explains that before the coming of Jesus, humanity was bound by the Old Testament law, which brought them into bondage rather than setting them free. However, when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son to redeem those under the law and offer them adoption as sons. Through this redemption, believers receive the Spirit of God, who dwells in their hearts and enables them to cry out to God as their Father. The preacher emphasizes the significance of this revelation and encourages listeners to appreciate the indwelling presence of God and the law written in their hearts.

Transcript

This is the day that the Lord has made. Hello again everyone, this is Chip Brogden welcoming you to another edition of our webcast. We are streaming online at www.watchman.net and we are continuing our series of messages on the book of Galatians.

The question that we are examining in the light of this book of the Bible is the issue of law and grace. Is a Christian under law or under grace? And I suppose the answer to that question, I hope that it's becoming pretty evident, that those who are in Christ Jesus have been set free from the law and from the attempt to try and please God on the basis of the Old Testament and the Old Covenant commandments. Now we've covered quite a bit of material beginning with Galatians 1. We went through Galatians 2 and Galatians 3. And the last time we were together we concluded Galatians 3. And I'd like to pick up there in the last verse as we begin to progress and go on through Galatians chapter 4. So if you would grab your Bible and turn with me to Galatians chapter 3 beginning in verse 29.

And why don't we go to the Lord in prayer right now as we ask him to bless this time that we have together in the study of his word. Father I thank you today for your word and for the truth that makes us free in Jesus name. I thank you for everyone who is listening to this.

And I pray Lord that you would open our hearts, open our ears to hear what your spirit is wanting to teach us. Open our mind and just give us that spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ that our understanding would be enlarged, that he would be increased, that we would be delivered from the shackles and from the bondage of trying to please you in our own strength and trying to please you in some manner of activity or some manner of religiosity or hypocrisy that focuses on the outward. Instead Lord create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us so that we can serve you in the newness and the freshness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter of the law.

I thank you for this book of Galatians and pray Lord that you would be with us as we study your word. I thank you for producing fruit in our lives in Jesus name. Amen and Amen.

Well Galatians 3 verse 29 says and if you are Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Chapter 4 and verse 1 now I say that the heir as long as he is a child does not differ at all from a slave though he is master of all. Now I started with the last verse of chapter 3 because again Paul did not write in chapter and verse.

Those conveniences were added to us to assist us in our reading but he is continuing on with his thought. Now he has already talked about the purpose of the law why the law was given basically was to lead us to Christ. And he continues on through the end of chapter 3 talking about how there is neither Jew nor Greek nor slave or free.

There is no male or no female you are all one in Christ Jesus and if you are Christ he says you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. He elaborates on this a little bit more in the book of Romans where he says that not everyone who is of Abraham's seed according to the physical according to the flesh. Not everyone who is of Abraham's seed according to the flesh are really children of Abraham.

And here he is telling us pretty much the same thing that if you belong to Christ then you really are Abraham's seed. But see the issue John the Baptist said remember don't say to yourself that we are children of Abraham. John said God can raise up children of Abraham from these stones that doesn't mean anything.

What counts in God's kingdom is not whether or not we have some physical genealogy or some ancestry that we can trace back and say well I am Jewish and I am God's chosen people. I am part of that chosen people because I can trace my genealogy and my ancestry back to Abraham. All of that is pretty much done away with in Christ or rather I should say it is fulfilled in Christ.

It is not because you are a child of Abraham it is because you are a child of Christ and you are of Abraham's seed. Well Abraham's seed is Christ and we have already established that Paul discussed that pretty extensively in Galatians chapter 3. Now he is continuing on with his thought process here and he says if you are Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. And he says that the heir verse 1 of chapter 4 as long as he is a child does not differ at all from a slave though he is master of all.

Verse 2 but he is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Now see he is making a comparison here and basically he is saying that we are heirs of the promise but in the meantime while we were still immature. Now he is talking about the human race.

As long as Christ was still shut up in heaven, as long as Christ had yet to be revealed in all of his fullness the law served as a tutor, served as a guardian until the time appointed by the father when we would come to maturity, when Christ would be fully revealed in the flesh, when the word would become flesh and would come and would live among us as it says in John chapter 1. That the word became flesh. No longer was the word etched upon a tablet of stone. No longer was the word written down into a scroll but the word became a person and came to live with us.

And once that happens folks you don't have to rely upon tablets of stone or commandments of men to reveal and to teach us anything about the Lord. Instead we have the Lord himself standing, living, breathing with us. And people think well you know I would really know Jesus if I could live at the same time when Jesus walked this earth.

If I could just be with the disciples boy I would really know Jesus. Well you know even if that were possible, even if you could spend some time with Jesus 2000 years ago and if you could walk around with the disciples and if I could, I don't think we would have any better idea and any better conception of who he is just by the fact that we are living and walking with him. The disciples really didn't have a clue as to who Jesus was.

They didn't understand him and it was only after, only after, only after the spirit of God was given that they were able to have some sort of inkling and some sort of revelation into exactly the significance of this man that they had lived with. And so Paul says we used to know Christ after the flesh but now we know him after the spirit. In fact there is no other way to truly know Jesus but by the spirit.

And so we have an opportunity because we live in the new covenant and we live under this age of grace. The spirit of God is not out in outer space some place. The spirit of Jesus lives within us.

We can know him to a depth and a dimension that you can't know otherwise. We can know him to a depth and a dimension that you can't know just by living with him according to the flesh. So no, I don't think I'd want to go back 2000 years ago and try to understand Jesus apart from the spirit of God.

Most people did not understand him. Even his own disciples did not fully appreciate and value the significance and the worth of this man. It was only until the spirit of God was poured out upon them that they had any idea who they were dealing with.

And so that's kind of what we're talking about here. Until the Lord was revealed from heaven, until the word became flesh, the word was bound up in this Old Testament law. This Old Testament covenant.

But, verse 4, but, but, but, when the fullness of the time had come. Well let's back up to verse 3. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. See, the law did not set anybody free.

It brought them into bondage. And the purpose was to show and to demonstrate that apart from a living, breathing Christ living on the inside of us, conforming us to his image, teaching us by his spirit, we are bound. We are under bondage.

Paul says, we were children in bondage under the elements of the world. Verse 4, but when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son. The word became flesh, see.

God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to do what? Verse 5, to redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons. Verse 6, and because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father. Verse 7, therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

What a powerful revelation this is, and I predict most people are going to pass over this portion of Scripture and not really appreciate the significance that is here. Basically, God has come to live on the inside of us now. His law is something that is written in our heart.

It is not something that we try to obey and then we fail. It is being conformed to his image and actually having Christ living within us so that we are sons and daughters of the Most High God, not slaves, not people who are afraid to approach God, not people who are trying to please God on the basis of written rules and commandments which turn into traditions and philosophies of men. Instead, it says we are no longer slaves.

We are no longer in bondage, but we are sons, and obviously the implication is daughters as well. But see, the Son had all the privileges. The Son had, in the Middle East there and still today, it is the Son who has all the inheritance and all the privileges and all the promises, everything handed down by the Father.

And so, Paul says we are no longer slaves. We are no longer under the stewardship and the guardianship of law. Instead, we are children, we are sons, and we are heirs of God through Christ.

Praise the Lord. Well, verse 8, But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. In other words, they were idol worshippers.

They were not Jews. The Galatians were pagans. They were Gentiles.

They did not keep the Jewish law. Instead, they pretty much did whatever came natural. They worshipped a variety of different gods.

Verse 9, But now, after you have known God, or rather, are known by God, he asks the question, How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements to which you desire again to be in bondage? So, Paul is really saying here, If you really want to go and be circumcised and bring yourself under the Jewish law, under the Jewish commandments, after you have already come to Christ, now you want to go back under bondage, he says that is pretty much like turning back to idol worship. Because you are still dealing with the external things. You are dealing with the outward things.

And you are not fully cognizant and fully appreciative of the work that God wants to do on the inside of you. So, how is it that you would turn again to those weak and beggarly elements? Well, what do you mean, Paul? Turn again to what? Verse 10, Here is an example. He says, You observe days and months and seasons and years.

So, here is what I have noticed about law, and religious law in particular, and people who teach that the old covenant is something that we are supposed to obey and respect today, that God expects you to tithe, or in the case of the Galatians, that God wants you to be circumcised. It sounds like such a small concession. It sounds like not really a big thing.

Why not just do this and make everybody happy and not cause any problem? Well, see, here is the problem, folks. When you try to keep one part of the law, more things come up. And so, for the Galatians,

it was to be circumcised.

But then, see, here is what is happening. Now, Paul says you are beginning to observe days and months and seasons and years. See, religious bondage does not stop and is not satisfied with just one point.

And you see people go down this road where they begin to argue about the Sabbath day. Well, is the Sabbath day on Saturday? Is it on Sunday? Is it from Friday night to Saturday night? And, you know, you can really become distracted with all of that. And they are the same people that will say you are supposed to tithe, and they are the same people that will say you are supposed to observe the Feast of Passover.

And basically, if you are not Jewish and if you are not Hebrew, then you are not serving God right. You are supposed to go back and study all that. And like I said in our last time together, all of that is very interesting.

All of that is a good thing to study. It is a worthwhile study. If you understand that all of those things are pointing us to Christ, then you can use those things as tools and references to help you better understand God's intention and God's purpose in Christ.

But to suggest that you or I or anyone else in the New Covenant, in the New Testament, who have the Spirit of Jesus living on the inside of us, for anyone to suggest that we should go back and observe the letter of the law, the Sabbath day, the eat certain foods and don't eat this other stuff, and here is what you are supposed to do. That is basically preaching another gospel, bringing people back into bondage that God has already delivered them from. And we just need to reject that on the basis of our freedom in Christ.

And again, it is not a freedom to live any way you want and do whatever comes natural. It is a freedom to serve God and to walk with God and to please God and to love God, but not on the basis of obedience to some outward Old Testament covenant, some religious system. And that is all it is, folks.

It is just another form of bondage. It is not so much that the law in and of itself is bad, but when people take it and they try to apply it and bring other people into bondage to their interpretation of what that Old Covenant is all about, then basically you have modern day Pharisees who are simply twisting the Word of God and using it in a way that is, quite frankly, immature because it falls short of God's purpose for us in Christ. Now, see, Paul is concerned with these Galatians because they just are starting out with this gospel of grace.

And he says, not only are you starting to consider being circumcised, but you begin observing days and months and seasons and years. All of those Jewish days and holidays, they had a purpose, but the purpose is fulfilled in Christ. And Paul says, now I'm afraid for you, verse 11, lest I have labored for you in vain.

See, they're in danger not of being Christians, not of growing in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Now, they're in danger of just going off into Judaism, into some Jewish system of rules and regulations that Christ has delivered us from and never intended for the Galatians to go down that path. So, verse 12, brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you, you have not injured me at all.

Verse 13, you know that because of physical infirmity, I preached the gospel to you at the first. Verse 14, in my trial, which was in my flesh, you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Now, here he's making an appeal to them just on the basis of personal relationship.

Once again, it's not Paul the Apostle throwing his authority around, saying, I'm the Apostle Paul, I'm the one who started you off, and you better submit to me and obey my authority. It never is that to someone who truly has authority. He is simply appealing to them on the basis of a personal relationship.

He sees himself not as a superintendent or not as a district manager or as a CEO of the Galatian mission. He is appealing to them on the basis of being a brother and a father to them in Christ. Now, a lot of people will read this, and it's talking about the thorn in my flesh or the trial that was in my flesh, and they put one and one together and draw the conclusion maybe that Paul had an eye problem or he was blind because he says that he had a physical infirmity the first time he came to them, and maybe this was his thorn in the flesh.

We don't know. That's just all speculation, but let's not be distracted with trying to figure that out. The point is he is appealing to them on the basis of a personal relationship.

Now, verse 15, What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. Again, we don't know if Paul meant this literally, if that was a reference to some eye problem. Again, folks, why spend a lot of time trying to figure that out? That's really not the point of the book, so let's just move on.

Verse 16, Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? Verse 17, They, referring to those false brothers that Paul made reference to in chapter 1, those false brothers who came in to spy out their liberty in Christ, and who's he talking about? Those Jewish-slash-Christians who were preaching Christ, but also preaching obedience to the Mosaic Law. So he says, They, verse 17, They zealously court you, but for no good. Yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.

Verse 18, But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. Verse 19, My little children, for whom I labor in birth again. Until what? Until what? What is the goal of the ministry? What is the goal of this letter to the Galatians? What is the goal of all of Paul's labor with them? It was not to teach them Judaism.

It was not to bring them into obedience to the Mosaic Law. He says, My little children, for whom I labor in birth again. Until what? Until Christ is formed in you.

See? Until Christ is formed in you. And that is the purpose of the ministry. It is to bring us to the full knowledge of Christ.

That we would grow up into Christ. And not be children anymore. Tossed to and fro by every wave of doctrine.

So, he calls them, My little children. So, he sees himself as a father. And what is he doing? He says, I am laboring in birth again.

Until Christ is formed in you. And see, that is the goal and the purpose of ministry. I mean ministry in its very largest sense.

In its scriptural sense. In the sense that God means it. When the scriptures talk about ministry.

I am talking about that he gave some apostles. And some prophets. And some evangelists.

And some pastors and teachers. For the building up of the church. For the edifying of the saints.

Until we all come to the full knowledge of Christ. Until Christ is formed in you, Paul says. Now, they were born again.

They were disciples of Jesus. But they were immature. And now they were being tempted to go off and follow a different gospel.

Which Paul says is really no other gospel. And he is prevailing in pain. Laboring in birth again.

Again. Until Christ is formed in you. And see, that is really where I find fault with organized religion in general.

And that is where I find fault with the church in general. They go through a lot of labor to get people into the gate. But once they get them into the narrow gate.

They pretty much forget about. Not all, but a lot of them forget about. There is a narrow path that leads to life.

And that narrow path is called discipleship. And quite frankly, religion drops the ball at that point. Fundamentalists drop the ball at that point.

It is let's go get them saved. Let's get them to pray the sinner's prayer. Walk the aisle.

Sign a card. Join the church. And after they have gone through all of these steps.

What happens? Well, they pretty much just. They give them religion. They teach them doctrine.

But they are not really laboring until Christ is formed in them. And that is where my heart is. And I believe that is the heart of God.

It is really the heart of ministry. Is to see Christ formed in people. To see them growing up spiritually.

Growing in grace. And in the knowledge of Christ. Not becoming more religious.

Not becoming more fundamentalist. Not becoming full of just all of the stuff that religion pumps into you. To make you into their image.

A relationship with Christ is far deeper than church membership. It is far more profound than learning a few Bible verses. And attending Sunday school.

It is a process of discipleship until Christ is formed in you. And where are the Pauls of this generation? Where are the fathers who will labor in birth again and again and again and again. Until Christ is matured in a person.

Until Christ is formed in that person. Until they are brought to the full knowledge of Christ. And brought to perfection.

Maturity. Spiritual adulthood. You just don't see it.

And I pray that somebody listening will take that and will make that their prayer. That we would have fathers who would labor. Mothers in Christ who would labor in birth until Christ is formed.

Until Christ is formed. See, Christ coming to live on the inside of us. When we are born again, it's almost like a seed has been planted.

But that seed is not the finished product. That's just the beginning. The gate is not the destination.

God's goal is not to get you into the gate and then just drop you there by the gate. Say, well, they're inside the gate. Praise the Lord.

They're saved. They're going to heaven. So, our job is finished.

No, it's not. Jesus says, go into all the world. He didn't say, go into all the world and make decisions for Christ.

He said, go into all the world and make disciples. Teaching them. Discipling them.

And that's what Paul is doing. I labor for you in birth again until Christ is formed in you. Because, see, here's the thing.

When Christ is fully formed in a person, never again will they be tempted by religion. Never again will they go back into bondage to outward things. Never again will they be in a position where they feel like they have to comply with the demands of the Mosaic Law.

And that's really what it's all about. The reason people are in that situation, and the reason why they attach so much significance to religion and to the outward appearance of things, and the reason why they want to go back and live under the Old Testament and observe the Sabbath and pay tithes and observe the feast and get into all of that, is because, simply, they're immature. Christ has not been formed in them to the extent that God desires.

Because when Christ is formed in a person, nothing else matters. Jesus is enough. You just don't need anything else.

You're complete in Him. Either you're complete in Him or you don't have Him fully formed in you yet. So, verse 20, Paul says, I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I have doubts about you.

He's speaking quite frankly. And he is warning them, quite frankly, that if you continue down this path, you're going to miss God's highest and God's best that He has for you in Christ. And he's going to talk about two covenants, and hopefully we can get through them here.

Verse 21, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? I like that. And he's chatting with them a little bit now. You want to be under the law? Okay.

Listen to what the law says. Verse 22, For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman. 23, That he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise.

And then you'll have to go back in Genesis, and it would be good for you to do that to get the background here. The difference between Sarah and Isaac versus Hagar and Ishmael. Verse 24, Paul says, These things are symbolic.

For these are the two covenants. The one for Mount Sinai, which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem, which now is and is in bondage with her children.

Now see, that's what I'm getting at. That's what Paul's getting at. Here's the point.

If you are trying to live according to Mount Sinai, according to the commandments, according to the Mosaic law, according to all that is Jewish, all that is Hebrew, according to this earthly Jewishness, according to calling God Yahweh and not spelling the name of God, and all of these little particular things that are particular with respect to the earthly Jerusalem, the Hebrews, the Jews, Mount Sinai, Mosaic law, Old Testament, covenant, all of these things, Paul says, you are in bondage. You are relating to God on the basis of the slave girl, Hagar. But, verse 26, but, but, but, the Jerusalem above, above, above, and I pray to the Lord that you will get your eyes off of the earthly Jerusalem and get them on the Jerusalem that is above in Jesus' name.

The Jerusalem above, verse 26, is free, which is the mother of us all. Verse 27, for it is written, Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear. Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor.

For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband. Verse 28, now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Verse 29, but as he who was born according to the flesh, then persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, even so it is now.

And if you try to live and believe this, then the people who are going to fight you are the people who are still relating to earthly Jerusalem. Verse 30, nevertheless, what does the scripture say? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. Verse 31, so then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Hallelujah. Well, that is just about all the time that we have for this week. So we're going to leave it off right there.

We've talked about what living by grace is not. And next week, as we get into Galatians 5, we'll begin talking about what it is. What does it mean to walk after the spirit? So we are really getting ready to get fired up here.

So I encourage you to join us again next week. This is Chip Brogdon, streaming online at www.watchman.net. Thanks for listening. Tell a friend about next week's webcast, and I hope that we will see you there.

God bless you.

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