

Galatians 4:1-7
From Childishness to Sonship

Introduction: Paul picks up on the two interrelated concepts on heirs and sons from 3:24-25, 29. He wants his readers to understand the significance of these ideas as they relate to their Christian life. This section contrasts the immaturity under the Law and maturity in Christ. Believers are beyond the need for legal guardians. But this passage also reveals a couple ways in which the Tri-unity of God works together in matters of salvation.

Paul illustrates the truth from Roman culture—4:1-2 (EXTERNAL compulsion)

- 1) ¹ *Now I say, as long as the heir* [κληρονόμος] (cf. 3:29) *is a (legal) minor* [νήπιος],
 - a) Comparatively—*he does not differ from a bondsman* [δούλος],
 - i) *even though he is the master* [κύριος] (rightful legal owner) *of everything*;
 - ii) He is too immature to take on any of the management responsibilities or to utilize any of the privileges that belong to him. His guardians controlled every aspect of his life.
 - b) Submissively—² *but is under/beneath* [ὑπό] *guardians* [ἐπίτροπος] (similar to the guardian in 3:24-25) *and stewards* [οἰκονόμος]
 - i) For how long? *until* [ἄχρι] *the day pre-appointed* [προθέσμιος] *by the father*.

Paul applies this illustration to Jewish Christians—4:3-5 (the Father and the Son)

- 1) Remember the way things used to be—4:3 ³ *In the same way* (as future heirs under guardianship as minors) *we also, ... were enslaved* [past periphrastic plupf. pass. ptc. δουλόω] *under/beneath* [ὑπό] *the rudimentary elements* [στοιχείων] *of the world* [κόσμος].
 - a) *when we were minors* [νήπιος],
 - b) The Law contained the most rudimentary of spiritual elements, akin to an elementary school in our culture.
- 2) But God the Father authoritatively sent God the Son to function with delegated authority as His authorized representative—4:4-5
 - a) When did this happen? ⁴ *But when the fullness* [πλήρωμα] *of time* [χρόνος] (set by the Father; cf. 4:2) *had come*,
 - i) God the Father prepared the created universe for the arrival of His Son as a real human being. Nothing was by chance; everything was by God's plan and appointment.
 - ii) Such preparation as: Roman peace, Roman road system, common Greek language, Jewish synagogues, Jewish Messianic hope, etc.
 - b) What did the Father do? *God sent forth* [aor. act. ind. εξαποστέλλω] *His Son*,
 - Theologically, Jesus pre-existed before He became human
 - i) Generally, Jesus became truly **human**—*born* [aor. dep. ptc. γίνομαι] *of a woman* [γυνή],
 - ii) Specifically, Jesus became truly **Jewish**—*born* [aor. dep. ptc. γίνομαι] (to live) *under/beneath* [ὑπό] *the Law*,

- c) Why did the Father send the Son?—4:5
 - i) Immediate purpose: redemption/liberation from bondage—⁵ *that* [ἵνα] *He* (Jesus) *might redeem* [aor. act. subj. ἐξαγοράζω] *those who were under/beneath* [ὑπό] (the condemnation of) *the Law*, (cf. 3:22-23)
 - ii) Secondary purpose: status as mature sons—*so that* [ἵνα] *we may receive* [aor. act. subj. ἀπολαμβάνω] *the adoption as sons* [υἰοθεσία].
 - (1) A technical legal term for the appointed time of assuming the full rights, privileges, and responsibilities of an adult male. The son does not belong to the family by virtue of his birth but because of his adoption.

Paul applies the illustration to Gentile Christians—4:6 (the Father and the Spirit)
(emphasizing OUR INTERNAL compliance)

- 1) God the Father sent God the Spirit to us—4:6 (cf. 3:2, 5, 14)
 - a) Why? ⁶ *And* [δέ] *because* [ὅτι] (as proof that) *you^{pl} are sons* [υἱός],
 - i) Roman law demanded a witness of the transaction, which in this case is the Holy Spirit.
 - b) God the Father authoritatively sent God the Spirit to function with delegated authority—**God** *has sent forth* [aor. act. ind. ἐξαποστέλλω] *the Spirit of His Son into your^{pl} hearts*, [NB the Tri-unity of God]
 - i) What does the Spirit do? *Who* (neuter, referring back to the **Spirit**) *cries out* [pres. act. ptc. κράζω], “*Abba!* (Aramaic) *Father* (Greek; πατήρ).”
 - (1) This was a daily but polite, deeply respectful form of address to the father.
 - (2) Cf. Romans 8:15 where **Christians** echo the Spirit’s cry, “Abba. Father.” and Mark 14:36 where **Jesus** prays, “Abba, Father”.
 - ii) This answers Paul’s question from Galatians 3:2 and explains further the truth of 3:14.

Paul’s main conclusion for each individual—4:7 ⁷ *Therefore* [ὥστε] ... (there is a shift from plurals to singular)

- 1) Stated **NEGATIVELY**—*you are no longer a bondsman* [δοῦλος] (cf. 4:3)
 - a) *but a son* [υἱός],
- 2) Stated **POSITIVELY**—*and if* [εἰ, 1st class condition, assumed true for the sake of argument] *a son* [υἱός],
 - a) *then also an heir* [κληρονόμος] *of God*
 - i) Who is the Mediator? *through* [διὰ] *Christ*.

Take-home truth: Have you personally experienced this grace from this marvelous God?