



WEEK 4 DEVOTIONAL

June 11, 2023

RECEIVE

Slowly. Prayerfully, read and/or listen to Galatians 4:1–31 twice. Before and after each reading, pray asking the Spirit of Christ to guide you into knowing and living what you are receiving from the Scriptures. Consider, what does God want you to reflect on and learn from?

REFLECT

1. Do you know anyone who has been adopted? Isn't it a beautiful thing to think of someone gathered up in the love of a family and called son or daughter with all the rights thereof? How does this apply to your relationship with Jesus according to this chapter? What rights, responsibilities and privileges flow from your decision to develop a relationship with Him?
2. Before becoming a follower of Jesus, how were the Galatians like slaves? How would you describe this slavery of the law?
3. Jewish people lived a very structured life with rules and regulations dictated by Jewish laws and customs. What requirements or behaviors are you "enslaved" to? How about our culture? How is projecting a certain image or conforming to the expectations and standards of others a form of slavery?

4. Paul was concerned that the Galatians were returning to their old way of life. After experiencing salvation and the life that Jesus brings, why do some followers of Jesus return to their former bad habits? What bad habits are hard for you to break?
5. In what way did Hagar typify first-century Jerusalem? How was Sarah an example of that "first-century Jerusalem"? How did Paul compare Ishmael's persecution of Isaac to the legalists' opposition to the Christians? What was Paul's point? How can these pictures help you follow Jesus here and now?

RESPOND

1. In verse 5, Paul uses the word "redeem." How do you feel you have been redeemed and adopted? Henri Nouwen uses the term "the beloved." You are the beloved son or daughter of God. What thoughts and feelings stir in you as you consider this?

RESOURCES

The Bible Project | [Introduction to Galatians](#)

Dive deeper into the Scriptures during our weekly Sunday Discipleship class at 10:30 a.m. at our Oak Brook Campus.

The precious nuggets below are taken from [The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians](#):

In the ancient world the process of growing up was much more definite than it is with us.

In the Jewish world, on the Sabbath following his twelfth birthday, a boy's father took him to the synagogue, where he became *A Son of the Law*. The father gave a benediction, "Blessed be thou, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy." The boy responded, "O my God and God of my fathers! On this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto thee, and declare with sincerity and truth, that henceforth I will keep thy commandments, and undertake and bear the responsibility

of mine actions towards thee." There was a clear dividing line in the boy's life; almost overnight he became a man.

In Greece a boy was under his father's care from seven until he was eighteen. He then became what was called an *ephebos*, which may be translated *cadet*, and for two years he was under the direction of the state. The Athenians were divided into ten *phratryai*, or *clans*. Before a boy became an *ephebos*, at a festival called the *Apatouria*, he was received into the clan; and at a ceremonial act his long hair was cut off and offered to the gods. Once again, growing up was quite a definite process.

Under Roman law the year at which a boy grew up was not definitely fixed, but it was always between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. At a sacred family festival called the *Liberalia* he removed the *toga praetexta*, which was a toga with a narrow purple band at the hem and put on the *toga virilis*, the plain toga which adults wore. He was then brought down to the forum and formally introduced to public life. Once again, there was a quite definite day on which a boy attained manhood. There was a Roman custom that on the day a boy or girl grew up, the boy offered his ball, and the girl her doll, to Apollo to show that they had put away childish things.

When a boy was an *infant* in the eyes of the law, he might be the owner of a vast property but he could take no legal decision; he was not in control of his own life. For all practical purposes, he had no more freedom than if he were a slave; but when he became a man he entered into his full inheritance.

Paul says that when the Galatians—and indeed all men—were mere children, they were under the tyranny of the law; then, when everything was ready, Christ came and released men from that tyranny. So now Believers are no longer slaves of the law; they have become sons and have entered into their inheritance. The childhood which belonged to the law should be past; the freedom of manhood has come.

SCRIPTURE

Galatians 4:1–31 | New International Version

What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are His Sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the Gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman,
you who never bore a child;
shout for joy and cry aloud,
you who were never in labor;
because more are the children
of the desolate woman than
of her who has a husband.”

Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.