BIG IDEA
No Longer A Slave, Now A Son

Title Card

Good morning, everyone.

We're continuing in our series, **Witness for the Defense: Defending the True Gospel of Faith.** So far in his, "trial", Paul has called Titus as a witness, followed by Peter, Abraham and the Law.

With his previous witnesses, Paul has forcefully confronted the two lies of the false teachers:

Works and the Law are necessary to become a Christian.
Works and the Law are necessary to grow as a Christian.

Now, he decides to call a surprise witness to the stand: The Galatians themselves!

Over the next three sermons, we'll hear testimony from the Galatians concerning Paul's defense of the True Gospel of Faith Alone. You might think of this is a mini-series in the middle of our overall series.

By calling the Galatians to the stand, he reinforces his point that works and the Law are not necessary to ***become*** a Christian, but he also emphasizes the second point, that works and the Law are unnecessary to ***grow*** as a Christian.

Theologian and author Warren Wiersbe makes the point that one of the attractions of relying on works is that it gives the **appearance** of being spiritually mature. In point of fact, as we'll see in today's passage, legalism does quite the opposite: As Wiersbe said, Legalism leads the believer back into a sort of, "second childhood" in our spiritual life.

Like us, the Galatian believers wanted to grow and move forward in their Chrisian life. Laudable goals for them and us, to be sure. It wasn't that they were trying to do the wrong thing, oh no, it's that they were going about it the wrong way.

Hoping that we become better Christians – growing in love and grace – is something we all aspire to and rightfully so. Scripture makes it plain that we ***should*** become more and more like Christ the longer we live as believers.

But relying on works, the Law, legalism only means that while our motives are right, our methods are wrongs.

The Galatian church was facing this very issue: The false teachers had convinced them – "bewitched" them, as Paul phrased it in his opening statement – that works and legalism was how one could grow and become a better Christian.

Galatians 3:27-4:7

In the next section of his letter – from chapter 3, verse 27 through chapter 4, verse 7 – Paul shows the Galatians that they did not need works and the Law to ***become*** Christians and they do not need works and the Law to live and ***grow*** as Christians.

As we work our way through today's message, Paul will make three arguments that prove works and the Law are not necessary for salvation or growth.

Point 1 – As Believers, We Are Equal In Christ.
Point 2 – Before We Were Believers, We Were Slaves to the Law.
Point 3 – As Believers, We Have Been Adopted as Sons and Heirs.

And these three points form the basis for our Big Idea this morning, the one thing I want you to remember about today's sermon:

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In today's testimony, Paul will take us through a journey of redemption, a journey from slavery and inequality to freedom and equality. And understanding this journey and our status as free, adopted sons can keep us free from the tyranny of believing that legalism and works can save us and make us better Christians.

I First Point – We Are Equal In Christ

In verses 27 through 29, Paul makes his first point, that we are Equal in Christ.

Galatians 3:27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ESV

Hey, do you love history, like I do? If so, then boy, are you in for a treat! This verse is chock full of historical traditions concerning both baptism and the phrase, "put on Christ" that we need to know if we're to understand the importance of what Paul is saying here.



So, strap in and hold on tight, we're about to fire up the WABAC machine and go traveling back in time, baby!

To begin with, Paul mentions baptism. Baptism was practiced long before the New Testament in many forms, in many cultures all over the world, including Jewish culture. But in nearly all cases, baptism had a two-fold symbolism attached to it.

Baptism's Symbolisms
Purification **Identification**

Purification and Identification.

In the act of baptizing, a person is immersed in a body of water. This immersion provides a symbol showing the participant has been cleaned or purified and is a public declaration that the individual is identifying with a particular person or concept.



Now, a few moments ago, I said that baptism had been practiced in some form or fashion in many cultures, including Jewish culture. What you see on the screen behind me is a mikvah. You might call it a Jewish baptistry.

A little backstory on the mikvah.

Jews had to use “living water” for their purification rituals. Living water was defined as fresh and flowing water.

To meet these requirements, many mikvah’s were dug out of the ground so that it could collect rainwater. As you can see from this particular mikvah, there are actually two pools. This is so the water can flow from the collecting pool, which is on your right in this picture, into the pool you dipped yourself into on the left. Some mikvah’s had three pools so the water you dipped into could continue to flow into another pool, making sure the water was always fresh and flowing.

Now, not everyone used a mikvah. There were a fair number of Jews who would use a lake or river for their baptisms. But whether it was in a mikvah, a lake or a river, the idea was always the same:

Baptism symbolized purification and identification.

Baptism seems to be an appropriate symbol of the spiritual reality that occurs when we place our faith in Jesus Christ for eternal life:

Baptism’s Symbolisms

Purification = Cleansed From Sin
Identification = Joined Together With Christ

When we believe in Jesus, He cleanses us from our sin and we are joined together with Him in spirit.

Purification and identification.

Galatians 3:27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ESV

Then Paul said that when the Galatians’ believed in Christ, they, “put on Christ.”

Huh. That’s kind of an odd phrase, don’t you think? Well, it might not mean anything to us, but to the first century believers, it spoke volumes.

enduo
Sinking into a garment
Clothe oneself

To begin with, that phrase, “put on” is a single word in the original Greek. Enduo is the idea of changing clothes. Now here’s where it gets really interesting.

The Galatian believers would have immediately understood that Paul was referring to the change in garments a young boy would make once he was declared an adult by his father.

You see, a Roman child wore clothing called *toga praetexta*. Basically, this meant the style of clothing worn by a child. But when a Roman son came of age, he took off the childhood garments and put on the *toga virilis*, the toga of an adult citizen.

An interesting little side note is that because Roman society was completely patriarchal in nature, the father **alone** decided when the son was considered an adult citizen and could change from his *toga praetexta* into the *toga virilis*. Usually, this occurred between the ages of 14 and 16, but it occurred whenever the father decided to invest his son with adulthood.

But however old the son was when the father made his decision, at that moment, the son was no longer considered a boy or a child. He was now considered a full adult, a full citizen of Rome, with all the attendant rights, responsibilities and privileges of Roman citizenship.

In like fashion, at the moment we believe in Jesus for eternal life, we metaphorically put on the clothing of Christ. We receive a new life and purpose because we are now united to Christ.

In verses 28 and 29, Paul explains one of the practical effects of this idea of putting on Christ when he says:

Galatians 3:28-29 – 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. ESV

What a strong declaration of equality in Christ!

This concept of equality in Christ is important because the false teachers were claiming that in order to become a Christian, Gentiles had to first become Jews. In effect, they were saying that one cannot be saved if one was an unconverted Gentile. Only Christian Jews were real Christians, Christian Gentiles were not.

Paul rejects this notion and boldly proclaims that, in God's eyes, there is no distinction between a Jewish Christian and a Gentile Christian, a slave Christian and a free Christian, a male Christian and a female Christian, there are only Christians.

In each case, he divided the world into two groups:

Jews and Gentiles
Slaves and Free
Male and Female

- **If you're not a Jew, then you're a Gentile.**
- **If you're not a slave, then you're free.**
- **If you're not a male, then you're a female.**

You're either one or the other. If you'll notice, the divisions he mentions carried implications regarding inequality.

Jews were called God's chosen people. This led many Jews to regard Gentiles as something, "less than." As we've mentioned before, by the first century, many Jews referred to Gentiles as, "dogs," a pejorative that referenced the mangy, flea-ridden, dirty, diseased dogs that roamed free, not the clean, sweet, fluffy pets we have in our homes.

Obviously, there is an inequality between slaves and free. In the Roman Empire, slaves were not considered human beings or people. They were considered and treated as if they were property, inanimate objects. They could be bought and sold, treated well or abused. Slaves had no inherent human rights. They were merely property.

And in the first century Roman Empire – and in many cultures over all of human history, to be honest – men held all the real power. It was a patriarchal society where the man/husband held all the power over his wife and family.

Apart from Christ, we live in a fallen world where some consider themselves better than others. But this distinction falls apart in a Christian worldview.

Christ is the great Barrier Buster. He broke down all classes, distinctions and racial barriers. He has redeemed all who have placed their faith and trust in Him, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female, black or white, gay or straight, Democrat or Republican.

It is not that these divisions or distinctions don't exist in the real world, rather, they are not grounds for exclusion from the life God offers to all people in Christ.

No matter what our distinctions are in this world, we are equal in Christ.

In the past, we were equal in the sense that we were slaves to sin and the Law, but if we have trusted in Jesus for eternal life, we have been freed and now stand equal in the freedom of our faith.

That is to say, we are:

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II Second Point – We Were Slaves To the Law

The verses we just studied set the stage for Paul to show the Galatians that they do not need works and the Law to either become Christians nor to grow as Christians.

In verses 1 through 3 of chapter 4, Paul contrasts our current freedom with our past slavery and what that means for us, when he says:

Galatians 4:1-2 – 1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ESV

In the Roman empire of the first century, children had no more freedom than a slave. As a matter of fact, if you'll remember from our last message in this series, children actually had to answer to the slaves who were responsible for their education and upbringing. In one sense, the slaves had more power than the children. Up until the time the son changed from his *toga praetexta* into his *toga virilis*, that is.

Paul further discusses this contrast between slavery to the Law and freedom in Christ when he says in verse 3:

Galatians 4:3 – In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ESV

The enslavement mentioned refers both to Jewish Law and Gentile paganism. Both enslave their believers to a legal set of rules that must be followed to obtain salvation and entrance to the next life as well as to earn the love and favor of their god.

Performance Principle

We might call relying on our works to justify ourselves the Performance Principle. That is, if we perform a certain way, then God is obligated to reward us with His love and forgiveness.

On one level, this makes sense, doesn't it? It does when you realize we rely on the Performance Principle in practically every other aspect of our lives.

As children, we learn this idea that the Performance Principle offers rewards, don't we? If we misbehave, our parents discipline us. If we want to avoid the discipline, we must live by the Performance Principle.

In school, we're graded on our ability to learn new information.

Our coaches reinforce the Performance Principle, our bosses reward us with promotions and/or bonuses based on our performance. Want to avoid jail and prison? Better follow the Law.

All of society is based on and built upon the concept of the Performance Principle. Why wouldn't we think that God requires us to perform for Him if we want Him to save us or love us?

And that's the essence of legalism. Relying on works and the Law to earn God's love and forgiveness seems right because everything else in life works that way. So why not perform for God?

But that's not how God works. God doesn't demand obedience to a set of rules, He doesn't demand we live according to the Performance Principle to receive His love.

Quite the opposite. As we've seen in past sermons, God already loves us fully and unconditionally. There is nothing we can say or do that would make God love us more or less than He already does.

Scripture tells us that we love God because He first loved us and also tells us that Christ died for us while we were estranged from God. In other words, God didn't decide to love us because He was reciprocating our love. He wasn't rewarding us with His love because we performed well and earned it.

Relying on the Performance Principle gets it backwards. The Performance Principle says, "Do and you will be blessed." But God says, "You are blessed, therefore, do."

And that's where the false teachers got it wrong: They made performance a **condition** for acceptance rather than a **response** to acceptance.

Once we fully realize and accept that reality, we can realize and accept that while the Performance Principle may be a basic principle for success in the world, it is a formula for defeat in the Christian Life.

In the past, before we put on Christ, we were slaves. Slaves to a system of rules and works and laws, all based on the Performance Principle. But as Paul makes clear in the next section, once we accepted Christ as our savior, we were freed, declared a Son of God, no longer bound by the Performance Principle.

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III Third Point – We Are Sons and Heirs

Finally, in closing the Galatians' testimony, we see the explanation of our adoption as sons.

In verses 4 and 5, Paul says:

Galatians 4:4-5 – 4 But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ESV

In verse 4, Paul said that Jesus came, "in the fulness of time."

At the time appointed by God, Jesus came into the world to live His life and give that life as a ransom for sins. You may have heard or seen this verse before and just glossed right over that phrase. But have you ever stopped to think what Paul meant? What made the first century the appointed time? Why didn't God send Jesus sooner or later?

Excellent question! So glad you asked, 'cause that means we get to study a little more history!



Alright, another journey through time! Let's fire up the WABAC machine once more and head back to antiquity, to about 900 years before Christ.

After the death of Solomon, there was a civil war and the kingdom was divided into two separate nations: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Israel had no kings who followed after the Lord, and although Judah had a few godly kings, both nations rebelled against God for the next 200 years.

Finally, around 700 years before Christ, the northern kingdom, Israel, was invaded and conquered by the Assyrian Empire. And while the southern kingdom, Judah, was spared this humiliation for a while, eventually, another empire arose, the Babylonian Empire.

The Babylonians conquered the Assyrian Empire, meaning they now owned the northern kingdom, Israel. But they didn't stop there, the Babylonians continued their

wars of conquest and eventually conquered Judah and they continued to conquer other lands and expand their empire.

The Babylonian's victory was short-lived, however, as less than 100 years later, the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire. Just like the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires before it, the Medo-Persian Empire continued its wars of conquest, expanding their borders beyond the lands the Babylonians controlled.

About 200 years later, trouble was brewing down in the area we now call Greece. At that time, Greece wasn't the fully formed nation we know today, it was a collection of city states, each with its own king, and these city states waged continual war on each other.

One of the kings of these city states was Phillip of Macedon, who was beginning to conquer other city states and bringing them under his control. Eventually, Phillip was assassinated and his son, Alexander the Great became king of Macedon.

Alexander continued in his father's footsteps and united Greece under his rule. But his ambitions went much further than his father's. Alexander decided that the entire world should come under Grecian rule. And so Alexander embarked on a campaign of wars to conquer the world, including the Medo-Persian Empire.

When Alexander died, most of the known world was under Greek rule. But Alexander didn't just conquer lands and demand tribute from them. He considered Greek civilization the height of humanity and in every land he conquered, he introduced Greek thought, philosophy, religion, society and – most importantly – language.

For the first time since the Tower of Babel, much of the world spoke and read a common language. As we'll see in just a moment, this would prove invaluable to the spread of Christianity.

And then, Julius Caesar entered the world stage about 40 or 50 years before Christ was born and set Rome on an unparalleled course of conquest, which continued for the next 300 years.

By the time Jesus was born, Rome had conquered the lands ruled by Alexander and continued to add nations to their empire.

So why is all of this important? How does this fit into the idea that God sent forth His Son in the fulness of time? Because Rome, like all empires, made the collection of taxes the utmost importance.

Really? Taxes? Yes, the collection of taxes was instrumental in the spread of the Gospel. Here, let me explain.

The constant flow of monies from every kingdom and nation was vital to Rome's success and power. Three areas of Roman society were vital to Rome's ability to collect taxes.

Roads and Transportation
Peace and Security
Common Language

The Romans built reliable roads between cities and nations. This allowed for the free flow of goods throughout the empire, resulting in a strong, vibrant, growing economy. And with a strong, vibrant and growing economy comes the ability to pay taxes to the government.

Caesar Augustus instituted the *Pax Romana*, the Peace of Rome. Peace, safety and stability were of the utmost importance to the Roman Empire. So long as the populace felt at peace, believed they were safe and their lives were stable, once again, they were free to engage in commerce, resulting in a strong, vibrant and growing economy, which ensured the steady flow of taxes to Rome.

And finally, the Romans were incredibly intelligent in the third point: A common language. The Romans realized that since Greek had become the common language of the world, they decided not to force conquered peoples to speak Latin. Most of the world already understood each other, why try to fight it?

And once again, this proved invaluable to the free flow of goods throughout the empire, resulting in a strong, vibrant and growing economy, ensuring a steady flow of taxes to Rome.

And it was into this point in history that God sent His Son into the world. With Rome ensuring the constant flow of taxes from around the world because of roads and travel, peace and security and a now common language, the stage is set for the Word of God to travel unimpeded by geography, safety concerns or language barriers to every corner of the known world.

The fulness of time had come.

Galatians 4:4-5 – 4 But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ESV

OK, folks, now we're going to delve into some serious theology, here. In verse 5, scripture says that we were redeemed by Jesus Christ so that we could be adopted as sons.

huiothesia
The condition of an adopted son equals a natural born son

The word adopted in Greek is huiothesia. It's a combination of two words, huios which means son and thesis, which means a placing. The word signifies the condition of an adopted son being equal to a natural son.

Inheritance and adoption laws in ancient Rome were, in some respects, similar to modern day laws. When the father died, the son or sons inherited the father's estate. But what if the father did not have a son? Wealthy Romans could adopt a son to pass on their wealth to when they died.

In Roman society, at the moment of adoption, the adopted son enjoyed all the privileges, obligations and inheritance rights as a natural son. In the eyes of the law, they were equal in every single respect to a natural born son.

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul says that when Jesus redeemed us with His blood, we were adopted into God's family, we became sons of God, equal in every respect to His natural son, Jesus Himself.

Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ESV

Here's where the idea that Paul presented several sentences earlier comes into focus when he said there is neither male nor female. Not to destroy gender, not to destroy the distinctions between us, but to include women in the adoption.

In patriarchal Rome, women were not considered equal to men and, therefore, had no inherent rights to receive their father's estate upon his passing. Only a son could inherit the estate, not a daughter.

We are all considered the adopted sons of God, we all inherit the same rights, privileges and obligations that Christ enjoys. It matters not if we are Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, male or female, we are now adopted as God's sons, no longer slaves to the Performance Principle where we tried to earn His love and favor. We simply possess God's love and favor because of Who He is, not because of what we do or how we behave.

And to wrap up the testimony from the Galatians, in verses 6 and 7, Paul gives us some further insight as to what this adoption means to us.

Galatians 4:6-7 – 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ESV

To begin with, we can now call God our Father.

This may not seem like such a big deal to modern day Americans in the 21st century, because we've heard God referred to as Father our whole lives, but it was huge, life changing information 2,000 years ago.

But why would this be so earth shattering to the early believers? Well, because it had never happened before. Never once in the Old Testament does an individual address God as Father. In fact, nowhere in Jewish literature before the coming of Christ do we find any Jew calling God his Father...that is until Christ, who is recorded saying, "The Father" and, "My Father" 170 times.

Second, that word Abba is important. Abba is Aramaic for father, but not just father, it was a term of endearment and intimacy, more like dad, or daddy or dada, like an English speaking infant would say. Actually, abba is how an Aramaic speaking baby would say dada. And Aramaic was the native language of Jews living in the Promised Land in the first century.

And Paul uses the Greek word krazo when he says crying. Krazo means to call aloud, shriek, to cry out, much like a child does when their parent comes home.

When my kids were little, they were so happy when I'd come home from work every day. When they heard me come through the door, all four would come running, calling out to me. And my youngest would crawl as fast as she could, calling, "Dada, dada, dada!"

Paul is reminding the Galatians that they were adopted by the Father because of their faith, and this adoption created a close, intimate relationship with Him.

And since the Galatian believers are now adopted as sons, no longer to consider themselves under the rule of the works of the Law, they are in a position to receive the inheritance from God.

An inheritance that Paul has just proven is not dependent upon their behavior, not dependent upon the Performance Principle, but dependent solely upon God's promises to all who believe in Jesus for eternal life.

If you'll remember, in the introduction, I quoted Warren Wiersbe who said that relying on Legalism to measure our growth in Christ leads us to a kind of second childhood. His point is that by going back to legalism after we have trusted in Christ for our salvation is like a Roman son who decides to trade his adult *toga virilis* for his old childhood *toga praetexta*. It makes no sense.

Choosing slavery to works and the Law over freedom in our faith in Christ is regression, not growth. Our growth in Christ is measured in grace and love, not adherence to a set of do's and don'ts. The Law can only offer slavery, faith can only offer freedom.

Indeed, we are:

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Let's close in prayer.

I'd like to remind you that we have someone at our Connect Desk in the lobby waiting to greet you with a smile and answer any questions you might have.

Also, someone will be waiting in the prayer room next to the Café if you need to pray about anything at all.

Have a great week. Bob will be back in 2 weeks as he is finishing preparing for our next ministry year, so Todd Mathis will be here next Sunday. See you then.

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