

Privileged – Gal 4:1-7

Gal 4:1-7; We're working our way through the book of Galatians (**Intro**), and finding some truths that are absolutely foundational for our lives
Gospel truths, and the privileges that come with it
Like the fact that we're a part of God's chosen people – sons of Abraham
And that we're identified with Christ, no longer subject to the Law

And here in chapter 4, at least at the beginning, Paul lays out even more; Even *more* privileges of believing and trusting in Jesus; Let's take a look

➤ After just saying in v29 of chapter 3, that we are *heirs according to promise*, he expands on that concept, in v1 of chapter 4

[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. [3] In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. [4] But when the fullness 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. [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.

The first thought here from v1-3 that we can't afford to miss, is that . . .

Before Christ we were in bondage (v1-3)

Miss *that*, and you'll fail to appreciate what we have *in* Christ

Or to say it another way – You'll never fully appreciate who you are, until you realize who you were; Until you realize from whence you've come so to say
Like being rescued from the Titanic; If you had no cognizance that you were a goner, you wouldn't fully appreciate that you're still alive
Or if you were rescued as a hostage, and had no idea that you were minutes away from death, you wouldn't appreciate your release as much

And the same is true of our life in Christ; To the extent we fail to realize our former bondage, we'll fail to appreciate our current freedom
I think that's one of the main *reasons* for these first few verses

➤ But to see it, you have to understand some Greco-Roman law; V1-2

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

The heir, the child, *is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father*

To make sense of that, you have to understand that in Paul's day, at least in *Roman* culture, it was customary for a wealthy man . . .

To entrust his eldest son to the care of a guardian, until he was old enough and mature enough to receive his inheritance

The son *knew* it was his, he *knew* it was coming to him, but it wasn't yet under his authority; Or available for his use

That had to wait until the date his Father had set, for him to *receive* it

➤ It's similar to what the Duke and Duchess of **Northumberland** did in 1999

Northumberland is the northern most county in England . . .

And the location of **Alnwick Castle**; Which, by the way, was used in the filming of Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies, and Downton Abbey; The BBC TV show Worth a bit of money to say the least

And the Duke and Duchess went to court in the Spring of '99, to prevent their son, Earl Percy, from inheriting his portion of the estate, when he turned 18

Apparently that was the precedent

He stood to receive the castle, a million pound lump sum (\$820k), and half that again in *annual* income

And given the dismal track record of other young nobleman, who had squandered their inheritance, they didn't think he would be ready

So they set up a trust, to *manage* his fortune, until he was 25

Treating him much the same as a *servant* in the castle – under the supervision of a guardian, and under the *principles* of the trust*****

➤ And Paul says, that's how it was with us, before *Christ*; Before he came into the *world*, and before he came into our *lives*; V3

In the same way we also, when we were children [when we were *apart* from Christ; we], *were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.*

IOW we were in *bondage* to things contrary to God; Contrary to faith

Referring, to 3 main realities; The first of which is sin

Before Christ, we were in bondage . . .

• **To sinful desires**

Or as Paul says it in Rom 6 – we were *slaves* of sin (v17,20)

That's *part* of what he means by *the elementary principles of the world* – sin; Base desires; *Works of the flesh* that held us in bondage and ate at our soul

Like Paul says later on in **Gal 5:19-21**

[19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

All works of the flesh, that arise from the bondage of sinful desires

Things that *before* Christ, we did our best to mask and dress up, didn't we?*****

And some people still do

Like the alcoholic who describes their weekend as fun and games, when they woke up each morning feeling like death

Or the porn viewer who's buttoned up on the outside, but out of control on the in

Or the adulterer who acts like things are peachy, but is riddled with guilt

Apart from Christ you can dress your sin up, but the emperor still has no clothes

You're still living a lie, and you're still in bondage; Or *were*

2nd, is false religions; Before Christ, many of you were in bondage . . .

• **To false religions**

Unbiblical religions; That's another aspect of *the elementary principles of the world*

Like those that deny the deity of Jesus Christ

Including Jehovah's Witnesses for instance; Christian Science; Judaism
All false religions, and therefore forms of spiritual bondage, that keep people from true religion

As are those that deny the authority of God's Word, as the sole rule for faith and life
Like Islam; And Scientology; And a whole *slew* of New Age thinking

And don't miss the ones that advocate a *works*-based salvation; Rejecting the complete, substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ
Saying it's faith *plus* works that save us or keep us; Like Mormonism; And several others *closer* to home

Any belief system that denies the core tenets of biblical faith – like the deity of Jesus, the authority of God's Word, or the vicarious death of Christ – are false religions
Subtle but powerful forms of bondage, that keep people from the freedom of salvation, and a genuine life in Christ
And the extent you fail to realize such bondage in your past, you'll fail to appreciate your freedom in the present, and thereby diminish God's glory in saving you

And then 3rd, is bondage . . .

- **To worldly thinking**

That's the last elementary principle to which we were in bondage before Christ
Like the mindset that this is all there is; Worldly thinking
That if it can't be explained by science, it's not real
It's okay to live however you *please*, as long as you don't hurt anybody
And for sure there are no moral absolutes – if it's right for you, it's just fine

Or how about the worldly thinking that you have the right to do whatever you want within the sphere of your own body?
Or that money is the be-all-end-all, and a great source of security
Or that bigger and better is always better, so go for it
Or that a little indulgence here and there won't hurt anyone
Or that you're the captain of your soul, and nobody can tell you what to do

Worldly thinking; All of it; And a subtle form of bondage that will deceive your soul, rob your joy, and leave you hollow (**Summary**)

That's the idea of *the elementary principles of the world*, that enslave us, and keep us from receiving all that God has in store; Just like Earl Percy

➤ If that's you, if you're *still* in bondage, if Jesus hasn't come into your life – you can change that; *He* can change that; And change you
If you'll *admit* your bondage, and ask *forgiveness* for your sins, and *receive* him into your life; If you're still in bondage, he can free you

If you're not, don't miss this; So your joy can be *full* in the midst of your freedom; *Full* as a result of your rescue; *Full* due to your release

➤ Which brings us to the next point, that **through Christ** we're privileged
Before Christ we were in bondage, but through Christ, we're privileged; V4-5

When we were children, [we] were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. [4] But when the fullness 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.

When the time was right, when all the factors for God's plan to bless the nations were ready – from Israel's yearning, to the Gentile's desperation . . .
God sent forth his Son – Jesus; His own flesh and blood if you will; His own likeness
With all the attributes of his Father, and therefore fully divine

And yet, he was *born of a woman* – the virgin Mary; So that he's just like *us* in the *flesh*, but just like *God* in the *spirit*; Untainted by sin
Which you might think, warranted being born *outside* the Law; Having nothing to do with it
But just like us, he was *born under the law*; Subjecting himself to the same constraints that *we* had; Identifying with us in *every* way; Internally *and* externally
Why? To redeem us; [5] *To redeem those who were under the law*

Before Christ we were in bondage, but . . .

Through Christ we are:

- **Redeemed (v4-5a)**

Talk about privileged; We were not only *rescued* from *the present evil age* (Gal 1:4), but redeemed; Set free from our bondage *under the law*, by the payment of a *price*
And that price, was death; The Law says that the wages of sin is death

So through Christ, through his death in our place, he paid the price for our freedom;
Freedom from the bondage and consequences of our sin
What a privilege; What a grace; What a gift

But as good as that is, that's *not* the end game; The *ultimate* purpose of Christ's coming, was to *adopt* us

Through Christ we are . . .

- **Adopted (v5b)**

God sent forth his Son . . . [5] to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. We might be ushered into God's family, as one of his own Sons and daughters of God himself; That's what's up
That's the *ultimate* purpose of our redemption – adoption

Which was and still is, a formal legal process for taking someone into your home, as part of your family; Something many of *you* have done over the years
Bearing the cost, and picturing the gospel, to a T

➤ What it's not, is simply providing food/shelter for a child; That's what orphanages do
Nor is adoption a little thing; Something trivial; Something easy
Especially when the disparity between the child and the parents is so vast
Including the cultural differences, and socio-economic background, and family history
More often than not, the costs are high, and the differences *huge* in adoption
Making it all the more significant, all the more amazing, and all the more reflective of *our* adoption; God's adoption of *us*

It would be like the rich, aristocratic family in Downton Abbey, adopting the village *beggar*; Not as another servant to cook the meals and earn their keep . . .

But as a full-fledged member of their *family*; Another brother and sister; An heir
With all the rights and privileges to go along

Far from a small thing, far from a trivial thing, far from an *obscure* aspect of our salvation,
our adoption is the core of it

The very purpose for which Christ paid the ultimate price, to bridge the ultimate gap

The gap between his holiness and our sinfulness

Through Christ, we're adopted

➤ And it means at least 7 things; Starting with . . .

Love – Nobody adopts, especially when it costs so much, if they don't love; Nobody; Not
in *your* family, and not in God's; Adoption means love; *You are loved*

Protection – When a child is brought into a healthy family, they're protected; How much
more when their adopted into God's family? Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me

Provision – God provides for his sons and daughters, *according to his riches in glory*
Including the provision of contentment, to go *without* sometimes

Assurance – Our adoption into God's family, is one of greatest sources of assurance we
have; Assurance of salvation; That we're in, never to be removed

B/c it's a metaphor that conveys *permanence*

And there's not one shred of evidence in the Bible, that God somehow *un*-adopts those
who are his; Or that you can do so as the child

If you can walk away from the Downton Abbey of God's family, you were never really
in it

Responsibility – To carry your weight; To serve and sacrifice out of love and obedience

Joy – Not only due to our release from bondage, but our participation in the greatest
cause, for the greatest glory, in all the world

Rest – Like all good parents, God wants his children to *rest* in his goodness and grace

7 aspects of our adoption (**Summary**), that comes from our redemption, that was paid on
the cross; Can you say privileged? I think so

And even more so, b/c through Christ, we're also . . .

• **Indwelt (v6)**

*God sent forth his Son . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons. [6] And because you
are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son [the Holy Spirit] into our hearts, crying,
“Abba! Father!”*

Through Christ, we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit; Who not only *seals* our adoption

(Eph 1:13-14), but makes it *personal*; Taking up residence in our soul

It's about as personal and intimate as it gets

Not only that, but he gives expression to our hearts as we cry out to the Father

Sometimes like a little girl full of love and excitement when her Daddy comes home . . .

And sometimes like a desperate adult in need of reassurance or help

That's the idea of *Abba* – it's Aramaic for “Father,” and carries a sense of both joyful
endearment, and heartfelt longing

And the Holy Spirit utters it *for* us when we sometimes can't . . .

And gives us the words, when we often can; What a privilege

Through Christ we're indwelt, and last here, we're blessed; Through Christ we're . . .

• **Blessed (v7)**

Saying in v7 – *So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through
God.*

Through Christ we're blessed with an inheritance of life forever, and life to the full;

Now *and* future; The trust has already been abolished; We're heirs

No longer considered slaves, but sons; No longer treated as servants, but daughters

Which means we're also blessed with a *relationship*; We're blessed with an inheritance,
and we're blessed with a relationship

The kind of relationship *every* son or daughter yearns for with a loving father

One that's close b/c he lives within; One that's open b/c he knows our heart; One that's
honest b/c he's always true; One that's safe, b/c he'll never leave

Son-ship, implies relationship; Making us privileged of all people (**Summary**)
