

# **Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth**

*Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver*

 **828 7580 6094** ►

**Thursday October 15, 2026**

**Women of Excellence**

**Bible Study 7pm**

## **Memory Verse**

**Galatians 4:9 (NLT)** So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?

## **Children of God**

### **(Galatians 4:1–6)**

#### **POINT 1 - PREPARATION FOR SONSHIP: UNDER LAW**

**Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.**  
**(4:1–3) NLT**

In the ancient world the division between childhood and adulthood was much more definitive than it is in most societies today. Although ancient customs varied, there was usually a prescribed age when **a child**, especially a boy, would officially come of age and take on the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood. That Jewish ceremony was (and still is) called bar mitzvah.

Until the age of twelve, a Jewish boy was under the direct and absolute control of his father. But at the bar mitzvah, observed on the first Sabbath after his twelfth

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birthday, the boy's father would pray, "Blessed be thou O God who hath taken from me the responsibility of this boy," and the boy would pray, "O my God and God of my father, 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 to bear the responsibility of my actions toward Thee."

The illustration of a **child** infant, one without understanding, or a minor coming of age was therefore easily understood by both Jews and Gentiles to whom Paul wrote. They were well aware that **as long as the heir was a child, he** was under conditions that did **not differ at all from** those of **a slave**. As son and **heir** of all his father's possessions and duties, a boy was the potential and rightful **owner of everything** that belonged to his father.

While **a child**, he was **under guardians and managers until the date set by the father**. Families would assign certain capable and trusted slaves to act as **guardians** (a general term for a person who cared for underage boys) **and managers** (house stewards) over the child until he was grown. Along with his tutor. Those family slaves would have virtually full charge of the child's education, training, and welfare. The **child** could do nothing without their permission and go nowhere without their companionship. For all practical purposes, the **child** did **not differ at all from a slave** under whom he was being trained. Just as **a slave** had masters, so the child had masters.

But at the **date set by the father**, the child's status changed radically, no longer **a child** or like **a slave**, but a responsible adult and citizen.

In a similar way, **so also we, while we were** under the law as unbelieving **children, were held in bondage**. For an unbeliever there is potential salvation

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and fulfillment of the promise given to all the world through Abraham (Gen. 12:3). But unless and until he spiritually “comes of age” through saving trust in Jesus Christ, every unbeliever is a kind of slave and is imprisoned **under the elemental things of the world**.

**Elemental things** signify foundational orderliness. It was used, for instance, of the letters of the alphabet, the elemental building blocks of writing.

Paul does not specify what **the elemental things of the world** represent, and Bible scholars have offered many suggestions. Some hold that it refers to the demon spirits who rule the present **world** system. Others say it refers to stars and therefore to pagan systems of astrology. Still others believe it refers to the basic, **elemental things** of human religion; and that interpretation seems appropriate in this context, especially in light of the fact that in 4:9 the same phrase is connected with the ceremonial rituals of human religion.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (Gal. 4:1-3)

1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?
2. How does Paul compare heirs to slaves?
3. How does Galatians 4:1-3 explain our transition from law to grace?

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### POINT 2 - REALIZATION OF Sonship

<sup>4</sup> But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. <sup>5</sup> God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. <sup>6</sup> And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Galatians 4:4–6 (NLT)

#### ITS SOURCE

**But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (4:4–5) NASB**

The source of divine sonship is the true **Son**, Jesus Christ. Just as a human father in ancient times set the time of his son’s coming of age, so did **God** the Father set **the time** to send **forth His** incarnate **Son** to earth as man’s Redeemer. It was in **the fulness of the time** that Jesus Christ **came**, exactly as and when the Father had established.

When **God sent forth His Son**, He provided the guarantee that those believers and all others would become joint heirs with the **Son**. Those who under the law are no better than slaves (4:1) will **receive** full and complete **adoption as sons**.

**The fulness of time** refers to the completion of the period of preparation in God’s sovereign timetable of redemption. When the law had fully accomplished its purpose of showing man his utter sinfulness and inability to live up to God’s

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perfect standard of righteousness, God ushered in a new era of redemption. When He **sent forth His Son**, He provided the righteousness for man that man could not provide for himself.

When God's **time came**, He **sent forth His Son**. **Son** does not refer to Jesus' divine essence. He was not by nature eternally subordinate to **God** the Father but was equal to Him, yet He willingly submitted Himself to the Father during His incarnation, as an obedient son does to an earthly father. It seems that Jesus had not been eternally subject to the Father but was subject only during the time of His humanity. "Although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (**Phil. 2:6–7**). Jesus is eternally "the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power" (**Heb. 1:3**).

Some 900 years before Jesus was born God prophesied, "I will be a Father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me" (**Heb. 1:5; 2 Sam. 7:14**), indicating that in eternity past that, though there were always three persons in the Trinity, there were not yet the roles of Father and Son. Those designations apparently came into being only at the incarnation. In the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary, the angel Gabriel declared, "He will be great, and *will be called* the Son of the Most High; ... the holy offspring *shall be called* the Son of God" (**Luke 1:32, 35**). **Son** was a new name, never before applied to the second person of the Godhead except prophetically, as in Psalm 2:7, which is interpreted in Hebrews 1:5–6 as referring to the event of His incarnation. John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (**John 1:1**). Only when "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" as "the only begotten God" (**John 1:14, 18**) did He take on the role and function of **Son**.

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**Born of a woman** is not intended to be an exclusive statement emphasizing the absence of a man, and thus does not so much refer to Jesus' virgin birth, important as that great truth is, as to His complete humanity. He was fully man, **born of a woman** like all other men, yet He was fully God. Otherwise, He could not have been Savior of the world. He had to be fully God in order for His sacrifice to have the infinite worth necessary to atone for the sin of mankind. He also had to be fully man in order to represent mankind and take the penalty of sin upon Himself in man's behalf. It was man who sinned, who was under the curse, and who was condemned to render his life forfeit to God. Jesus therefore could not have substituted for sinful man on the cross had He not taken upon Himself "the likeness of men" (**Phil. 2:7**). He had to be God to have the power of Savior, and He had to be man to have the position of Substitute.

Jesus not only came to earth as a man but was **born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law**. As Paul explains in Romans, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us" (**Rom. 8:3–4**).

Like every other man, Jesus was **born under the Law**. Like every other Jew, He was **under** obligation to obey and be judged by conformity to God's written **Law** in the Old Testament; but unlike any other Jew, He satisfied the requirements of that law by living in perfect obedience to it. And because He lived in perfect obedience, He was able to **redeem** all other men **who were under the Law** but *not* obedient to it, provided they had saving faith in Him.

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**Redeem** means to buy out or buy back and was used of slaves whose freedom was purchased. Through payment of the required price, slaves were redeemed and became free men, and, more than that, they received **adoption as sons** (cf. Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5; 3:14–15). That completed their liberation.

**Adoption** refers to a man's giving the status of sonship to someone who is not his natural child. Because men are not naturally the children of God, they can become His **sons** only by divine **adoption**. In the Roman world **adoption** was an honored custom that gave special dignity and family membership to those who were not born into a family. Often a wealthy, childless man would adopt a young slave, who would trade his slavery for sonship, with all its privileges.

## **Discussion Questions (Gal. 4:4-6)**

- 1. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?**
- 2. Why does Paul emphasize that Jesus was 'born under the law' in Galatians 4:4 ?**
- 3. What is the significance of receiving adoption as sons in Galatians 4:5?**

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4. What is the theological significance of the Trinity in Galatians 4:4-6?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does Galatians 4:6 teach about the inward work of the Holy Spirit?

**Closing Prayer**