

## **From Slaves to Sons and Daughters**

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The Book of Galatians Series

Galatians 3:23-4:11

This evening [morning] I am going to plunge right into the passage that we will be looking at tonight because there is so much wonderful content that I am not going to follow my tradition format of trying to introduce the topic. I am going to allow the text to build the bridge to you. If ever there was a thrilling section of scripture, it is the one that we are going to encounter this evening as Paul describes the difference Jesus Christ makes in transforming us from slaves to sons and daughters. So let's read Galatians 3:23-4:9:

"Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are 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 a son and since you are a son, 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 principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?"

Now the apostle Paul begins by describing our former condition under the law. By the law we are talking about the Mosaic Law given to Moses in the Old Testament. That includes the 10 Commandments, but is not exhausted by the 10 Commandments. It includes all the other 613 laws and statutes and ordinances that God gave to the Jewish people. You will recall that the reason Paul is discussing the issue of the law with the Galatians is that the Galatian believers were new believers. Paul was a church planting missionary. He planted churches in the south Galatia region of the Roman Empire, which today is Southern Turkey. After he left these new churches, these new believers, to return to his home church, false teachers entered the church and said, "You know, guys, the apostle Paul gave you only half a message. He told you that you needed to trust in Christ for salvation and that is true. But in order to be saved,

you must add to the death of Christ on the cross obedience to the law given to Moses.” Simple trust in Christ is not enough they were saying. It is Christ plus something in order to be really saved and accepted before God. You must be circumcised in accordance with the Jewish ritual of circumcision given to Abraham. You Gentile believers also have to observe the Jewish holidays – the Passover and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and the Feasts of Tabernacles and all of that. In addition to being circumcised, observing all of the Jewish holidays, you also must follow the Jewish regulations about what foods to eat, clean and unclean foods.

And so Paul, throughout this letter, is forced to deal with the issue of the Jewish law and its relevance in the life of the Christian believer, whether a Jewish Christian, or a Gentile Christian. I want to underline this and then we are going to plunge right into the text. What I am going to say is as relevant to a Jew that comes to faith in Christ as it is to a Gentile. Jews may choose for pragmatic reasons, for the purpose of being a witness to their families or friends to continue the observance of certain laws. But the apostle Paul is clear that the law given to Moses has no abiding religious value for Jew or Gentile. It no longer is in place in terms of our acceptance with God.

And so, Paul tells us what it was like when we were under the law forced to obey the law. He says that. First of all, we were condemned. Let’s look back at verse 19 and recall the discussion from last week. The apostle Paul says, “What then was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions.” Until the seed to which the promise referred had come, the law was added because of transgressions, in order to reveal transgressions, to expose sin as sin. The problem of the Judaisers were that they were trying to prove themselves holy by that which proves us to be sinners. So many people think that the way they are going to get to heaven is by obeying the commands of God, thereby proving themselves to be good persons, worthy of heaven. The apostle Paul says they are using the law exactly opposite of what it was designed to do. The law was designed to show us that we are unworthy of heaven and that we need a savior. It wasn’t designed to be a ladder that we climb by our own efforts to get to heaven. It was designed to be a sledgehammer breaking us down, bringing us to earth, to cause us to call upon the Savior. The main work of the commandments of God is to expose sin, to be a light in the basement of our souls.

You know, it is easy to have a hidden cellar in a building that has been shut off for years, dark and damp with rats running through it, and old garbage. You think that everything is okay with the building and then you open the cellar door and flip the light on and see the rats scurrying. You say, “O my goodness, something is terribly wrong here.” That is the function of the law, to expose the sinfulness of sin. Paul says that it was added because of transgressions, to show them to be transgressions, departures from God’s law.

I said last week that the law was given to function as a thermometer. Sometimes you don’t know that you are sick until you stick a thermometer in your mouth. Then you say, “O my goodness. I really am sick. I am going to call in sick today. I have a fever. My temperature is 104.” Before that you just felt a bit

unwell. But after you took your temperature, you know that you are sick. There is an infection in your body. That is what the law was designed to do. It functions as a mirror showing us what we really look like.

Now the Judaisers were teaching that the law was designed to somehow add to the work of Christ, to boost our standing with God. The law was designed to show that we had no standing with God, that our present situation was unacceptable.

You might say, "Rich, does the law have any continuing purpose in this exposing function, this condemning function?"

I would say that the law has a continuing function in reducing people, exposing sin, so that we might be driven to Christ. Let me put it this way. There are many people who run to Christ and never meet Moses on the way. Those folks often, not always, but often will have a very shallow salvation experience. Let me explain what I mean. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a story about a farmer who goes out and scatters seed widely. He sowed seed the way we ought to be broadcasting the gospel. This farmer is sowing seeds. Some of it falls on the path. Some of it falls in rocky soil. Some of it falls on thorns. Some of it falls in good soil. And he describes a shallow conversion this way. It is like seed that falls in rocky soil, soil that is only 2 mm deep. It is a person who hears the word and receives it with joy, but since he has no roots, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

What is Jesus talking about regarding that shallow reception of the gospel? I think there are many people who are drawn to Jesus out of some need. Maybe they are sick and in the hospital. They realize that the doctors don't have the answers and it is time to turn to Christ. Maybe it is the person who is afraid of dying and they don't know where they are going to go, where they are going to end up and they turn to Christ. Maybe a person is going through divorce, life is falling apart, they are unhappy and they turn to Christ. Maybe a person has experienced a broken engagement and they realize they have needs that are unmet and they turn to Christ. Maybe the person is having problems with their children and their family is unmanageable and they turn to Christ. Maybe they have a habit that they can't break and they turn to Christ.

There are virtually no illegitimate reasons to get on the road to find Christ. There are a thousand doors in, thousands of reasons why you and I turn to Christ. But if we don't meet Moses somewhere on the road on our way to Christ, we often see a very shallow conversion.

What does a shallow conversion look like? I talk with believers all the time that say, "I don't know what the problem is with my friend, Karen, or my friend, Bill. They seemed really excited about Christ a few months ago. They were coming around. But I have called and called. I have invited them to small group and they came twice. I invited them to church but over the last month or two there is just excuse after excuse. They have to work. They are preparing for a test. They were really tired. There is a big project due at the office. I am pulling teeth. I am the one dragging them along. They are not internally motivated to follow Jesus out of something inside of them. I am the one putting the pressure on them. What is going on, Rich?"

I think that often what is going on is that they come to Christ and have not met Moses on the way. See, somewhere along the line we have to be struck by our own sinfulness. How do you explain the person who never gets it in gear, who drops out after awhile? I think the person got on the path for some reason, but along the way never met Moses. At some point along the way we ought to have our stuff exposed. We have to be reduced. We have to have a thermometer stuck in our mouths to say, 'You really are sick.' There is something in you that is terribly wrong, broken, twisted and infected. You are not the nice person you project out to the world that you want to believe you are. There is a terrible competitiveness in you or jealousy. There is this awful selfishness. You may be someone who uses God the way you use other people. Until we meet Moses, we may not fully turn to Christ as Savior. Not just the Savior from my illness, when I am laid up in the hospital. Not just savior from my loneliness when I have gone through a horrible broken relationship. Not some savior from a jerk of an ex-spouse or savior from an unmanageable kid, or savior of my broken heart. But savior from my most fundamental problem, my sin, my self-centeredness, and my corruption.

So, let me ask you a couple of questions. Have you met Moses on the way to Jesus? I am not asking you the reason you turned to Christ. I don't know if there is a bad reason to turn to Christ. I know we come for a thousand different reasons. But along the way, have you met Moses? Are you now not only turning to Jesus because of your broken heart or your initial problem, but are turning to Jesus because you have been shown your own sinfulness. Not the sinfulness of your ex-spouse, your stuff. Are you in touch with that? And when you get in touch with your stuff, or when someone points it out, do you sink into despair continually or do you say, "Hey, I am under the gospel now. I have hope. Christ Jesus has assumed responsibility for my change. All I need to do is turn to Him, depend on Him. He who began a good work in me promises in Phil 1:6 to bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

The law is designed to condemn. The law is designed to be a prison guard. Verse 23, "Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up, until faith should be revealed." What does it mean that the law is a prison guard? The law is designed to be like a prison where bad people are kept locked up, where they can't hurt others. Why do we have prisons? We have them to take people off the streets who are dangerous, to restrain them, to keep them hemmed in. That is what God did with the Jewish people. The world was running amuck, crazy. God decided to take a group of people and hem them in, restrain them, put them in prison, if you will, so that they couldn't worship idols and commit adultery freely, and couldn't go out and kill each other.

Do you know what the problem of prison is? The problem of prison is that the moment a person has the opportunity to escape, the moment that the jailer's back is turned or a window is left open or the prison term is over; very often a person immediately goes back to what they were doing before. They break out of jail and immediately rob another bank or car jack another car or rape another person or go back to drugs. You see the same thing in the life of the Jewish people in the Old Testament. Whenever they had the opportunity to escape from

the prison of the law, they did. The moment that there was any opportunity to commit idolatry, they were worshipping the sun, the moon, rocks, trees, and carved images.

What is the problem with prison? The problem is it doesn't change us inside. It just denies us the opportunity to do what we want to do and given the opportunity, will do the moment we escape. Paul is talking about the ineffectiveness of the law to really create change. Law just denies opportunity. But we are the same inside. It is just a straight jacket. The moment we get it off, we are back doing the same things. A lot of people own it. I want to change; what I need is more rules, more principles.

I tell you, friends, this idea of law being like a prison, but ineffectively producing holiness has so many implications for your child raising. If you are a parent, listen to me now. Lots of parents spend all kinds of time constructing fences, prison walls, for the kids. They don't know that is what they are doing, but by laying out all these rules, they are putting the kids in prison and denying them the opportunity to sin wildly. You can't hang out with those friends. You can't wear your hair like that. You can't wear those kinds of clothes. You can't go here or there. And many times a kid needs those kinds of rules or barriers to protect them. Many times these rules and fences are well intentioned. But what we often see is the moment a child turns 18 and moves out of the house, they just go crazy. I don't know why they are like this? They weren't like this when they were at home. But now that they are on their own, they are drinking and using drugs. They are sleeping with their girl friends or boyfriends. They are running wild. Just go into a freshman dormitory and you will know what I am talking about. I mean they used to call the Twin Towers at OSU, "Sodom and Gomorrah".

What happened? Why this explosion of sin? Is it just that there is more temptation? No, there is more opportunity. The person was raised by the law. But the principles of God's way of living were never internalized. It was all out here. All coming from the parents. But there was never this deep internalization of real Christian life that caused the child, when they were in secret and not being observed, to do the right thing. Parents, I think we need to think about this. As a practical matter, I think parents as we consider this whole business of law being like a prison, we need to focus on getting principles internalized in our children's hearts rather than external rule keeping.

How do I get something inside my kids? One of the things we need to do as parents is not focus so much on the rule, but the reason for the rule. Here is why mom and I feel so strongly about your relationship with this friend. Here is why we feel so strongly about your not participating in that sleep over or not going with someone at your age. What I am talking about, parents, is beginning to focus more of your attention on what is going on in your child's heart and not just what they look like or how late they stay up. What is going on in their hearts and their attitudes? And go after those things as opposed to just the externals.

And then in terms of internalizing a principle, there is an old saying regarding child raising that goes like this: Rules without relationship always leads to rebellion. If a child gets a rule [and Dads, this is aimed at me and you because

we are the chief offenders here], but if a child gets a rule but doesn't get relationship from us, doesn't get touch, doesn't get lots of communication, voice and doesn't get eye contact, I will tell you what will happen with that child. They will be hemmed in for a little while, as in a prison, but the moment they get the opportunity to rebel, if all they have received are rules without relationship [and Dads, I believe we are the chief offenders here] it is going to lead to rebellion. The law functioned as a prison.

The third thing Paul says about the law is that the law was a guardian. Verse 24, "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ." Literally, it reads until Christ came – lead us to Christ is a very poor translation. The law was put in charge, it was a guardian, and until Christ came so that we may be justified by faith, now that faith has come we are no longer under the supervision of the law. And then he uses the guardian illustration again in ch. 4:1-2, "Again, what I am saying is as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father."

Now in the ancient world, in wealthy patrician families, a father would often hire a guardian to discipline and supervise their children to make sure they were kept under, corrected. Why does Paul use the illustration of a guardian or trustee? Paul is trying to show the temporary nature of the Mosaic Law in the life of believers. He is trying to show that we are no longer under the Law of Moses for most purposes. He says it so many times here that it is amazing to me that anyone would ever get a different idea other than that the law was designed to be temporary. That the situation has changed and we are no longer under the law for most purposes. Look at verse 23, "Before faith came we were held prisoner by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed." He is giving us a time indication. Now that faith came, something else is going on. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ, it literally should read, until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. Do you get it?

Well, many times we don't get it. So Paul repeats himself in verse 2 of ch. 4. "He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father." Well, perhaps you still don't get it, so Paul repeats himself in verses 4-5, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law so that we might receive the full rights of sons." Something has changed. What has changed is this time element. You used to be under the law, but now Christ has come and you are no longer under it.

Here is what Paul was trying to say by this guardian illustration, what was called the pedagogue. When kids are young we blanket them with protection. Watch parents with little ones at a playground. We walk our children up the steps of the slide. Daddy is behind them walking them up the steps. Mom is at the bottom. okay, honey. We have you. You are not going to fall off. We walk them to the playground and hold their hands when they cross the street, so a car doesn't hit them. When kids are young, you keep the fence closed in the backyard. You are constantly looking out to see if they are okay and that they haven't put anything in their mouths. When kids are young, we are constantly

correcting them. No, this is how you sit at the table. This is how you hold a fork. This is when you say thank you and please. Stand up when you are greeting someone. There's lots of protection, lots of correction. That is the function of the law.

When kids get older, you give them more freedom, more room. You let out the rope. There is no longer protection holding them under. There comes a point when your child ought to be allowed to cross the street. And if you have an 18-year-old, you shouldn't keep holding their hand across the street. They are given more liberty. You allow your children to stray farther from the house. They no longer have to stay on the same block. They can go on the next street. Or they get in the car and go to the next state. And it is an appropriate process that we go through from protection and correction to freedom and release.

Here is what Paul is saying. It was appropriate for our spiritual infancy, but it is no longer appropriate now that we have come to maturity as children of God. Now that we are sons and Christ has come, we don't have to constantly be blanketed. You don't have to walk around with the constant sense of being corrected all the time by God. Don't do this and don't do that. And don't go here and don't do the other thing. God is not constantly slapping your hand as his child.

And you know, in a parent/child relationship when a parent doesn't permit that kind of release of a child to fuller liberty, to more decision making, to more freedom, to less correction, it really can distort the child's emotional health. Have you ever seen a parent or maybe experienced a parent who still treats their adult child like they treated them when they were ten? Why are you eating that, Joe? You shouldn't be eating that. It is just going to make you fat. Why are you spending your money here or there? Why are you buying those kinds of clothes? Why did you do that with your hair? You know, the parent who constantly corrects the adult child or the parent who constantly supervises the adult child.

Marlene and I were married very young. I was 19 and she had just turned 20. We were married for a few weeks when I came home one evening and Marlene was reading from our checkbook over the phone. She was saying, "Electric, \$14.10; phone bill, \$13.00; food, \$21.00..." I said, "Marlene, what are you doing?" She said, "Just a second. Barber, \$4.50..." I said, "Marlene, what are you doing?" She said, "Just a second..." I said, "Who are you talking to?" I was concerned that some fast talking con man had gotten my wife on the phone and she was giving our financial information. I couldn't understand why she would be reading our checkbook into the phone. I said, "Tell me who you are talking to." And so she put her hand over the phone and said, "My mother." I said, "You are reading our check book to your mother? Get off the phone, please. Get off the phone right now." And we had it out. Marlene had gotten used to her first year in college of her mother balancing her checkbook. And that slid over into the beginning days of our marriage. But I considered it such inappropriate behavior for a married couple that Marlene's parents would know what was going on with our finances that I just hit the roof. When adult children or married couples don't have that boundary, you see this unhealthy dependence and failure to leave their parents that the Bible speaks of.

All of this forms a backdrop for Paul's understanding of law and gospel. God treats us now as adult children. You are no longer under the thumb of the law. As a Christian believer you don't have to live with the sense of being hedged in, corrected for every thing – this sense of pressure on you from God because God doesn't treat his sons and daughters like babies. That was for a former age. We are in a totally different deal now.

And Paul says that we are no longer enslaved. Verse 3, "So also when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world." Verse 8, "When you did not know God you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods, vs. 9 but now that you know God – or rather are known by him – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? Verse 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! Verse 11 I fear for you that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."

Paul calls living under law, obeying God's commands as a way to get God to love you more, Paul says, "Observing all of the holidays as some obligation, that if you don't observe this holiday, God is somehow upset with you. If you don't worship at this particular moment, God is displeased with you. If you don't fast on this day, God is angry with you. God's favor will lift off your life." Paul calls all of that slavery to the basic principles of the world. Some translations say, "slavery under the elemental principles." The NIV translates, "the basic principles", verse 3. And in verse 9, "the weak and miserable principles." The Greek word here is *stoicheia*, which literally refers to demonic principalities and powers.

Paul is saying that behind legalism, there is a demonic power or principality that enslaves people. Note what he is saying in verse 8. He says, "Formerly, when you did not know God you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods." In other words, these Gentile Galatians, who were pagans in the past, they were enslaved to the demons behind their idols. They were under all these forces in the universe that keep people captive. And now that they have come to Christ, they should be released from slavery, but instead are going right back into slavery under the same sort of demons. Verse 9, "But now that you know God – or rather are known by him—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!"

They exchanged one set of demons for another set – the demon of idolatry for the demon of legalism. If you are interested in this whole subject of principalities and powers behind legalism, in fact the whole subject of spiritual warfare in the ancient world, let me make a book recommendation to you. Clinton Arnold, who is the world's leading expert on issues of the demonic, sorcery, divination in the ancient world – both in the Greek and Roman world as well as the Persian culture and Jewish culture. Clinton Arnold's book on the subject is called *The Powers of Darkness*.

But Paul is saying that behind legalism, legalistic churches, legalistic teaching, legalistic people, what is going on is domination by a demonic power. It is not just false teaching. It is not just erroneous ideas that we need to contend



with. There is a spiritual power behind legalism. I referred to that when I was teaching on Galatians 3:1 and Paul saying, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?" He is making that same point. Literally, it reads, "Who has cast an evil spell over you?" Legalism. People exchange one set of demons for another.

Have you ever met a reformed alcoholic who is now a legalist [self-righteous and judgmental]? They put away drink and are now living by a set of rules. That person is often no more in touch with the grace of God today or even a true Christian than when they were a roaring drunk. Just because you are no longer sinning in the way you used to sin doesn't mean that you have really grasped hold of grace or the good news of the gospel. You maybe enslaved to a whole new set of spirits.

And there is real spiritual bondage under legalism. You can see it every time you try to reason with legalists, a person who constantly feels like they are not accepted by God because of some sin they have sinned in the past, or because of one of their present failures. The person who, constantly lives with a sense of condemnation, even though they have turned to Christ for salvation. The person who feels that they must keep this set of rituals or laws in order to be really pleasing to God. The person who is constantly trying to prove their holiness. You can see the spiritual bondage every time you try to reason with someone like that. The argument doesn't get through. It is always, "Yes, but..." and we go over the same sin they committed 10 years ago. And they raise the same objections. "How do I know I haven't committed the unpardonable sin? How do I know that God has forgiven me? How do I know that I am in a state of grace?"

Very often with legalism, what you are dealing with is a demonic stronghold around the mind. The apostle Paul speaks about the problem of demonic strongholds in 2 Cor. 10 when he says, "Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Sometimes there is a demonic stronghold around the mind, which keeps out the invading presence of God's grace. I have seen this legalistic stronghold around people who have been raised in very traditional Roman Catholic settings. I have seen it in talking with people who have been raised in holiness churches and have received a lot of teaching from the holiness perspective. I have seen it in folks who have received a lot of teaching from the fundamentalist church and sometimes I have seen it with folks who have sat under distorted Calvinistic teaching. They hear the message of grace, but they can't receive it. And what needs to occur is the stronghold needs to be pulled down. I have seen this problem in people raised in perfectionistic homes where good was never good enough.

How do we pull down the strongholds? First of all, we need to call the teaching we received legalism, and therefore false. Anything that says to you that trust in Christ alone and turning to him as Savior and Lord is not enough is

false teaching. Anything that causes you to look at yourself more than Jesus, anything that calls into question the competence of Christ to save you is legalism. Any teaching that spends more time on what you must do than what Christ has done is legalism. And you have to put a big label over that teaching – false.

Now, very often if there has been a lot of legalistic teaching, this initial step is going to be hard for you to take because frankly, you will think, “O my, am I really allowed to call that false? I just don’t feel comfortable.” Of course, what I am saying is that not all of the teaching all the time in every way in the church is false. It may only be 5% of the teaching or 10% or a coloring, a film, that ran through the teaching. But at some point we need to come to the place of saying what I received there or in my legalistic family background or in my legalistic college or Christian education was false teaching – it was legalism. And recognizing it as a demonic stronghold over my life, after I label it as false, I must renounce my agreement with that false teaching. Lord, I have opened myself up and have come into agreement with this so that every time I hear it I say yes and amen. I now renounce that. I tear up my agreement with that. Sometimes it is good to have someone pray with you to break the power of that influence in your life.

I want to underline for you the symptoms of legalism that you may be under these powers because very often we deny it. We say, “Oh no. I understand the gospel and the church that I was in understood the gospel.” But there is an element there that still has you in bondage. And you need to see it. You need to understand the symptoms.

Certainly, one of the symptoms is a focus on externals. Jesus said to the Pharisees, “You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.” Philip Yancy in his wonderful book called, *What is so Amazing About Grace?* said that when he was growing up in his church they used to conduct an annual fundraising drive for foreign missions. From the pulpit the pastor would call out the names and the amounts of each pledge that came in. Mr. Jones, \$500.00. And listen to this, the Sanderson Family, \$2000.00 – praise the Lord. They all applauded and amen. The Sandersons beamed. He said as a child he craved that kind of public recognition, not to further the cause of foreign missions, but to get that approval and respect and acclaim. One time he hauled a big bag of pennies down front and never did he feel more righteous than when the pastor stopped the proceedings and commended him and prayed over his pennies. Yancy concludes it by saying, “I got my reward.”

False externals. That is why people give to the President’s fundraising so that they can sit next to him at some campaign dinner and sleep in the Lincoln bedroom. See, legalism is whenever your eye is not what is going on in your heart, but you are mostly concerned about what others see. You see legalism every time there is extremism in an approach to following Jesus. Of course, the Pharisees were experts on extremism. They were not to misuse the name of God, but instead of saying what that means is I never curse the name of God, I never use it as an expletive when I am upset. I never attached the name of God to my own silly thoughts; they actually stopped mentioning the name of God at all, even in prayer. And when they wrote the name of God, they dropped some

of the letters. Extremism. So even today when Jews write the name of God in English, they don't spell it G-O-D. They write G—D.

And you see extremism in the church's history, Christians outdoing the Pharisees. By the 4<sup>th</sup> century there were Christian monks who were living on a diet of bread, salt and water in order to prove their simple living before God. And so as not to be extravagant, one person had designed this tiny little side of a cave where he had to bend in half in order to climb in. That is what he lived in. One person lived on top of a pole for 37 years. People would wear thorns. I watch churches today pushing this kind of extremism that is the sign of legalism.

It is appropriate every so often to have all-night prayer when there is a particular issue in the church's life that has come to the surface that we need to present to God. We need a new season; the Lord is calling us into it, to have all-night prayer. But when all-night prayer is every week? It is appropriate every so often to call for a day, or season, of fasting. But when fasting is every week and the people in the church begin to believe that they are not fasting every single Wednesday that there is something wrong with their Christian lives, that is legalism.

And of course, symptomatic of all legalism is hypocrisy, where we honestly can't admit that there are significant problems in our lives or in our church. One of our vision statements as a church is to have real fellowship at the foot of the cross with each other. That is why I love the fact that we have life support groups here. We say we have real problems, but we are committed to heal our real problems rather than pretend that all of us are perfect and that none of us struggle with alcohol or sexuality or past abuse.

Legalism is awfully seductive, though. Why do you think that the Galatians were tempted back into it? And why do you think so many churches in America are so seduced by legalism and teach legalism?

Let me give you a few reasons, real quickly, and then we are going to move on to the positive side of becoming sons and daughters of God. One reason why there is such seductiveness in legalism is because it is easy.

You say, "Rich, it is hard. It is burdensome to keep these rules and fast every Wednesday."

I say, "Quite the contrary. It is really easy. You know exactly where you stand."

And if you are disciplined, you check the checklist and everything is okay. You pray from 7-8:00 every night at our prayer meeting. You are okay. You fast on Wednesday. You are okay. You give this amount. You are okay.

Following the Spirit is really hard because God is going to be addressing attitudes and heart issues and call you to heart changes that other people can't see. And not only do people like legalism because it is easy, but legalism appeals to our pride and competitiveness. Oh, we can deny all day long that we are proud, but you get around legalists and before too long they are going to be boasting about their accomplishments and holiness. And they will be telling you how long they pray. All in a sincere, "We are just trying to be an encouragement brother." People like this, to be one-step up on other people. It makes us feel secure.

Paul says, “Folks, God has swept all of this away in the gospel.” It is different administration now. You are no longer under the law. You are now sons and daughters of God. Ch. 4:4-5, “But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

I want to underline this little phrase, “When the time had fully come” or “in the fullness of time” and make a couple of parenthetical remarks because the coming of Christ was ordained by God to occur at the right moment of history so that the gospel could spread most effectively. It was in the fullness of time that God sent his son. Why was it such a perfect time for the Son of God to enter the world? Because when Jesus came, the entire Mediterranean world from Spain to Persia and then all the way across North Africa was under the *Pax Romana* – Roman Peace. Had Jesus been born a ½ century earlier, it is very hard to believe that the gospel would have spread very well at all. Civil Wars, internal strife, and lots of armies fighting each other racked ½ a century earlier Rome. And all of this wasn’t dealt with until 31 BC and the Battle of Actium, which Octavius finally defeated Marc Antony and Antony’s mistress, Cleopatra. When Christ came the world was at peace. And the whole Roman Empire was garrisoned about by Roman armies.

Not only was there a great peace, but also the Romans built a road system that stretched throughout the Empire so that travel was very easy. It was never as easy to travel in the Roman Empire until the mid-1800’s. You could travel anywhere without a passport.

And not only was there a great road system and peace and you could travel easily with no passport, but the entire Roman world spoke the same language – Greek. So a missionary didn’t have to go to language school for four years in order to bring the gospel to some other nation. The whole Roman world spoke the same language – Greek.

The philosophers had thoroughly discredited all the gods in the Roman Empire. The point is that it was just at the right moment that Jesus came into the world. God planned it perfectly so that the gospel would spread. As I meditated on this over the last few days it struck me, friends, that we may be headed for just such a moment again after 20 centuries. Transportation makes it possible to get anywhere in the world quickly and easily. The spread of the English language is so awesome that in many, many countries people are adopting English as a second language. Of course, communication now is easier than ever with the Internet. The United States has armies all over the world garrisoned everywhere. Many countries are doing away with passports. In Europe you can travel across Europe without having to check with a border guard if you are part of the European Union. I think we are going to see more and more of that in the next 10 years. We may be living in the moment before the return of Christ.

But what is it that changed our status from being under the law? How did it come about that we would be called sons and daughters of God? Well, in verse 4 we read that God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law. Redemption takes place through Christ’s curse-bearing death.

And what Paul is emphasizing here is Christ's qualification to redeem. Redeem means to purchase out of slavery. We are no longer enslaved; we are set free. Christ is qualified to set us free because He was God's son. We read also that He was born of a human mother so that He was human as well as divine. He is the only God-man. And he is not only the God-man; he was born under the law, which is of a Jewish mother, into a Jewish nation, subject to the Jewish law. So throughout his life he submitted himself to the requirements of the law. He came under the law and succeeded in obeying the law, where everyone else had failed. Everyone else failed to obey the righteous requirements of the law, but Christ succeeded.

And so because of His divinity, because of His humanity and because of His righteousness, Christ was uniquely qualified to be our Redeemer. If He hadn't been God, He couldn't make us the sons of God. If He hadn't been man, He couldn't be our substitute. If He hadn't been righteous, he couldn't have taken the curse of the law and merit salvation for us. We become [sons and daughters] because of His redemption.

We become sons [and daughters] because of Christ's indwelling. Verse 6, "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out 'Abba Father'". God sent His son into the world to redeem us, and God sends his Spirit into our hearts to change us. He sent His Son so that we might have the status of being sons, but He sends His Spirit so that we might have the experience of being sons and daughters.

So many people have the status. They understand, "O yeah, my standing with God is okay," but Paul is talking about a deeper kind of salvation. The experience inside of knowing that you know that you are a child of God and that God's fatherly affection is on your life.

And of course, all of this must be received by faith. It is not the whole world that are children of God. It is not just by virtue of being created. You look out and you say as many liberal churches do, "Oh, we are all children of God. Every single American, everyone around the world is a child of God." The Bible never calls God our Father or us children of God except that we place our faith in Jesus Christ. Note verse 26, I want you to underline this. Ch. 3, it says, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." You don't become a son or daughter of God until you place your faith in Christ Jesus. You are not born a child of God. You are not a child of God by virtue of Christ's death or His indwelling until you place your faith in Him. It is not an automatic.

You must choose to trust in Christ. You must rest upon Him and His death on the cross as the full payment for your sins. And so, what has changed now that we are sons and daughters? We are no longer condemned. We say, "God accepts me. As my father, He accepts me." And you know, friend, you don't have to keep trying to gain God's acceptance. There is nothing you can do to make God love you or accept you any more than He does right now. And nothing that you will ever do will make God to not accept you and reject you, if you have trusted in Christ. You are a son, a daughter.

Not only that, but you have moved from being in prison to being changed. You are no longer in the status of, given the opportunity, I am going to go hog-

wild on sin, God's indwelling presence in your life means that God is taking responsibility to internally change you. Listen. God did not just save you for the purpose of heaven. But God loves you so much that He has assumed the responsibility to change you right now. He has come into your life not to imprison you so that you say, "Oh, but I want to sin, I want to sin, I want to sin and God will not let me." Being a child of God means that God's coming in so that you say, "I don't want to sin. My desire is different. I have new ambitions. I have new dreams. I have a new goal in life. I am seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Being a child of God means that you have moved from being under a custodian to being entrusted with a calling. Instead of being treated like a baby, because you are a son or daughter of God, you are a real player on God's team. You don't have to sit around saying, "I am just a stupid little kid. I don't have any place in the kingdom. Who am I?" God says, "You are my son. You are my daughter. You have a real place in my Kingdom." You can be confident that if you are a son or daughter God has a calling on your life and he trusts you with a calling.

And because you are a son or a daughter you are no longer a slave, you are free. Freed from constantly having to measure your spirituality. Free from feeling like God is always trying to correct you. Free from God always slapping your hands. Free from focusing on externals.

And Paul tells us that we can make three affirmations as sons and daughters of God. Here are these three affirmations out of verses 26-28 in chapter 3, "You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all of you who were baptized into Jesus Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free man, male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

You can say, "Because I am a son or a daughter, I am united with God's people. There is no distinction. It doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor. It doesn't matter if you have a degree or don't. It doesn't matter what your religious background was. Because of your faith in Jesus Christ, God now treats us without distinction.

I am united with God's purpose. I am united with God's people.

Conclusion.