



Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

## ***FREEDOM IN CHRIST***

**Galatians 4:1-31**

Inductive Discovery Lesson 5

Despite his tough language, Paul understood that his friends in Galatia thought they were doing the right thing. But they fell in with the wrong crowd; men who claimed to be more concerned for their spiritual growth than Paul. Apparently they were pretty convincing, since Paul was being treated like the troublemaker. Paul let his feelings surface as he recalled the early days of their friendship. *Have I now become your enemy because I continue to tell you the truth?* In spite of the tension, Paul assured the Galatians of his own genuine concern for them. He loved them enough to point out their inconsistencies and risk offense if only it would bring them to their senses.

### **Background**

At the time Galatians was written, the early church was still experiencing growth pains. As the gospel spread and more Gentiles came to faith, the relationship between Jewish and Gentile converts had to be sorted out.

What defined a Christian? For Jews, the Law as a way of life was what separated them from the world and identified them as God's people. From the days of Moses and by God's command, Gentiles who desired to live among God's people were obliged to live by the Law. It is understandable, then, that many Jewish believers carried this same opinion into the early church. But the legalists carried it too far, making circumcision the litmus test for salvation (Acts 15:1). The message they sent to Gentile converts was loud and clear: you won't be accepted into fellowship as a true Christian unless you submit yourself to Mosaic Law.

The legalists may have believed they were protecting the church from slipping into lax moral and religious standards, but Paul saw their dangerous teaching for what it was and adamantly objected. If Gentiles were compelled to live like Jews, the gospel of grace would have been diluted. Fledgling believers (Jew and Gentile alike) would get bogged down in rules and regulations and the saving work of Jesus Christ would not be seen as sufficient.

For Paul, a devoutly Jewish man *saved by grace* and entrusted with taking the gospel to the Gentiles, this was no minor disagreement—it was a hill to die on. And not just for his friends in Galatia. The future of the church and true Christian faith was on the line.

## **Working Text for Galatians 4:1-31**

English Standard Version (ESV)

**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. **8** Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. **9** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? **10** You observe days and months and seasons and years! **11** I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

**12** Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. **13** You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, **14** and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. **15** What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. **16** Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? **17** They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. **18** It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, **19** my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! **20** I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

**21** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. **23** But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. **24** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. **25** Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **26** But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. **27** For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." **28** Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. **29** But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. **30** But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." **31** So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.





## Key Words and Phrases

Key words and phrases help us understand the main point the writer wants to make. How do we recognize key words and phrases? Here are some simple things to look for.

- When you see a word or phrase repeated, you can be sure Paul is using it to make his point.
- If you are unfamiliar with a word or its meaning, it becomes a key word *for you*. Take time to learn the definition so you will understand how it is being used in the sentence.

List any key words and phrases you found in Galatians 4:1-31.

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Write the definition of the following words or phrases. Use a regular dictionary or a concordance with a Greek Dictionary if you have one.

“**slave**” (vs.1,7) \_\_\_\_\_

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“**son**” (vs.5,6,7) \_\_\_\_\_

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“**heir**” (vs.1,7) \_\_\_\_\_

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**INTERPRETATION — *What does it mean?***

**Look for a spiritual lesson.** Be careful not to read into the Bible an idea that is not there. Examine each verse in light of the verses around it. To help you find a spiritual lesson, ask questions such as: “Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid?” **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

**APPLICATION — *How does it apply to me?***

We don’t study the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to do something with what we have learned. Ask yourself: Is this a new insight for me, or does it reinforce what I already know? What does it challenge me to do? Does it point out error in my attitude or actions? What changes does it require? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

**Galatians 4:1-11**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Galatians 4:12-20**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Galatians 4:21-31**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Summary**

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the passage is about. \_\_\_\_\_

Give a title to the chapter that will help you personally to remember it.



**Take a Closer Look**

**Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.  
Galatians 4:6-7 NAS**

***Memorize God’s Word***

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize from and re-write the verse here.

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***Meditate on God’s Word***

**Look up.** What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

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**Look around.** What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

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**Look within.** What does this verse teach you about yourself?

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**Look ahead.** Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

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**Look alive!** Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

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## ***Make God's Word Your Prayer***

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.

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## **Something to Think About . . .**

The Spirit that dwells in you, oh child of God, is none less than the same Spirit that was in Christ. He teaches us to know God's father-love, and to respond with childlike love and obedience.

- Andrew Murray<sup>1</sup>

## **God's Word Bearing Fruit**

For you, personally, what has been the most important lesson from this study?  
How will you put what God has shown you into practice?

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Murray, *God's Best Secrets*

**Message Notes:**

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