



Children not slaves based on Galatians 4

Consider this little illustration 'Perched on a tree branch, two birds were observing passers-by rushing from one place to another. Looking at their faces, one bird asked the other, 'why is man so full of worries and cares?' The other bird answered, 'Maybe they don't have a heavenly Father like we do.'

Matthew 6:26

On the sermon of the mount, Jesus said, 'Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?'

In the same way that God feeds the birds that do not go through the sow-then-reap-then-gather system of the world, He wants to and will do much more for you! Your heavenly Father wants you to know the generosity of His heart toward you...The book of Galatians encourages to know the benefits and freedom of this relationship with God rather than us earnestly striving.

The last chapter set out the importance of living by God's promises and not by the law – 'So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?' *Galatians 3:5*

Similarly, to the church in Corinth, Paul wrote, 'The letter kills but the Spirit gives life' 2 *Corinthians 3:6*. Paul doesn't want us to go back to a life of 'I ought to' under the law but instead to live in the grace of God:

But when you are brought into the full freedom of the Spirit of grace, you will no longer be living under the domination of the law, but soaring above it! *Galatians 5:18*. The giving of the law in the Old Testament is paralleled with the giving of the Spirit in the New Testament. The law led to death, but the Spirit brought life.

Gift of the Spirit	Gift of the Law
Acts Chapter 2	Exodus Chapter 19
50 days after Jesus' crucifixion (Passover)	50 days after Passover
3000 saved (Acts 2:41)	3000 died (Ex 32:28)
Life	Death

In *Galatians 4*, Paul illustrates the two paths with the story of Hagar and Sarah (*Genesis 17-21*). Abraham and Sarah were promised a son but after waiting some time Sarah suggested their servant Hagar sleep with Abraham. She gave birth to Ishmael and it was years later that Sarah would give birth to Isaac. Paul says, 'Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, the son of the slave girl, was a child of the natural realm. But Isaac, the son of the freewoman, was born supernaturally by the Spirit—a child of the promise of God! ...We're not the children of the slave woman; we're the supernatural sons of the freewoman—sons of grace!'

The story points us to not force the hand of God but to hold on to his promises and believe in his grace.

A second story that illustrates the two paths is the Prodigal Son story in *Luke Chapter 15*. In fact, both sons are lost – one having squandered his father's wealth and the other not enjoying being a son in the family instead the older son says, 'All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders' (verse 29). Living as a slave and trying to please his father, he was also lost and didn't know he was a son.

The culmination of *Galatians chapter 4* is that we should live free and not return to a life in the law. Chapter 5 starts with 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery' or in the Passion Translation, 'Let me be clear, the Anointed One has set us free—not partially, but completely and wonderfully free! We must always cherish this truth and stubbornly refuse to go back into the bondage of our past.'

One story of the great escapologist, Harry Houdini is that he was bound and locked in a prison cell claiming he could escape from anything. Releasing himself from handcuffs and chains, he struggled to pick the lock of the cell door. He tried and tried and eventually kicked the door only for it to swing open. Houdini realised he'd been trying to pick a lock that was already unlocked – the prison guards had failed to lock the door in all the excitement of the event. The story illustrates how we have been set free through the full payment for our sins, but how we can often still struggle to be free – even though the door is already open!

Galatians 4:6-7 then makes it clear that we'll know we are free when we know that we are God's children. 'And so that we would know for sure that we are his true children, God released the Spirit of Sonship into our hearts—moving us to cry out intimately, "My Father! You're our true Father! 'Now we're no longer living like slaves under the law, but we enjoy being God's very own sons and daughters! And because we're his, we can access everything our Father has—for we are heirs of God through Jesus, the Messiah!'

The key message is that we are the children of God not slaves. As emphasised in *2 Corinthians 6:19* 'And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'

For the sake of the world, let's carry the presence of God into the world knowing we are his children, free from being slaves under the law.

Questions to consider:

1. Do we trust God for his provision for us just as he cares for the birds of the air?
2. What promises of God are you holding on to?
3. Paul uses the phrase, 'soaring above the domination of the law', how do you think we do this in our everyday lives?
4. Take time to acknowledge that God is your father and has made you his child.