

## Galatians 4

Polar Opposites: Plus and Minus, Night and Day, Black and White, Light and Darkness, Win or Lose, Right and Wrong, Life and Death, Heaven and Hell.

- I. A Legal Illustration of Grace vs. Law 4:1-7
- II. A Personal Appeal to Remain in God's Grace 4:8-20
- III. A Biblical Illustration of Grace vs. Law 4:21-31

**Grace and Law should be treated as Polar Opposites; it's vital that we see this difference for what it is.**

- I. A Legal Illustration of Grace vs. Law 4:1-7
- 4:1-2 While they are children, there is not much difference between a son and a slave. After a certain age, however, the difference becomes obvious.
- 4:3 **in bondage under the elements of the world** The "elements" are the basics, the ABCs or elementary spiritual things. In Paul's case, as a Jew, he would have been under the authority of the law. In the case of the Galatians, they would have been in bondage to pagan deities, with all the superstition that went with it.
- 4:4-5 Christ came forth **at the fullness of time** – at just the right moment in history – to redeem the human race, starting with those under the law.  
  
We have now received **the adoption as sons**. We are not slaves, but sons, because God has made us a part of His family.
- 4:6-7 As sons and heirs we have a right to the inheritance, beginning with the Holy Spirit.  
  
**Abba** is the Aramaic word for "Father." It's the word the child would say when calling out to him, maybe something like our "Daddy!" Mark records Jesus using this term as He prayed.

**Mark 14:36 NKJV** *And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*

Notice the work of the Trinity in this whole business of salvation. The Father sends the Son into the world to redeem us. Then, once we believe, He sends forth the Spirit into our hearts to bear witness that we are saved and belong to Him.

**Application:** Grace allows us to accept a position as children of God and heirs of God's estate. We don't have to feel like slaves in God's house because we are part of the family. We belong there. All that is His is ours. We're just waiting to receive our complete inheritance.

- The difference between Grace and Law is like the difference between being a slave and a son.
  - The slave can live in the house, but always feels like he is under orders to do this or that – because he is. The house or inheritance never belongs to him. He works there, but he will never become the owner.

- The son, when he gets to maturity, takes ownership. When we are in Christ, we please the Father out of a sense of responsibility and respect, but perhaps mostly out of love – which is really a response to His love for us. We understand that all of the Father’s riches actually belong to us as His heirs. A slave will never have that same level of motivation.
- Note this key point: The person under law and the person living by grace may be hard to tell apart at first – just like the slave and the son. The difference only becomes obvious when they come to maturity. At that point the difference between the bondage of law and the freedom of grace will be clear.
- The person under the law only feels inwardly more defeated as his or her inability to meet the law’s high standards becomes clearer over time. This person may even become bitter or judgmental of others in the process. Pharisees and hypocrites are nurtured in an environment of law.
- The person under grace experiences more freedom, more joy and more blessing all within a life of greater obedience. Our lives take on a greater sense of purpose and direction. The Spirit-filled believer is nurtured in an environment of grace.

**Grace and Law should be treated as Polar Opposites; it’s vital that we see this difference for what it is.**

II. A Personal Appeal to Remain in God’s Grace 4:8-20

4:8 Most of the Galatians started out worshiping idols.

4:9 By embracing the law, the Galatians are taking a step backward, comparable to going back to their pagan idolatry. God gave the law to the Jews intending it to lead them to Christ. If the Galatians already have Christ, they have nothing to gain by embracing the Jewish law.

4:10-11 The days and months and seasons and years were all part of the religious structures of the law. They were part of Israel’s national identity. Not only are they unnecessary in Christ, by beginning to celebrate special days, Paul is worried that the Galatians are missing the point.

- As Christians we are free to celebrate various holidays, but none are mandated in Scripture. It’s a side issue, a secondary concern. It’s not a difference of right and wrong.

4:12-16 The Galatians initially received the gospel from Paul. Why are they changing their attitude toward him and his message now?

4:17 The false teachers were flattering the Galatians to try to gain their favor. They only wanted to form an elitist group of law-keepers who would then see themselves as the “real Christians”. This was all really part of a big deception to get the Galatians over into the Judaizers’ camp.

- **Application:** As children and heirs we need to be careful that we don’t go back into bondage. Rather than growing in grace, a Christian can drift into a legal relationship with God, in which outward forms or legal requirements become the main thing. We need to keep in mind that legalism and works can be a trap designed to tie us up and keep us from enjoying a rich, free and real relationship with God in Christ.

**Grace and Law should be treated as Polar Opposites; it's vital that we see this difference for what it is.**

III. A Biblical Illustration of Grace vs. Law 4:21-31

4:21-23 When Abraham was about 75 years old, God promised him a son with Sarah. It took 25 years for Isaac to be born. After about 12 years of waiting, Abraham now 87 and Sarah 77, they became impatient. In those days, if a family had slaves or “bondservants”, it was customary for men to have children with their women slaves. So, Sarah encouraged Abraham to try to have a son with Hagar, her servant. You can read the story in Genesis 16. Hagar gave birth to a son named Ishmael, who is called in 4:23 the son born according to the flesh. Later, miraculously, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, when they were 100 and 90 years old, respectively.

4:24-27 Those who are trying to please God by means of the law are comparable to Ishmael, the son born according to the flesh. Their “good works” are works of the flesh.

4:28 Those who come to God in faith are children of promise, like Isaac. Their good works are a result of God’s grace.

4:29-30 After Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, she began to look down on Sarah her mistress, treating her with contempt because she gave Abraham a son while Sarah didn’t. Then Ishmael apparently didn’t like Isaac once he came on the scene and treated him badly. Sarah, therefore, demanded that Abraham throw Ishmael and Hagar out of the house. You can read about this in Genesis 21.

4:31 We are children of promise, like Isaac, if we have trusted in Christ by faith and are no longer trying to impress God with our ability to keep the law. We are free from all bondage to the law.

Contrasts in Paul’s Allegory: Galatians 4:21-31		
	Ishmael	Isaac
1	Mother was a slave woman: Hagar	Mother was a free woman: Sarah
2	Born according to flesh	Born through promise
3	Born into slavery	Born into freedom
4	Present Jerusalem – earthly	Jerusalem above – heavenly
5	Old Covenant – representing the law	New Covenant – transcending the law
6	Persecuted the child of promise	Persecuted by the child of the flesh
7	Cast out with no share in the inheritance	The heir who receives the inheritance

- **Application:** Law and grace are not workable alternatives that allow us to choose between the two. The difference between law and grace is the difference between freedom and slavery. Worse yet, those who chose slavery to the law *will not* share in Christ’s inheritance in the end. Those who choose slavery to the law will be cast out.

- It is vital that we grasp this. Ishmael could not share in Isaac's inheritance. If we want a relationship with God that is based on law or works instead of grace, we will lose. We will be cast out. The two cannot function together.

**Grace and Law should be treated as Polar Opposites; it's vital that we see this difference for what it is.**

#### **Conclusions:**

- Here is the list we gave at the beginning:
  - Plus and Minus, Night and Day, Black and White, Light and Darkness, Win or Lose, Right and Wrong, Life and Death, Heaven and Hell.
  - Now let's add one to it: Law and Grace
- God wants to relate to us as His children not as His slaves.
  - Remember the difference: The person under law and the person living by grace may be hard to tell apart at first – just like the slave and the son. The difference only becomes obvious when they come to maturity. At that point the difference between the bondage of law and the freedom of grace will be clear.
  - The person under the law only feels inwardly more defeated as his or her inability to meet the law's high standards becomes clearer over time. This person may even become bitter or judgmental of others in the process. Pharisees and hypocrites are nurtured in an environment of law.
  - The person under grace experiences more freedom, more joy and more blessing all within a life of greater obedience. When God is our Father and not merely our Master, our lives take on a greater sense of purpose and direction. Love becomes our primary motivation. The Spirit-filled believer is nurtured and empowered in an environment of grace.

**Grace and Law should be treated as Polar Opposites; it's vital that we see this difference for what it is.**