

Galatians 4:4

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[0 : 00] We shall turn again to Galatians chapter 4, and we shall read at verse 4, Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4.

Amen.

As you can see at once, this is one of Paul's great theological statements.

He is bringing before us very clearly his own vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the passage is one of immense theological depth and complexity.

And yet it is a passage given to us by the apostle for an intensely practical purpose.

[1 : 21] The church at Galatia was plagued by teachers and members who wanted to go back to the bondage of their pre-Christian state.

They wanted, as we shall see, to return to their old slavery and to their old immaturity and spiritual childhood.

They desired, as the apostle in verse 9, desired again to be in bondage. They wanted to renounce their freedom, and they wanted also to bind in the freedom of other Christians.

And Paul's answer to this challenge to freedom is to draw their attention to Christ, to what he was, and to what he did.

His broad answer is that we have no right to go back to our bondage. Because God's son came to redeem us from bondage.

[2 : 32] And therefore, says the apostle, to renounce our freedom is to prove unfaithful to Christ's redemption.

It is to show contempt for Christ's redemption. That for those two perspectives, the theological and the practical, those two coalesce in the apostle's thought.

The affirmation that God sent forth the Son is given by the apostle because it is the only answer to this imminent threat to the freedom of the church in Galatia.

And I want for a moment tonight to explore Paul's teaching here. I want first of all to look at the doctrine which we have in verse 4.

And then go on to look at the way that Paul applies it in practical detail. The doctrine is on the face of it then plain enough.

[3 : 49] God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law. It is a doctrine about Christ himself.

And it tells us three things with regard to the Savior. It tells us, first of all, that he is God's Son.

You will notice that it isn't that he was God's Son after he came. It isn't that in his humanness and creaturehood he is God's Son.

But he is sent forth as one who from eternity is God's Son. And one who is God's Son possesses and enjoys the whole nature of God.

Just as in a human Son there is the whole nature of his Father. So in the Divine Son there is the whole nature of his Father.

[5 : 01] So that Jesus Christ is of one and the same substance with God the Father. As God's Son there is in him all the fullness of the Godhead.

As God's Son there is in him all the form of God. All the essence of God. All that constitutes Godhead.

All that is part of the definition of Godhead. Is found in Jesus Christ. Now we come over it time and again because it is the fundamental doctrine of the New Testament.

This affirmation of the supreme, absolute and unqualified deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's form.

He is God's image. He is God's likeness. He is God's glory. We can make no distinction between God and Christ.

[6 : 14] Christ is God. Beyond that we would say that we cannot understand God apart from Christ.

Because Christ is the definition of God. Christ is the meaning of God. So that we understand God by looking at Christ humbling himself.

We understand God by seeing Christ bearing sin. Christ crucified between two thieves. Christ weeping over the sins and sorrows of mankind.

God sent forth one who was his own son. Christ is the meaning of God. Christ is the meaning of God. Not only a great teacher about God. Not only a great and magnificent understanding human being.

But one who comes from the outside. One who originally is not man at all. Is not created at all.

[7 : 30] Is not human at all. But is God's son. And who was God's son. From eternity. Was with God.

Was secure in the blessedness of God. Was absolutely invulnerable. Beyond the possibility. Of pain.

Or poverty. Of tears. Or heartbreak. Beyond the reach of temptation. Beyond the reach of suffering. Beyond the reach of human hostility.

Beyond all contact with sin. But simply blessed. And all the blessedness of God. He was rich. He was with God.

He was face to face with God. He was in the bosom of God. He was the object. Of everlasting and unremitting. Angelic adoration.

[8 : 28] That's what he was. And Paul in the New Testament. Want us constantly to bear that in mind. That the great backdrop.

To Bethlehem. The great backdrop. To the stables. The great backdrop. To Gethsemane. And to Calvary. And the spitting.

And the dereliction. The great backdrop. It's the eternal deity of Christ. The backdrop is the uninterrupted.

Blessedness and glory. That were his. As the son of God. God sent forth. One. Who was his own son.

And with. All our impatience. With theology. There is no way. That the gospel story. Can move us. Unless we see.

[9 : 31] That. The child in the manger. Is one. Who in himself. Is God. It cannot move us. Except. Us.

We remember. That. The one. Before whom. The shepherds fall. That one. Is. The Lord of all. The one.

The one who left. The courts. Of everlasting day. And took with us. A darksome house. Of mortal clay.

And that's where. Paul's perspective begins. With the deity of Christ. Those of you. Of. Delved into any modern. Christology. Will know.

That it's great. Insistence is. That you must think. About Christ. From below. Upwards. You begin. We are told. With the humanity. Of the savior.

[10 : 27] And then you work. Up. Possibly. To the truth. Of his divinity. But the whole. Approach. Of the new testament. Is the exact reverse.

The new testament. Begins. With the son of God. It begins. In John's gospel. With the word. Of God. It begins. In Matthew's gospel.

With the manual. God with us. It begins. With the deity. Of Christ. And that is where. I want us to begin. It seems to me. One of the greatest perils.

That is facing us. Us evangelicals. And as a free church. Is the temptation. To major. On our own distinctives. The terrible peril.

That we shall. Place those things. That distinguish. Our own tradition. In the forefront. Of our message. And the desperate.

[11 : 24] And urgent need. For those who lead the church. To call it back. Insistently. And emphatically. To Christ. The church. Must live. Not under the shadow.

Of sabbatarianism. Or under the shadow. Of purity. Of worship. Or in the shadow. Of the establishment principle. Or even in the shadow.

Of the five points. Of Calvinism. The church. Must live. And flourish. And survive. In the shadow. Of Calvary. It must live. In the shadow. Of the incarnation.

The church's life. Must be a response. To the self-abasement. Of God. And that is. Why therefore. It is this great doctrine.

Of the deity. Of the Lord. Which more than any other doctrine. Must be prominent. In our pulpits. If we are to command. The blessing of God. And know his power.

[12 : 20] In our own souls. Collectively. And individually. This is the citadel. This is the core. Of the gospel. This thing. Which before God.

Yes. We share. With the whole of Christendom. It is no distinctive. Of our denomination. And yet it is. So frequently.

Insisted upon. In the New Testament. It is so. Radical. And so fundamental. That this is where we must live. Close. To Bethlehem. We must live.

In constant intercourse. And interaction. With the deity. Of the Lord. He was. His son. And then we are told.

That he was made of a woman. What a marvelous statement that is. There is a little. Unnoticed clause. In our confession.

[13 : 17] That reminds us. That Christ was conceived. In the womb of the Virgin Mary. Of her substance. It took us humanness.

From the substance. Of his mother. It is the great. Marvel. Of the umbilical cord. That bound.

The son of God. To Mary. Something we must never lose sight of. That his humanness.

Is rooted in her humanness. In her bloodstream. And that for a critical point. Period in his life. It is her blood.

That courses through his veins. And it is. Upon her humanness. That his humanness. Depends.

[14 : 15] For its survival. So that he is rooted. In her bloodstream. He is. He is. The heir. Of her genetic inheritance. And so that with us. He shares human physicalness. And shares human psychology. So that she. His mother. Contributes to him. All that any human mother. Contributed. Or contributes. To her child. That. Umbilical cord. Means that his body. Is the same as our body. That umbilical cord. Means. That his psychology. Is the same as our psychology.

[15 : 16] That umbilical cord. Means. That he with her. And in her. Is vulnerable. To all the mysteries. Of this life. He is liable. To every human experience. And indeed goes on. In his adult life. To encounter. All the. Tribulations. That we as human beings. Are heir to. He is exposed. To all our sufferings. To all our temptations. Exposed to all our pains. And to all our woes. Exposed. To humaneness. In all its. Aggravated. Afflictions. He is made. Of a woman. With her. In the valley.

[16 : 15] Of the shadow of death. And there. Only. With. His human resources. With the same. Kind of resources. As we have. The same kind of physique. The same kind of psychology. The same kind of spiritual resources. As we ourselves have. And I will repeat again. That here is something. That we must do justice to. Sometimes we imagine that. To safeguard. The deity of the Lord. We have to minimize. The humanness. Of the Lord. And yet you see how different. The New Testament's perspectives are. To the New Testament. The greatest thing about Christ. Is. That he became a man. That he made himself. Poor. That he took.

[17 : 13] A servant's fall. That is the thrilling thing. That is the enthralling thing. That is the grandeur. Of Christ. That is the glory. Of God. The glory. Of his grace. And it seems to me. Tonight. As I observe. Human suffering. It seems. That maybe. As I recall. Moments. Which were close. To being unbearable. And as I contemplate. In human weakness. The possibility. That there may one day. Be other moments. Close to being unbearable too. It seems to me. That nothing is more important. Than the compassion. Of God. In Christ. The certain assurance. That God understands. That he understands.

[18 : 14] Not as a God. Afar off. Understands. Not as a mere observer. Of our human scene. But understands. As one who has been. At the very vortex. Of our human struggle. And who in that humanness. Has been exposed. Beyond any other human. Tested beyond any other human. Born down beyond. Any other human. How marvelous it is. That he remembers. We are dust.

Sometimes. Don't you think. It is not difficult. To contemplate. To contemplate. The son. Saying to God. The father.

[19 : 13] In the intimacy. Of his exalted. Fellowship. The father. That struggling. That falling. That failing.

Human being. His dust. And I know. That you father. Through your omniscience.

You know. What it is. To be dust. But I know. What it is. To be dust. Experientially. I have been dust.

And I am dust. The dust of the earth. At the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. How marvelous it is.

That Christ. Knows. What it is. To be exhausted. Knows. What it is.

[20 : 20] To be sorrowful. Knows. What it is. To weep. And believe. And. Knows. What it is.

To wonder. If he can cope. Because that's. What Gethsemane was. Can I cope. Knows.

What it is. To be afraid. Knows. What it is. What perhaps. Some of you. May understand. To be amazed.

By the will of God. And to be close. To saying. To his father. Father. Father. Father. You can't. Mean me.

To take that. To walk that road. To drink that cup. He began. To be so amazed. To be so amazed.

[21 : 17] We have the same idea. When the disciples. Come to the empty tomb. On the resurrection morning. They were amazed. Christ. Because.

They stood in the presence. Of the uncanny. The presence. The presence. Of the eerie. And it may be tonight. That someone understands.

What it is. To be looking into. An imminent providence. Are an actual providence. And to feel the goose pimples.

Rise. The feeling of the uncanniness. And the eeriness. Of the providence of God. To know then.

That we are dust. To wonder then. If we can cope. And surely. As we contemplate it tonight. There is in those situations.

[22 : 17] No comfort. With God's. Fellow feeling. That by that umbilical cord. That bound him to his mother.

He is one with us. In compassion. And understanding. It is terribly possible. My dear friends. Even.

When one has many. Privileges. And close associates. Beyond most human beings. It is possible.

Even then. To feel terribly. And frighteningly afraid. And frighteningly alone. And there are.

At those moments. There is at those moments. No comfort. But that. He can be touched. With a feeling. Of our. Of our. Infirmities. It may be.

[23 : 16] Tonight. Speaking to an audience. That is so. Largely youthful. That you have no. Present experience. Of it. And or a collection. Of depths.

Of that kind. God. That God. That God. But someday. You may remember. A man. Who told you. That it was possible. That God's will.

Could make the goose pimple. Stand out. On your flesh. Possible. That God's will. Could be eerie. And God's will. Could be uncanny. God. And you'll know then.

That you're not the first. To have walked that road. But you'll remember too. That that same man said. That Christ. Understands.

And said that Christ too. Felt at moments. That maybe. He couldn't cope. The son of God. Absolutely invulnerable.

[24 : 21] Made of a woman. Frighteningly. Vulnerable. Vulnerable. Like the burnt offering.

Slain. Skinned. Flayed. Dismembered. Cut. To let the fire. Of access.

To every corner. And to every particle. To let the providence of God. And at last. The wrath of God.

Play. About it. And play upon it. Freely. As vulnerable as that. The invulnerable son of God.

Is the vulnerable. Made of a woman. But then Paul. Goes beyond that. And he says this to us. Made.

[25 : 22] Under the law. Not only made of a woman. But made. Under the law. The son of God.

The law giver. The son of God. Above. Law. The son of God. God. Comes.

Under the law. Under all. Its obligations. All the obligations. Of the ceremonial law. All the obligations.

Of the moral law. You bear in mind. That tonight. The law. That says. Thou shalt love. Thy neighbor. As thyself. Binds.

The exalted. Son. Of God. He is still. And is. Everlastingly. Under that law. The great.

[26 : 19] And terrible thing is. Under the curse. Of the law. Under the anathema. Of the law. I have said to you.

That no matter. How far. You go. Into the depths. Of this valley. Of the shadow. Of death. No matter. How low. No matter.

How deep. No matter. How dark. God. Will understand. Christ. Will understand. The physical pain.

The psychological stress. The social pain. The spiritual pain. I guarantee you. Christ. Will follow you. And understand.

But when I tell you. That Christ. Was made under the curse. I am telling you. That there are areas. Where we cannot follow him.

[27 : 20] Areas. What we cannot understand. And what we cannot understand. Above all. Is the loss.

Of God. The loss. Of the face. Of God. The loss. Of the sense. Of the love. Of God. The loss. Of the assurance.

Of God's care. The loss. Even of the sense. Of his own identity. My God. My God. Why hast thou.

Forsaken me. I believe. That Christ. Understands. All my whys.

Except the whys. Evoked. By my wrestling. With the problems. Of my own temperament. God. But I can't.

[28 : 19] Understand. His why. I can't. Understand. The anathema. I can't. Understand.

Being made. Under the law. I can't. Understand. Being hurled. To the far. Corner. Of the universe. I cannot. Understand. That why. That comes.

Out of the. Anguish. Of God's son. And which God. The father. Cannot answer. Although he. Hears it. He is made.

Under the law. He is. Rejected. By God. Because. He bears. Sin. And you.

Remember. Where his. Existence. Began. He was the son. Who was. With God. With God. But. Being under the law.

[29 : 17] Means. Being without. God. Paul. Wants you. To understand. The glory. Of the price. I'll tell you. Why. In a moment. But I want you. To see it. Clearly. That the son. Of God. Not only.

By that. Umbilical cord. Was placed. In our humanness. And in our suffering. But that because. Of that umbilical cord.

That bound him. To a lost race. The son of God. Was anathema. The son of God. Was repelled. And repulsed. By God. Was rejected. By God.

Was hurled. Away. By God. Was not. Listened to. By God. I cry. But there is no answer. Christ.

[30 : 14] Had often cried. And every time. He had cried. God had answered. But one day. Cried. And God. Did not answer.

God. Longed. To answer. God. The father. Heard. That terrible cry. From a son.

In the far country. A son. Under stress. A son. In duress. A son. In a spiraling.

Darkness. But he couldn't answer. He was bearing sin. He was. Sin.

God. Couldn't answer. The why. Of sin. He is made. Under the law. He is made.

[31 : 10] A curse. He is made. Anathema. He is made. A reject. That is the doctrine. He is God's son.

He is made. Of a woman. He is made. Under the law. Why. Says the apostle. That we might receive.

The adoption. Of sons. That's why. Why. Was the son. Of God. Exposed.

To all. That pain. To that. Anathema. That we might. Receive. The adoption. Of sons. That. That the apostle. Means. Two things.

If you are a son. Then you weren't a slave. And if you were a son. Then you weren't a child.

[32 : 11] And I would like to. Commend to you. That you pay attention. To that latter point. Because it's a key. To the whole context here. In verse one.

Paul says. The heir. As long as he is a child. Differeth nothing from a slave. Though he be lord of all. But is under tutors and governors.

And then in verse three. Even so. We. When we were children. We're in bondage. And when Paul speaks. Of the fullness of the times.

He's talking preeminently. Of that moment. Of that age. When the minority. Of the church ceases. When the church comes. To be of age.

Let me get it again. In focus. The slave. Is in bondage. But then. Says the apostle. So.

[33 : 09] Is the child. During his minority. The child. So long as he's only a child. He may be a son. He is heir of everything.

But he's under tutors. Under governors. Under school masters. He has no freedom. His estate is in trust. He cannot have access to it.

He cannot manage it. He is in his non-age. He is in his minority. That is the picture. Paul is saying to them. You're God's sons.

You're not slaves. You're God's sons. You're not children or babies. But then you see this. In verse 9.

But now. After ye have known God. Or rather known by God. How turn ye again. To the weak and beggary elements. Where unto you desire again.

[34 : 06] To be in bondage. You desire again. To be in bondage. They wanted to go back into slavery.

They wanted to go back to their spiritual childhood. To their spiritual infancy. And that's what is evoking.

All the massive theology. And all the splendid passion of this great chapter. Christians. Who want to be slaves. And Christians.

Who want to be children. That's theology of verse 4. It doesn't exist to show that Paul is a great theologian. It exists.

To deal with the decease of Christian men and women. Who want to be children. And want to be slaves. They wanted to go back. To the Old Testament law.

[35 : 10] They wanted the comfort. Of tutors and governors. They wanted the comfort. Of human institutions. And human structures.

And human codes. They wanted men to compose a list of holy days. A list of permitted foods. A list of forbidden activities.

They wanted to go back. Into the security of bondage. And the security of their non-age. And I put it to you.

That that is. A prevailing and continuing phenomenon. In the church of God. And that to this day. We are still faced with the same temptation.

In all its plausibility. And I put it to you. And I put it to you further. A time and again. We ourselves are guilty. Of that precise mentality.

[36 : 18] We wish we were children. We wish we were slaves. Happy to do this. Because then. Because then. People would tell us.

People would make pronouncements for us. People would charge the course for us. People would tell us authoritatively. The right and the wrong.

That's what was happening here. and what does Paul say let me ask you tonight is it not true that you think well this is a very small problem Christians wanting to be slaves wanting to be children that can't be terribly important we haven't maybe heard much of this before just some tiny aberration some tiny inconsistency some small flaw in the life and bearing and conduit of some of the Lord's people but I bring you back to this what did my freedom cost and I say it again what did my freedom cost and it's there in those terrible words the son of God made under the law the son became a slave so that I a slave might become a son and I'm conscious on many sides that many people want to make me a slave again many people want to curtail to control and circumscribe my freedom

I am conscious also that there is that in me that wishes I were a child again or a slave again because it's difficult being free it's difficult having to know your own mind having to make your own decisions having to find your own answer much much easier if the church will tell me whether I may go to cinemas if the church will tell me the official position on cremation on women wearing hats women wearing slacks the official church view and politics on trade unions should teach your strike let's have the official view rather than leave it to us as God's sons to do our own thinking to know our own mind before we know where we are we are back in bondage to a mass of human rules human taboos human prohibitions with all the marvelous security that gives maybe one pope it may be a multiplicity of popes but they have answers to every question and all you need is the appropriate work of reference and you'll know the Christian view on this that and everything

I have come to the point where I regard any condoning of that mentality as a radical infidelity to my Savior and where I even regard it as an expression of contempt for Calvary the Son of God died so that I wouldn't be a slave the Son of God died so that you wouldn't be a child the Son of God died so that we might be mature men in Christ going to God in our own name going to God's word in our own name in the exercise of private judgment searching God's word for myself you see the whole marvelous logic of Paul's argument in this chapter culminates in that magnificent principle of verse one of chapter five stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith

[41 : 31] Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law Christ was made under the law so that we might be redeemed from that law stand fast therefore in the freedom do you realize that the moment you renounce your freedom you betray Christ Christ because he died to secure it the moment you start behaving like a child and want a handbook of Christian custom stream to tell you how to and what to in every situation that moment

I am betraying Christ he died to make me free let me be more solemn still the moment you tamper with another man's freedom the moment you lay upon a human conscience or a Christian denomination any doctrines or commandments additional to those of the word of God the moment you do that you are interfering with another man's family with God's family the moment you do that you are taking away from God's people what Christ died to secure but I do come back to it it's not easy to be free it's not easy not to be a child far better to be back in the womb far better far more comfortable on her mother's knees with someone to tell us the parameters the boundaries and the rights and the wrongs but I tonight address those who in future years will lead this church that God spares us and and spares it too and I want this church led by free men and I want this church led by men not by children stand fast therefore in the freedom with which

Christ has made us free and never never forget that to make you free he was accursed let us pray we ask thee oh lord to bless thy word to us and to apply it in thy spirit's power to our souls we thank thee oh lord for making us free and we pray thee to grant us grace commensurate without freedom because it brings terrible responsibilities and terrible pressure and unless we have thy spirit to indwell us and thy grace to sustain us we shall abuse our freedom take from us all our sin for Christ's sake amen our closing praises in psalm 96 and from verse 9 to the end psalm 96 from verse 9 in beautiful holiness oh do the lord adore likewise did all the earth throughout tremble his face before verse 9 to the end to god's praise to tune this block song oh do the lord adore thy

Christ that Oh say your praise The world shall stephously Be fixed from moving He shall judge The people righteously Let heaven be come

Before the Lord And let the earth rejoice Let seas and all That is the air Cry out and make a noise Let fields rejoice And everything As being left on the air Then wounds and everything

[48 : 41] Shall speak With gladness and with love Before the Lord Because He comes To judge the air Come see In charge the world With righteousness The people paid for me To be saved The people paid for me To be saved For the Lord To be saved For the Lord And all For the Lord To be saved