

TIMELY TRANSITIONS

Galatians 3:24-4:11

After a wonderful time of celebrating Easter, we're going to get right back into the book of Galatians and move on in our study of it. We're nearing the end of chapter 3 and last time we were here, we were discussing the purpose of the Law. Why did God institute the Law if it was only temporary? And we saw how God gave the Law to expose sin for what it really is and how it shut up everyone under sin. We saw that even though works and faith are contrary, the Law in a sense, was ultimately not contrary to the purposes of God in His Promise to Abraham because it actually establishes and supports the Promise principle of faith in that when people understand the Law, they understand their sin, and they will look to a way out of their sin and put their faith in a Savior, which was the Promise is all about.

The main analogy Paul used last time to describe the Law was how it was like a jail cell, but in verse 24 Paul switches analogies which is why I have decided to stop and start up again where I did. With the new analogy, Paul is continuing on in his argument about the temporal nature of the Law. And what Paul does here, the Spirit through him, is incredible – only the Spirit of God could've put this together. It's a remarkable passage of Scripture. Using one main analogy He is going to describe the **transition from Law to faith** in Christ not only in the program of God throughout salvation history, but also in our own lives, and **Christ, as that turning point for that transition**. Through one analogy, he explains the transitional program of God historically and work of God personally in our lives. We're going from works to faith, and Christ is turning point **historically and personally**. First, we have to study the analogy.

I. **THE ANALOGY USED CULTURALLY.**

As a reminder, an analogy is simply making a comparison between two things with similarities to explain or to clarify. We're just taking two differing things or ideas and comparing them to make a point. And the two ideas Paul uses is that of:

Idea #1 – The transition from works of the Law to faith in Christ.

Idea #2 – Going from being a child to an adult in a Greek/Roman culture.

This is one of those analogies that is initially hard for us to grasp because Paul is writing in a different time in a different culture. The original audience understood it perfectly fine but we have a little more work to do in studying.

His analogy beginning in verse 24, is that the Law is like “a tutor to lead us to Christ.” Some of your translations might read schoolmaster or guardian or disciplinarian. And they're all right. The Greek word there is *paidagogos*. Its where we get our English word for pedagogue, which is like a teacher or instructor. But the pedagogues of the Greek and Roman culture were more than just teachers, which is why some of your translations read disciplinarian or guardian. These pedagogues did more than just teach. The pedagogues were often slaves that belonged to well-off families and these slaves would actually accompany the child for their entire childhood, typically from ages 6 to 18, or whenever they were considered mature, which was apparently anywhere from 14 to 18, depending. 17 seems to be the most common. They would walk them to school and from school and be by their side at all times, guarding them, instructing them and disciplining them. They would teach the kid the **elementary principles of the world** – the ABC's, 123's, do's, don'ts. The in's and out's of society. My favorite term for **pedagogue is child conductor or disciplinarian** because it fits their main task: to raise them right, scold or give them a good swat if they needed it. Paul used the same word in Corinthians referring to himself as their spiritual pedagogue and says, “What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with a spirit of love and gentleness?” He didn't want to be the pedagogue and come with a rod. He wanted to hear they were walking with the Lord

and come with love and gentleness. Remember how I described the Law as a spring thunderstorm or wall cloud that kind of looms over you, waiting to strike you if you get out line? These pedagogues were that thunderstorm and that Law to them. They were always there, sort of looming over the child if they got out of line. If they needed correction, they got it, and were taught good manners.

Now notice too, what he says about the child in 4:1 – “As long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.” So Paul furthers the illustration in how these children during this time of upbringing, even though they are heirs to the inheritance in their respective and well-off families, they actually didn’t have any authority over themselves or the family property¹. They were considered too young. So they were just like a slave. They had no rights yet, no say, until they reached the age of maturity. But when the “fullness of times comes” and they reached the age of maturity, the child is delivered from the pedagogue and free from the pedagogue forever. They throw a party for the child called a **Toga Virilis**, which is like a Jewish **Bar Mitzvah**.² They give the child a **new white toga**, a white garment. It is considered a ‘**toga of manhood**’. During this celebration the child is going from just a child with no more rights than a slave, to an adult son and citizen who has rights over the inheritance and himself. He is free now from his pedagogue. Galatians 4:7 says, “He is no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir.”

Quite the analogy to have on a day where we’re celebrating the graduation of a certain young man in our congregation isn’t it? Graduating from high school is kind of like this. Now that we understand the analogy, I want to look at the two ways I believe it’s being used here by Paul which again is **historically** and **personally**

II. **THE ANALOGY USED HISTORICALLY**

Some of your translations read that the Law was our tutor **unto** Christ and some say **until** Christ. That’s because the word Paul uses, ‘*eis*’ in the Greek, can be translated either way (unto and until) and I think Paul is using it both ways in the passage. First let’s look how it led us unto Christ historically.

A. **The Law led unto Christ. (3:24)**

Paul seems to be referring to the child under the conductor as **Israel and mankind in general** as being under the Law, whether it’s the written Law or the law that is written on men’s consciences. Romans 2 says even if someone isn’t an Israelite and knowing the written Law, we all have it written on our conscience and it bears witness to us, accusing us or defending us. There is a conviction of sin and the idea that there is a holy God and coming judgment based on His universal law that He’s put within us. No one’s innocent. So we’re all forced to live under law like a child with his child conductor. And just as the child conductor **has a goal** that he is after, hemming the child in³ (shutting him in) pointing the child to grow up in a **certain direction**, so it is with the Law. It sort of hemmed us in (like the jail cell analogy), and set **boundaries or restrictions** for us. Because of my rural mindset, I like to imagine the boundaries set by the Law like one commentator did, as corrals⁴ or fences for cattle or cattle stalls. When you’re working cattle, you use fencing or corrals to direct them and guide them where you want them to go or what you want them to do. If you’re doctoring and branding, you use the corrals to guide them in such a way that they end up going into a certain chute or a certain gate. That’s how the Law works in leading us **unto Christ**. The **demands** and **symbolism** and **types** in the Law all help us understand our sin and need for a Savior and His ministry on our behalf.⁵ He is our Priest, our Sacrifice, our Temple. The Law acted like corrals that guided us **directionally unto**

the perfect chute God wanted us in and where He could doctor us and brand us as His, which is in Christ. He is the Way. He is the gate. The Chute.

B. The Law led until Christ. (3:25; 4:4-5)

Unto was a **directional** term but **until** is more of a **temporal** term. It has the element of **time** connected to it. When the child reached the appropriate age, when the fullness of time came, adulthood, he was no longer under the child conductor. The child conductor was temporary. So, it is with the Law. When the fullness of times came, Christ came and free'd man from the child conductor. Paul refers to Christ's deity in verse 4 saying He was **sent forth** (meaning He already existed before He was born, He just came to earth) and **born of woman** (conceived by the Holy Spirit). And because He was fully God and yet fully man and lived a perfect life without sin and in obedience to the Law, living under it, **He completely fulfilled the Law**. He fulfilled it perfectly with His life and then offered the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for mankind. His sacrifice was the turning point in history, the apex of salvation history, where the Law was fulfilled and the new dispensation of the Grace Age began. It was the moment where we went from the Mosaic Covenant of Law being forefront to the New Covenant of Faith being forefront. The New Covenant, New Testament, in His blood began at the cross. It didn't begin with the book of Matthew (as much as we think of the 4 gospels as New Testament), it actually began with the death of Christ. And it happened just as planned and at just the right time. We saw all throughout Easter how Christ was fulfilling one prophecy right after another just like it was planned. The exact day Jesus rode in to Jerusalem was the exact day Daniel prophesied He would. Like a child was under his conductor **until** the exact day set by his father, so man was under Law **until** the exact date set by God the Father when He sent His Son to free us from that conductor. 1 Timothy says Christ's ransom was the testimony given at the proper time. It's a timely transition, an exact date set by God. It'll be the same way when He comes again. At just the right time, the fullness of time.

Since we're speaking of the timeliness of everything right now, I've always thought it amazing, as many commentators have pointed out, that the condition of the world couldn't have been more perfect for the gospel. The world was ripe for the gospel. Alexander the Great had just conquered the world and introduced the **Greek language**, so you had more people speaking the same language which certainly made it easier to communicate the gospel and it's a detailed language. On top of that, the Roman Empire had just connected the ancient world and brought a stability to it. Also, a vast road system, like President Eisenhower did in the United States with the interstate system. Everywhere they conquered they built a road to it from stone, from Rome to Portugal to North Africa to Jerusalem to Constantinople to Rome (all the way around the Mediterranean). Hence the saying, all roads lead to Rome. Many of their roads are still there today. So it was the fullness of times, the perfect time. But again, historically it led us unto Christ and until Christ.

III. THE ANALOGY USED PERSONALLY

When it comes to seeing this analogy in our own lives like Paul is explaining to the Galatians, we have to see ourselves as the child. And as children and as unbelievers, we were all raised, to an extent, under the pedagogue mentality of Law.

A. All believers grew up under a pedagogue. (3:24-25)

Between the law being written on our conscience and our parents raising us a certain way, we were taught the elementary principles of the world with the ABC's, 123's, do's and don'ts. We learned

right and wrong and were forced to obey. As a kid, it can become very performance-based. Do good, get a cookie or an allowance. Do bad, get grounded. We learned to make distinctions as well. We learn the difference, hopefully, **between genders** like male and female; **between social status** like slave or free man, rich or poor, hierarchies; and **between races of people**. We learned the world and society. We make difference between the days and seasons and years. We have school calendars, astrological calendars, seasonal calendars. Everything runs off a calendar. We observe days and seasons and years. Not that all are bad or don't have a place, but we can acknowledge we have grid of **traditions and systems that regulate human interaction and existence**. On top of that, some of us grew up under a religious, legalistic system of works. We grew up under Law. Even if you were raised in a good church with good teachings of grace, as a kid, you were introduced to the Law and the fact that you're a sinner. You realized at some point, you didn't meet the standards and couldn't keep standards, even to the best of your ability – you weren't going to cut it. You developed a moral compass and a knowledge of God's Holy Law and putting your trust in Christ was the turning point that set you free. You realized grace! You quit attending church and doing church things as some mechanical motion, something you were supposed to do, and started doing it out of love for God and His grace. You came to the maturity of faith and realized a lot of the world's elementary principles just doesn't have a place in Christ. We're all saved by grace.

With the Galatians, however, when Paul refers to their elementary principles and being slaves to those which by nature are no gods, I think it gives us a glimpse of the Galatian believer's B.C. days – their lives before Christ. Before Christ, they had grown up under the calendrical worship of pagan Gentile gods and the Empirical Occult. Their culture was full of idols. Greeks had Zeus, Hermes, Apollo, Artemis, etc. Romans worshiped Jupiter, Neptune, Venus, Mars, etc. Some of them could have been worshiping heavenly celestial bodies like the sun and moon and stars. We still see fascinations with this stuff today through horoscopes and astrology. Some of them could have been worshiping literal elements of the world in their like earth, air, fire and water. Fallen man is known to worship the created rather than the Creator. But it was all legalistic, dead works and dead religion. He says in verse 8 they were slaves to worshipping around **rules and regulations**. That's what idol worship is like. And for some of the Galatian believers now living under Law, Paul is saying there's not much difference between what they were doing before Christ and what they're doing now because that's what the Law is like. It has rules and regulations and calendars and distinctions. And without apologizing he calls it elemental. Twice he uses this word "elemental". In 4:3 and 4:9 – "elemental things of the world". He's saying that anyone who thinks they can save themselves by their works and OT Law-keeping is a baby in their thinking.⁶ They've gone back to elementary school. They've lost grace. Paul says grow up and act your age. You don't live under a tutor anymore.

B. All believers have put on Christ. (3:27-28)

By faith in Christ, the Galatians had been set free from that way of thinking with dead works and performance-based systems of worship. They had been set free from their child conductor when they came of age and put on their **toga virilis**. Same with us. We've all come of age by faith and put on the **pure white toga** that is Christ, the toga of manhood. We've done away with the child conductor. We're set free from the child conductor. Christ transitioned us out of that. He was the turning point at the exact date set in our lives that the Father drew us to Him. Paul says, 'Don't you realize what has happened to you?' **You have been clothed with Christ, baptized into Christ by His Spirit**. We're all one in Christ. We all have one Spirit. We've been freed from the distinctions among us. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, male or female anymore – it's

not that they don't have a place or don't exist, but they don't matter⁷ – because we're all saved the same way and all part of the same body and partakers of the same Spirit.

C. All believers are heirs with Christ. (3:29; 4:1-7)

We've become **heirs** with Christ. No longer slaves but heirs, according to the Promise. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. Part of our inheritance that we received from our Father during our **toga virilis** party is that we inherited the Spirit of God. The Spirit is a down-payment on our eternal inheritance. Verse 4:6 says, "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts." So the Spirit coming into our hearts is the **result** of trusting Christ. But notice what the Spirit does for us. Through the Spirit we know that...

D. All believers are adult sons of God. (4:5-7)

We're adopted by God. We cry, "Abba, Father." We know God the Father is our Father. We know we're children of God, and specifically **adult sons** because the adult sons received the inheritance. But He's not just our Father, He's our Abba. That word Abba is short Aramaic for Father and means "Daddy" or "Papa". He's our daddy. It's the most intimate name for God there is. We have an incredibly close relationship with Him through faith in Christ. He is our Abba Father.

So what Paul is saying is that these Galatians, by going back under Law, were like an adult son who had become of age and had inherited so much and had been freed BUT NOW was trying to turn back time and go back under his child conductor. They were disregarding their inheritance and refusing to grow up in Christ. They were trying to go back to the elementary school. By reverting back to the Law, they were making **distinctions** again amongst themselves and putting **barriers** back up – the Law came with **delineations** of race and hierarchy and it revived again in this congregation like it did at the lunch tables in Antioch when Paul confronted Peter. It was clean vs. unclean, circumcised vs. uncircumcised, and Jews vs. Gentiles. Some of the Pharisees were known to thank God and praise God that they were Jews and not Gentiles, men and not women, free and not slaves, holy and not sinners. The Galatians were bringing this back into the church.

And **we do the same thing, not in precept (literally going back to the Law – e.g. can't eat pork), but in principle.** When we start to make unnecessary, man-made rules and regulations and works and distinctions and hierarchies in the church. Some churches are so stuck under Law, you can hardly tell the difference between them and Old Testament Israel. They've got the **hierarchy** of the clergy above the lay people. The Corinthians, for example, were guilty of creating a lawlike **hierarchy** in principle based on their spiritual gifts, as if they could boast about who was greatest based on their gift – gifts they received by grace in the first place. Not everybody has the same gifts. God decides that. The recipients of James' letter had their unnecessary distinctions, too. They would give a rich man a good seat in the church and the poor man no seat or have him sit on the floor. In both churches, it was an atmosphere of **pride** and **flesh** and **legalism**. It was **competition** amongst themselves. **Carnal comparisons**. Which is why in chapter 5:15 he says, "If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another." Legalism consumes a congregation. It's cannibalistic. The church eats itself apart from the inside out. It breeds competition and pride and one-upping or tearing down. There's a constant buzzing. It's a beehive.

While we're here I want to bring up some more sensitive subjects like the style of worship **music**? They say when Satan fell, he fell in the choir loft? Don't get so caught up in one style of music that you have disdain for the others. Paul said sing psalms, hymns, AND spiritual songs – and to be

filled with the Spirit is to do just that! To sing and joyful give thanks (Eph. 5:18-21)! Dozens of times Scripture says sing a new song to the Lord! With all kinds of instruments. What about **dress**? Just because a guy wears a suit to church and another wears shorts and a t-shirt, doesn't mean one is right and one is wrong or one's legalistic and one's not. Maybe one just likes to dress nice. Like Romans 14, if he does, he does it for the Lord, understanding he can dress how he wants. Same with the guy in shorts – if he does, he does it for the Lord, understanding the grace to dress how he wants. For all we know, the guy in the suit wears greasy coveralls all week and the guy in shorts wears suits all week. Their just honoring the Lord either way.

❖ **Apply grace to the gray areas of life. (Because that's where we tend forget it!)**

Apply it to the distinctive areas where the world gets embattled over with races and cultures! The idea that we're all one in Christ is quite the test in some **multi-racial, multicultural** churches and Christian settings. We like to think our way of doing things is always the best, but it isn't. I've learned that working with a different culture. Latin culture outsmarted me and my North American way of doing things several times. I remember, too, on one mission trip I went on where two guys on the same mission trip had to lay down some serious **personal beliefs** for Christ's mission. One worked in the oil field industry and fought the Green Peace group, while believe it or not, one worked with Green Peace, and had fought his oil industry field. What a joy to see them have to lay that down for Christ's cause!

IV. MAJOR APPLICATIONS:

A. **Come back to grace. (4:9)**

We're all one in Christ's grace. We're all saved by grace. We all have gifts by grace. We all grow IN grace. We're all part of the same body by grace. All partakers of the same Spirit by grace. All just graced with grace upon grace upon grace... so we live gracious lives! Learn to see one another that way. Remember what matters most. Paul says in 5:1 to **stand firm in grace**. Don't go back into the childlike thinking of legalism. **Legalism looks mature, but it's not**. Wiersbe writes, "One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a "second childhood" of Christian experience."⁸ Kind of explains the success of so many legalistic churches doesn't it? A lot of folks, hoping to become better Christians, can end up getting involved in legalistic movements and a performance-based relationship with God. We don't do in order to become. We do because of what's been done! Paul's main admonition is to the person who's trying to trust Christ and something else at the same time. Let go of whatever else you have a hold on and rest completely on Christ. Don't let Christ's work be in vain to you. Trust Him completely. Come back to grace. And when you do that, if you've been living under Law, you'll undeniably have to also...

B. **Come back to your Abba. (4:6)**

Come back to your daddy. People living under Law and legalism have a strict, disciplinarian pedagogue view of God. They've living as if it's strictly business between them. They see Him as a harsh taskmaster. Grace brings you back to your Abba. Such an intimate picture isn't it? Makes me think of a child sitting on their father's lap – care-free, worry-free, and full of trust and love. We come to Him like a child with a child-like dependence and He loves us unconditionally as a father. **Never get too old to look at Him as your daddy. Also try not to apply the image of your earthly father to their heavenly one**. It can be detrimental. Some of the situations we've experienced in life can really affect our view of God: Divorce, death, alcoholism, abuse, lack of commitment, perfectionism with its improper discipline (God lovingly disciplines us but knows when to stop),

workaholics. Certain characteristics in our dads can make us see God with those same fallen characteristics like: passivity, indecisiveness, over-demanding, expressionless, self-righteous, out-of-touch.⁹ Don't take apply those to your Heavenly Father. He is not our earthly father. He is so much greater. He loves us. He is faithful. He is just and good. Some of you can look back over your life and see just how good He's been. Even in the less-desirable moments of life, He was right there, being the your perfect Daddy.

Come back to Him. Spend quality time with Him. That's what a healthy father and son relationship does. They spend time together. We might not turn away from our Abba to some old pagan deities, but what idols do we turn to that take away from our time with our Abba? We might not turn from our Abba to fully immersed in a works-based mindset, but do we ever get mechanical in our worship? Where we're doing all the right things but we've lost the intimacy? I love seeing people serve their hearts out for the Lord and seeing people find their place in the ministry – that's what we're all about – but don't forget there's a time to stop. A time to sit down on your Dad's lap and enjoy Him. “'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me.' 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'” What was Mary doing? She was sitting down at her Savior's feet, listening. Just listening. Remember how Christ spent time with the Father. The busier He got and the more the people crowded in, the more determined He was to go away and pray and spend time with Him. We can't pour from empty cups. We can't serve the Lord properly if we aren't taking the time to stop properly, spending quality time with our Abba.

¹ David A. DeSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians, New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 345.

² John F. MacArthur, “Galatians,” *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 97-98.

³ DeSilva, 328.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁵ Warren W. Wiersbe, “Galatians,” *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 563.

⁶ David Thompson, *Galatians 3:10-18 sermon notes*, accessed 27 April 2019, texascornersbiblechurch.org.

⁷ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1968), 100-101.

⁸ Wiersbe, 564.

⁹ Christian Life Ministries, *Abba Father: Lay Class Level I Discipleship* (Rapid City, SD), 4-5.