Galatians 4:1-11

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Take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Galatians. Galatians chapter 4. Galatians chapter 4. We're going to be in verses 1 through 11 this morning in Galatians chapter 4.

Kind of get us caught back up where we were at. We've been going through the book of Galatians and we've been looking at Paul's encouragement here to the church at Galatians. A defense of or really an apologetic for the true faith.

The church at Galatia was really wrestling with something that seems different to us, but it's really not. It's something that believers wrestle with today and we'll see it as we go through the passage. They had accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

They had heard the preaching of Paul. They were there when Paul came through in his missionary travels. And the companions with Paul. And they were there and they were making disciples. And they were talking about faith in Jesus Christ.

And the people put their faith in Jesus Christ, were redeemed, completely forgiven. And churches were started. This isn't just one church. Multiple churches were started. Pastors were raised up.

They were referred to as elders in the book of Acts and in other places in the New Testament. And they raised up a number of elders and disciples were made and Paul moved on. Where after Paul moved on, other people moved in.

The ones who moved in came in trying to convince the new believers that, Oh, putting faith in Jesus Christ, that's all well and good. You've done enough to get started. Now this is what you need to do in connection with that.

And they began to put a works-based system. In particular in Galatians, it was Judaism. You need to be circumcised. You need to observe the kosher laws.

Don't eat this food. Eat this food. Observe this day. Keep this festival. And they started putting all these do's and don'ts on the new believers. And new believers, as is common, just took it for what they thought it was.

They thought it was truth. They had accepted Christ. They wanted to be faithful to Christ. They wanted to grow in Christ. They wanted to be the best believer that they could. They wanted to be the strongest Christian they could. And they wanted to mature into faith.

[2:02] So they began to do these things. At least that's what history seems to record for us. And Paul writes this letter back to the church of Galatians and saying, What are you doing? What are you doing?

Faith in Christ is enough. You don't need to add anything to your salvation. Salvation rests in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

You are freed and forgiven. Don't do anything in connection with that. Just accept the free gift of eternal life. Accept salvation by faith as provided for you or to you through the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And that's what the whole book of Galatians is about. It's about Paul's defense of the true gospel. So this morning, if you're physically able and you desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you would join with me as we read together Galatians chapter 4, starting in verse 1.

We're beginning to make a transition here. The first three chapters kind of introduce the problem that they're having and kind of begin to defend this stance of Paul.

This is what you're trying to do. This is what the gospel is. And then the last three chapters really are the application of that. So we're making a transition in these first 11 verses of the fourth chapter.

But Galatians 4, starting in verse 1. Paul says, Now I say, 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 also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

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. If a son, then an heir through God.

However, at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day.

God, as always, we thank you for your word. We pray that your word would resonate within this place this morning, Lord. We pray that we would hear not an opinion of man, not a thought of man, but Lord, we would hear the very word of God.

I pray that we would hear it as it is, and Lord, that the application of it would run throughout our lives for your glory, that it would shape us and mold us to become more conformed to your image. And we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. As Paul here is defending the true gospel, he is beginning to make a transition into truth to application.

Truth is great, but truth without application is really nothing but useless knowledge. Truth has the purpose of being applied to your life. And he begins this application with the section we have just read, and I want you to see this morning, the believer's high position.

[5:23] The believer's high position, because until we really understand our position as a believer, then we will not be able to combat the temptations of work and the temptation of effort and the temptation of Satan to try to add to our salvation.

Because in all actuality, all people really want to be good believers. We want to be good Christians. We want to, for those of us who have a love for Christ and have a love for the Savior, we want to be the best believer that we can.

And we want to grow in the faith. And those things are true and noteworthy, and we'll speak to those in just a minute. But we need to understand, before we really begin to apply these things to our life, what it looks like to live out our faith, we need to understand the position we already hold.

Because we're not working to earn a position, we are working because of a position. And that is totally different. The labor and the effort of the believer, the labor and the effort of the born-again individual who has accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior, is not a labor to reach to a place of maturity or to a great place of position.

Rather, it is a labor because of the position they already hold. And this is exactly what Paul is stating here to the fairly new believers at the Church of Galatia, is the high position that they hold simply as being believers in Jesus Christ.

I want you to see three this morning as we look at this passage. And the application would be endless, but I want you just to see three great truths that hold for us here as the believer's high position. Number one, we see that the believer in Jesus Christ, the believer in Jesus Christ holds a position of maturity.

He holds a position of maturity. Now, if I asked you to define for me or to describe for me a mature Christian, how would you describe that person?

Well, inevitably, we would all start talking of the works which they did and the effort they put forth and how much they do this and how much they support here and their attendance. And all of those things are good.

I'm not trying to be a discouragement for that. And I understand that we need to grow in the faith. We need to understand that. We need to not be nourished, as the book of Hebrews says, on milk, but we need to get to the meat of the word and we need to eat solid food and we need to be able to hold to the strong things of the faith.

But I want you to understand that anyone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ already holds a mature position. You say, well, how is that? Look at what the word of God says. He says, now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is an owner of everything.

[8:04] Now, Paul is speaking here with a reference to things that happen in daily life, but he is also pointing to the spiritual truth which they apply. He is opening up the window so that we can see a spiritual truth by daily application.

And heirs and slaves of those days in the Roman Empire were very common and also having overseers of people were very common. He did this at the end of chapter 3 when he spoke of the law, kind of being the tutor for the individual until they grew up out of the law.

And he is still referencing those who are in bondage to works, those who are living a life by do this, don't do that, live this way, don't live that way. If you do this, you earn favor.

How is Paul referring to those? He is referring to them who are children or slaves. They are heirs, but they are a child. And he does not differ from a slave, although he is an owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father

Paul here is given the reference to that a child, though he may be the heir of all things, does not live any differently than the slave. Why? Because he has not yet inherited all things.

[9:09] All things are not his yet. He may eventually inherit all things. He may be the leader or the ruler of all things, but he does not hold to them yet. So we see here that he is referring to the child, that though he is an heir, looks like the slave, just until he matures.

He says, so also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under, now pay attention to this, the elemental things of the world. You need to pay attention to that because we'll see it again later.

What is he saying? That the child is held in bondage by the law. By the don't do this, do this, don't go here, go there, behave this way, live this way, say it this way.

Paul is saying those things are for children. The child, though he is an heir, looks no different than a slave because he is maintained by this tutor or this keeper.

And the keeper, the elemental things, are the law, legalism. In our daily life, it looks like this. Well, if you want to be pleasing to God, do this, this, this, and this, and don't do that, that, and that.

And here are the things that you must do. Now, a lot of times we see people or we see individuals or we see even cultures who have such a rigorous lifestyle, such a standard that they adhere to, and they hold to such a legalism, we go, oh, they must be so mature and they must be so spiritual.

Paul says, on the contrary, those are the children. Because he said, children are the ones you have to tell, do this, don't do this, don't do that, do that, stop here, go there.

It is the children or the immature who need a list of do's and don'ts referred to as the law. Paul says, just because their life looks so structured or just because they appear to be doing things in such a good order, do not let that confront.

He said, that's elementary, that's the elemental things of the world. He says, they are operating as child, a child would operate, he says, in verse five, or verse four, but when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that he might redeem those, we'll get to this in just a minute, those who were under the law because that we might receive the adoption as sons.

We see here that Paul is transitioning from being a child to being a mature individual. He said, the child is bound by legalism, do's and don'ts, the mature individual is bound by freedom.

[11:43] We know this even in our own daily life, we put more constraints upon the children when they are younger, understanding that as they get older, we give them more freedoms. It may scare us a little bit, but they have more freedoms. Why? Because they are maturing, they can make their own decisions.

Just yesterday, we were there and I turned around and we had run this water line through a piece of property and there is a water spigot sticking up on one piece of our property just in the middle of a field and Braden has seen me take posts out of the ground and wiggle them back and forth and pull them up out of the ground.

Many of you know these frost-free water faucets, you're seeing where I'm going. I turned around and my mother-in-law said, Braden, that's probably not a good idea and Braden is just yanking on this thing, bending it all the way back.

I said, Braden, there's water on the end of there. He said, well, it was loose already. So I had to explain to him, don't take that out of the ground. That belongs in the ground. To him, he's a child.

He didn't think it needed to be in the ground. It's in the middle of a field. Let's get it out of the field, right? To the older ones, we're like, I don't have to worry about that. But now I have to understand you have to tell him everything. Why? Because he is a child.

[12:45] He needs to know. The younger they are, the more restrictions we place upon them. The older they get, the more freedom we entrust them with. In the faith, it is the same way.

We understand that God used the law to guard the heirs, which are the Jewish people in the Old Testament, until the fullness of the time came. The law did not symbolize maturity.

Being a good keeper of the law did not mean you were mature. Rather, it just meant you were childish. Having the freedom to live without a legalistic binding standard displays maturity.

We see here that the believer in Jesus Christ holds a place of maturity. They have moved beyond the restrictions of the law into the freedoms of relationship.

They are moving beyond the restriction of the do's and don'ts to the freedom of understanding me, know me, spend time with me. My friend, just because we see people who are very strict upon themselves does not mean that they are more mature.

[13:51] Rather, it means that they need more guardianship as a child. We see that the believer holds a position of maturity. Number two, we see that the believer holds a position of acceptance. And this is so good.

We see this. Let this truth just run over us afresh. And as a believer in Jesus Christ, because he's speaking of the gospel, that you put your faith in Christ, and that is enough. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we hold a position of acceptance.

It says in verse 4, but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his son. By the way, you'll notice in this passage that all three people of the Trinity are referenced, and that's important. God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

What is so good here is that we see all of the work and all of the effort being put forth, being done by God. God sent his son. His son came under the law. That is, he was born according to the Jewish standards.

He was born the right way. He lived the right way so that we might receive. Salvation is all about what we receive, not what we do, right? It is all about what God has done and what we get.

[14:58] That's what's so glorious about salvation. That's why it's so hard to accept. It is that God did this. God sent his son. His son lived by the standard. His son lived the perfect life.

His son died the perfect death. His son was buried in the tomb. His son was raised on the third day and we receive that. It is this matter of acceptance.

We see this because it says, so that we may receive the adoption as sons. Adoption is a great thing and it's a thing that this church knows full well. A number of people have walked through it. A number of families have done it and the church has walked beside us.

But what we need to understand in this passage that the adoption referenced here is not going and finding a small child and adopting that child. As a matter of fact, the word structure in this passage is the wording of an adult male being adopted into a family.

You say, well, that makes no sense to me. Why would a male, an adult male, be adopted into a family? Well, in Roman society, you were either born a Roman and had Roman rights or you bought your Roman rights.

You could purchase it for a sum of money. Remember, Paul says, I'm a Roman citizen. I was born a Roman and part of a Roman citizen is you could not go through corporal punishment. There's a number of things that Roman citizens were protected by and Paul says, I was born a citizen.

That gave him great rights. You could purchase your citizenship or you could be adopted into a family of Roman citizenship and therefore inherit their status.

So it was not uncommon for adult men to be adopted by families to inherit their citizenship or their privileges.

It was not uncommon for someone of a lower class or someone of an outcast society to completely separate himself from his old family and be united to another family and then he is seen as a law abiding, a law citizen of this family.

It is, we are going to take you in as our adult son and we are going to give you all the privileges of any son born of this family. What is this? This is a sign of acceptance.

[17:05] The wording is that God did everything so that after we grew up, after we grew up, he could accept us into his family.

Now let that picture settle in just for a moment. Adoption is a glorious thing. It always is. It is a magnificent thing. But how much more after God lets us grow up in our childlike status and as adults, it says now, come into my family.

It is this picture of God saying, I accept you as you are. I accept you out of your legalistic society. I accept you and I give you myself. He says here, because you are sons, by the way, I want you to understand it in verse six, you means y'all.

That's the best way to put it, okay? Just you all. We would say, because y'all are sons, we understand it's plural, because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, that's how we know that you are plural, because it's now our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

What is this? This is God's guarantee that we are accepted based upon our belief and our faith in Jesus Christ alone. This is God.

Paul references adoption adoption in Romans chapter 12. He references adoption in Romans chapter 8. He references it in a number of places here that Paul is looking at this practice that goes on in the Roman Empire as something that happens in the family of God.

The Roman Empire, there were people who would put themselves up for adoption hoping that a family of better off conditions would accept them into that family so that they could derive the benefits from that family.

And Paul says, that's exactly what God does. We say, you know what, we've been children and we've lived according to all these legalistic standards and it hasn't worked for us so now we're going to put ourselves up for adoption hoping that God accepts us into that family.

In Roman world, they would put a ring on your finger and you would have this signet ring of that family. Anybody ever seen Ben-Hur, the old movie Ben-Hur? A great movie, by the way. A lot of biblical truths portrayed in that movie.

If you have four hours one night and you want to watch it, go for it. It's great. But it's just this great picture of now you're a part of my family. I have accepted you in my family. I give you my family's seal because my seal is now your seal.

[19:21] Well, God shows us his acceptance of us by sending forth the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, and he comes and dwells inside of us and it's not us who cries out, Abba, Father.

It is the Spirit inside of us that cries out, Abba, Father. So now all of a sudden the Son came to redeem us in the fullness of time, God's perfect timing. The Spirit was sent inside of us to cry out from within us that God is our Father and all of these things are a demonstration of the believer's acceptance with a holy God.

The Bible tells us very clearly, Paul says, that he who has the Spirit has the Son. And if you do not have the Spirit, you do not have the Son. The sure sign of has God accepted you is not, what do you do?

I cannot come to you and say, are you a born-again believer? And you say, yes I am. And I cannot look at you and then say, well, now I understand the worst. There should be fruit that comes from that, but they are the fruit of the what? Somebody help me out here.

The fruit of the Spirit that is with a capital S, right? That's the Holy Spirit. So what I cannot do is look at you and say, well then tell me, what are you doing? Because your acceptance is not displayed by what you are doing.

[20:33] Your acceptance is displayed simply by the presence of the Spirit in you. And then the Spirit will be doing things. Because He's always doing things. There will be fruit, but it's not your fruit naturally.

Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, kindness, self-control. Those are not mine naturally. Those are His, right? Those are the Holy Spirit flowing through me. There are times I don't want to love.

And God says, no, you're going to love. There are times when I don't operate by kindness in the flesh. And then He gives me one of those great gut-wrenching, convicting things where I say, yes, but I'm supposed to be kind because the Spirit inside of me does not like that war of the flesh.

There are all these things. Patience. Man, that is a hard one, right? We want things yesterday. And when they didn't happen yesterday, they should happen a minute after yesterday. And we understand those things.

But it is not us who is doing it. It's the Spirit inside of us. And one of the greatest things is this, is can you claim a holy God as your Abba Father? Father, does the Spirit inside of you cry out and go, Daddy, Daddy, to a holy God?

[21:42] Friend, listen to me. That's acceptance. Acceptance. Probably one of the greatest pictures I ever saw of this is there was a time here that Carrie and I had, we hosted, and many of you have met him, a foreign exchange student, Beto is what we called him, Alberto Perez-Retuche.

He was from Mexico and he lived with us for a while and he came to us not in the best of circumstances. His host family, things weren't going that well. As a matter of fact, he was getting taken advantage of by his host family as kind of was a sad condition.

So they needed somewhere for him to go or he's going to have to go back to Mexico. He wanted to stay here. So we're like, yeah, we've had kids live with us. He can live with us, sure. So Beto came and lived with us. So when he came to live with us, he was very guarded because he had been living with a host family here that had taken advantage of him, not to go into it too much, but financially.

He was from a little bit better financial status than anybody I know and they had been taking advantage of him financially. So he came here and he was very guarded and for a while there he kind of, he lived with us and didn't really say much.

We introduced him to some things, you know, like a push mower and a vacuum cleaner. It was pretty cool. Kerry's like, you just push the button and it starts. He's like, what do you mean? You push the button, move your arm back and forth, you got it.

But from a man who, from a boy who came from living with a maid where when he got done with a plate he set it down and she came behind him and got it, the Calvert household was a wake up call, right? So things were different but he was very guarded, kind of way off for a while and I'll never forget one day, we were up at the school actually and I was doing something and he was trying to get my attention and Beto goes, hey dad.

And at that time there were a number of exchange students and all of them called their host parents mom and dad but Beto had never called us that. I was Billy Joe and she was Kerry but at that time he'd been living for a while and he said, hey dad.

I turned around and I answered him and it was then that I realized Beto knew we accepted him for who he was not what he had and he began to operate by that.

It was funny, he came to Tennessee wearing Armani and all these, he asked us where the closest Armani store was. We laughed. He said, we don't know what that is but there's none here, right?

And, but he wore the nicest clothes and we sent him back to Mexico wearing cowboy boots, a t-shirt, and blue jeans. He got Tennessee-ized, right?

But it was great because he began to, now he's changed a lot since then but at that time all of a sudden he realized he was accepted into our family. That's exactly what's going on.

You know you're accepted because the spirit inside of you cries out, Abba, Father. And you know God's accepted you not because of anything you've done, not because of anything you bring to the table, but because of his grace and his mercy and you've been adopted.

So we see here the place of acceptance, the position of acceptance. Number three and finally, the believer's high position, he has a position of security. And this, by the way, should be our guard from what Paul is speaking of here.

It is a position of security. In verse seven, he goes from speaking of y'all to speaking to you, right? Verse seven, there's a transition from saying, verse six says, you all are sons and God has sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts crying, Abba, Father.

Verse seven is the singular you. It says, therefore you, that's me singular and you singular, that's speaking to the individual. Listen to this, here is the place of security that the believer needs to operate in because it is so important.

Because why do we labor and push ourselves to such a rigorous list of do's and don'ts?

Just so you understand, I'm not giving you a license to go live however you want to
because the spirit inside of you will constrain how you live, what you do with his presence
because the Bible tells us you are the temple of the Holy Spirit and there are some places
that the spirit will not let me take him or do things with him, right?

We understand that. But I'm also trying to free you from those trying to tell you you have to do this and you have to look this way and you have to have this legalistic lifestyle and if you're not doing this then you're not right.

Listen to this, okay? This is, the only reason we do that is because we are insecure. We operate that way because we want to be pleasing to God and we think we can earn his favor if we do enough and we think we can earn his favor if we work hard enough and even if we don't want to do it, we do it anyhow because we desperately want to be pleasing to him.

Friend, listen to me, one thing that Satan desperately works so hard to keep believers from understanding is this thing called your security, your eternal security, who you are in Christ.

And so Paul is going to reference here as the believer's position of security. You are no longer a slave. By the way, for those of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, before putting our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we were a slave of Satan.

[26:38] If you have not put your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I'm going to tell you, you are a slave of Satan. You say, I don't like hearing that. Well, that's the truth. The Bible says you are either a son of God or the son of the devil. And we are enslaved to sin.

We are enslaved to these things that we cannot help but doing. But here's the good news. You, me, because of my faith in Jesus Christ, I am no longer a slave.

You are no longer a slave, he says, but a son. A son. Look at this place of security. And if a son, God has adopted me as his son. If I'm a son, guess what?

I'm not an heir also. You know, the Bible says in the book of Revelation it's one of those good things. Those great things. It says a number of great things in the book of Revelation but one of the greatest passages I have found is it speaks of the throne of Jesus Christ.

That Jesus sits on the throne of God in heaven, right? You know why it says that? Because prior to that in that passage it also says that we sit with Jesus on his throne. Now I know this kind of gets to the verge of us thinking a little too crazy but as a son of God because we have been adopted, Jesus is God in the flesh.

[27:48] He was born. He is the seed of God. I understand we don't want to get too deep here but we are full heirs with Jesus Christ. What a place of security. What a position we hold.

We are full heirs if a son then an heir through God. However, at that time when you did not this is verse 8 did not know God you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

All men are slaves to something. Slaves trying to please God trying to be pleasable trying to do exactly right or not not care just being a slave to our own desires.

Here is your security verse 9 but now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental I told you you'd hear it again elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again.

Friend listen to me and I just kind of wrap it up right here because verse 10 verse 11 says Paul's like if these things aren't so and if you're not accepting them I feel like all my work and labor among you is vain and I don't know what else to do he'll flesh that out starting in verse 12 but just listen to this truth right here in verse 9 your security does not rest in the fact that you know God.

[28:57] You say wait a minute I thought it was important that I know God. The Bible tells us that the demons believe in God and tremble but they're not eternally secure. Right? It tells us that even the demons believe in God and tremble and they shake.

You ever notice how many times Jesus met a demoniac someone that was influenced by demoniacs demons and you see how he cast out demons you ever notice that when the demons spoke they spoke with fear and reverence and awe and said who are you we don't want anything to do with you Jesus and we know who you are and we don't they tremble at his presence so knowing him is not sufficient.

Your security does not rest in the fact that you know God. Paul is not correcting himself here he is showing us the greater it says in verse 9 but now that you have come to know God he says or rather really to be in better place it literally means but better yet you are known by God.

Jesus tells us in the book of Matthew that many will come to me on that day and say Jesus did we not cast out demons in your name did we not perform healings in your name did we not do all these great works in your name and Jesus says what I will tell them depart from me for I never knew you you knew me but I don't know you the believer's security does not rest in the fact that he knows God the security is this we are known by God we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and we are welcomed into his family again it is all his work and it is all his effort in perfect time we have moved from a place of doing and don't doing it we have moved from a place of works based efforts to now a place of just accepting what God is extending and we allow God to know us and we are known and when we go stand before that throne on that day it is not because we say well I knew all these things and I did all these things based in response to what I knew and I gained all this information and since I learned all these things this is how I lived my life friend listen to me the only defense that will be given is that when we walk up the Father will look at us and say I know this one that one's mine

I know this one this one's mine Jesus says in the parable with the lambs and the goats and the sheep he said he will be separated to the left and the right and how is it he separates them based on the ones he knows right it is in the fact that he knows us and if he knows us you say well how do I know if he knows me through the spirit inside of us crying out Abba Father if he knows that I am his guess what why would I turn back to the weak worthless elemental things of the world I'm already his child I don't have to go back and earn his favor now I live because of his favor the gospel says the faith in Jesus Christ is enough and that through faith in Christ God knows us and we are eternally secure why would I go back to trying to live a legalistic pleasing life I'm already known

I'm already secure and I live in light of that not to gain that it's a big difference but my friends I don't know where you're at today but I know this it is one thing for me to know God there's a whole another thing for God to know me the only way I can do that is to say here I am Father you take me you use me you do with me what you see fit I am wholly yours and I surrender myself to you for your use for your glory for your honor let's pray Lord I thank you so much for this day God I thank you for your word Lord I thank you for the truths that it contains Lord I pray that we would take these truths we would live them out for your glory and it would be all about your namesake not the effort or the work that we put forth but Lord for what you have done we ask it all in Jesus name Amen

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen