

A Study of

Galatians

Heirs and Slaves

Law and Grace



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Galatians 4 Covers:

Heirs and Slaves:

1. A Child vs. a Slave (Galatians 4:1-3)
2. An Heir's Freedom from Bondage (Galatians 4:4-5)
3. Celebrating our Sonship (Galatians 4:6-7)
4. Living in the World vs. Living as God's Children (Galatians 4:8-11)

For more information, see Blue Letter Study Guide

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-4.cfm

Galatians 4 Covers:

Law and Grace:

1. An appeal from the Apostle Paul: Be Like Me (Galatians 4:12)
2. An Appeal from the Apostle Paul: Remember how you used to respond to me (Galatians 4:13-16)
3. An Appeal from the Apostle Paul: Beware of the affection the legalists show you (Galatians 4:17-18)
4. An Appeal from the Apostle Paul: I love you like a father, please listen to me (Galatians 4:19-20)
5. An appeal from the Apostle Paul: for those who claim the law: Bondwoman and Freewoman (Galatians 4:21-31)

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Galatians 4

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

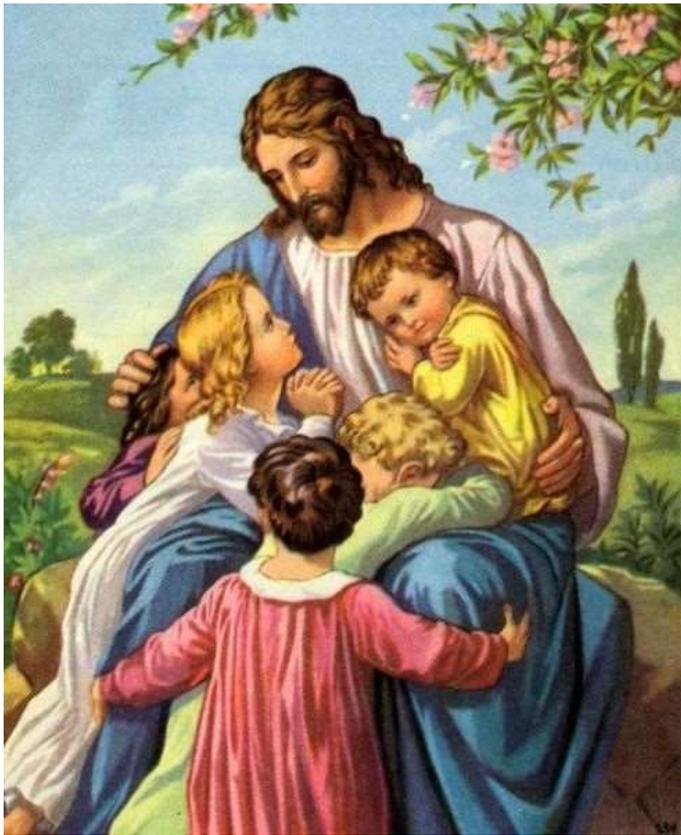
3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Heirs and Slaves: Child vs. Slave

No longer under bondage to the world, we are God's children:



That the heir, as long as he is a child: The word child has the idea of a minor. It doesn't suggest a specific age, but someone who is not yet legally recognized as an adult. In this sense Paul is speaking of believers under the law as "children".

differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all: Think of a wealthy ancient household, with a young boy who is destined to inherit all that his father has. When the boy is just a child, he actually has less day-to-day freedom and authority than a high ranking slave in the household. Yet, he is destined to inherit everything, and the slave isn't. In fact, the heir is under the strict care of guardians and stewards (the law) until the time appointed by the father (grace).

Heirs vs. Slaves

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

We are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26), and we are heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). The law was our guardian (Galatians 3:24-25), to watch over us when we were still "children." The law's effect on our corrupt nature was to show us that we were in bondage under the elements of the world. Jesus came to set the captives free by giving us His Spirit & fulfilling the requirements of law.

Heirs and Slaves: Freedom from Bondage

Liberation of heirs from their bondage:

But when the fullness of time had come: The idea behind the phrase the fullness of time is "when the time was right." Jesus came at just the right time in God's redemptive plan, when the world was perfectly prepared for God's work.

FULLNESS OF TIME: "It was a time when the Roman Empire extended over most of the civilized earth and when travel and commerce were therefore possible in a way that had formerly been impossible. Great roads linked the empire of the Caesars, and its diverse regions were linked far more significantly by the all-pervasive language of the Greeks. Add the fact that the world was sunk in a moral abyss so low that even the pagan cried out against it. Spiritual hunger was everywhere evident, and THIS TIME was the perfect time for the coming of Christ and for the early expansion of the Christian gospel." (Boice)

The time was also right because the 483 years prophesied by Daniel were drawing to a close
(Daniel 9:24-26)

Heirs and Slaves: Freedom from Bondage

Liberation of heirs from their bondage:

God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law: Jesus came not only as God's Son, but also as one born of a woman, born under law. The eternal Son of God in heaven added humanity to His deity and became a man, born of a woman, born under law. Jesus was born under the law and fulfilled the law. Jesus could not have fulfilled the law if he was not born under it.

To redeem them that were under the law: Because Jesus is God, He has the power and the resources to redeem us. Because Jesus is man, He has the right and the ability to redeem us. He came to purchase us out of the slave market, from our bondage to sin and the elements of the world.

that we might receive the adoption of sons: It would be enough that we are purchased out of the slave market. But God's work for us doesn't end there; we are then elevated to the place of sons and daughters of God by adoption! There is a sense in which this is a totally unnecessary blessing that God has given in the course of salvation, and a demonstration of His true and deep love for us. We can picture someone helping or saving someone, but not going so far as to make them a part of the family - but this is what God has done for us.

Heirs vs. Slaves

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

John Newton, the man who wrote the most popular and famous hymn in America, Amazing Grace, knew how to remember this. He was an only child whose mother died when he was only seven years old. He became a sailor, and went out to sea at eleven years old. As he grew up, he became the captain of a slave ship, and had an active hand in the horrible degradation and inhumanity of the slave trade. But when he was twenty-three, on March 10, 1748, when his ship was in imminent danger of sinking off the coast of Newfoundland, he cried to God for mercy, and he found it. He never forgot how amazing it was that God had received him, as bad as he was. To keep it fresh in his memory, he fastened across the wall over the fireplace mantel of his study the words of *Deuteronomy 15:15: You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you.* If we keep fresh in our mind what we once were, and what we are now in Jesus Christ, we will do well.

Galatians 4

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Heirs and Slaves: Celebrating Sonship

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father: It is fitting that those who are in fact sons have the Spirit of the Son in their hearts. This gives us both the right and the ability to cry out "Daddy!" to God our Father, even as Jesus did to His Father. We have access to the same intimacy with God the Father that God the Son, Jesus Christ had. Jesus addressed God the Father as "Daddy" when He prayed, Abba, Father as recorded in Mark 14:36.

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts: We know that we are the sons and daughters of God by the witness of the Holy Spirit within us.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;* if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. **For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:13-18**

Heirs vs. Slaves

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

We also can't miss the way the truth of the Trinity is woven into the text: God the Father sends God the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God the Son, into our hearts to give us an assurance that we are the sons and daughters of God.

"Thus, God's purpose was not only to secure our sonship by His Son, but to assure us of it by His Spirit. He sent His Son that we might have the *status* of sonship, and He sent His Spirit that we might have an *experience* of it." (Stott)

Heirs and Slaves: Celebrating Sonship

Spirit of his Son: The Holy Spirit can be called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, or linked to God the Father. This is because the nature of God is consistent among the persons of the Trinity. Here, the Holy Spirit is called the *Spirit of His Son* because the idea of our sonship is based on Jesus' sonship. Our sonship is based on *who we are in Jesus*, yet there are important distinctions between our sonship and Jesus' sonship. He is the only begotten Son (John 3:16) making Him a Son by essential nature. We are adopted sons and daughters of God, made children by a legal decree of God.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son: Sons are never slaves, and slaves are never sons in their father's house. Jesus illustrated this in the parable of the prodigal son, where the son was determined to return to his father as a slave - but the father refused, and would only receive him as a son.

and if a son, then an heir: Here is a beautiful progression. First we are set free from slavery. Then we are declared sons and adopted into God's family. Then, as sons, we are made heirs.

Heirs vs. Slaves

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

Heirs inherit something, and what do we inherit?

Paul makes it clear: We are an heir of God through Christ: We inherit God Himself.

For some, this might seem like a paltry inheritance. But for those who are really in Christ, who really love God, to be an heir of God is the richest inheritance of all.

Heirs and Slaves: Celebrating Sonship

an heir of God through Christ: Our release from slavery, our sonship, the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts, and our status as heirs of God are all birthrights given to us in Jesus. We receive them through Christ. These are things we should be living in and enjoying every day of our Christian life.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

- 1 Peter 1:3-4

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

- James 2:5

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13

Heirs and Slaves: A choice between living under the elements of the world or as a son of God.

Howbeit then, when ye knew not God: The bondage is natural when we did not know God and when we served those things that are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is that you turn again: But why would someone who knows the true God, and has been set free, place themselves under bondage? This is what the Galatians are doing!

how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements: In turning to legalism, the Galatians were not turning to a new error, but coming back to an old one - the idea of a works relationship with God.

and if a son, then an heir: These elements of the world are weak because they offer no strength; they are beggarly because they bestow no riches. All they can do is bring us again into bondage: the bondage being the knowledge of sin without the remedy for it.

Galatians 4

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Heirs and Slaves: A choice between living under the elements of the world or as a son of God.

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years: The false teachers among the Galatians demanded the observance of days and months and seasons and years and other such legalistic matters acted as if this would lead them into a higher plane of spirituality. But all these weak and beggarly elements of legalism did was bring them into bondage. Paul seems amazed that someone would turn from the liberty of Jesus to this kind of bondage. But legalism caters to and recognizes our flesh by putting the focus on what we achieve for God, not on what Jesus did for us. The liberty of Jesus gives us status as sons and a rich inheritance, but it won't cater to our flesh.

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain: Paul's fear is that this attraction to legalism will mean that his work among the Galatians will amount to nothing and end up being in vain.

labored: Labored is literally "to labor to the point of exhaustion." Paul worked hard among the Galatians, just like he always worked hard (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul never thought that his gospel of free grace meant laziness in serving God.

Heirs vs. Slaves

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

We have a choice:

We can have a living, free, relationship with God as a loving Father based on what Jesus did for us and who we are in Him.

...Or we can try to please God by our best efforts of keeping the law, living in bondage as slaves, not sons. Living that way makes the whole gospel in vain.

We must have the faith of a son, not that of a slave.

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul "Become Like Me"

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am: For many of us today, these are strange words from Paul. How could he ever urge them to become like him? Should he only point them to Jesus? In what way should the Galatian Christians become like Paul?

Paul knew well that he wasn't sinlessly perfect. He wasn't standing before the Galatian Christians, saying "Look at how perfect I am. Don't worry about following Jesus, just follow me." He simply wanted them to follow him as he followed Jesus. *1 Corinthians 11:1 "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

Imitating Paul's Consistency: Paul knew the Galatian Christians should imitate his consistency. The Galatians started out with the right understanding of the gospel, because Paul led them into the right understanding. But some of them didn't stay there like Paul did, and in that way, they should become like Paul.

Imitating Paul's Liberty: Paul was free in Jesus, and he wanted them to know the same freedom. In that way, they should become like Paul. "Be as I am" is an exhortation to the Galatians to become Christians in the same sense as Paul is a Christian, one who is not bound by the Jewish law.

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul "Become Like Me"

or I am as ye are: Paul can say to the Galatian Christians, "When it comes to legalism, I know where you are at. I used to live my whole life trying to be accepted by God because of what I did. In that regard, I became like you and saw that it was a dead end. Take it from someone who knows where you are coming from."

ye have not injured me at all: Paul has used pretty strong words with the Galatians. It would be easy for them to think he spoke just out of a sense of personal hurt. Paul assures them that this wasn't the case at all. Paul wants them to get this right, but for their own sakes, not for his.

We can feel Paul's heartfelt emotion in these verses. As Stott puts it, "In Galatians 1-3 we have been listening to Paul the apostle, Paul the theologian, Paul the defender of the faith; but now we are hearing Paul the man, Paul the pastor, Paul the passionate lover of souls."

"Like Paul, all pastors and ministers ought to have much sympathy for their poor straying sheep, and instruct them in the spirit of meekness. They cannot be straightened out in any other way. Overly sharp criticism provokes anger and despair, but no repentance." (Luther)

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul

"Remember how you used to respond to me"

Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you: We know that when Paul was in the region of south Galatia, they tried to execute him by stoning him in the city of Lystra (Acts 14:19-20). His attackers gave him up for dead, yet he miraculously survived. Some think that this was the cause of the physical infirmity he mentions. But Paul was already in the region of Galatia when that happened; his wording in Galatians 4 suggests that he came into the region because of a physical infirmity.

And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected: Even though Paul was not a great example of strength and power because of his physical infirmity, the Galatians still received him, and they received him honorably.

Law vs. Grace

Comparison to Our Spiritual Condition:

"To the degree that ministers and teachers of the Word of God do teach the Word, to that same degree should they be received as the Galatians received the apostle Paul. Ministers should not be received and evaluated on the basis of their personal appearance, intellectual attainments, or winsome manner, but as to whether or not they are indeed God's messengers bearing the word of Christ."

(Boice)

Galatians 4

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul

"Remember how you used to Respond to Me"

ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me: They embraced Paul so generously that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to Paul if that could somehow meet his need.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?: In light of the great love and honor the Galatians had shown towards Paul, and in light of the great blessing they received from God when they showed such to him, the Galatians should not think that Paul has now become their adversary when he confronts them with the truth. They needed the truth more than they needed to feel good about where they were at.

yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them: Paul's legalistic opponents wanted to draw the Galatian Christians away into their own divisive group. They actually wanted to exclude the Galatians from other Christians, and to bring them into the "super-spiritual" group of the legalists. The zeal cultivated by these cult-like groups is often more a zeal for the group itself than for Jesus Christ. Though they name the name of Jesus, in practice the group itself is exalted as the main focus, and usually exalted as the last refuge of the true "super-Christians."

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul "Beware of the Legalist's affection"

They zealously affect you, but not well: Paul will admit that the legalists zealously court the Galatians; and legalism often comes wrapped in a cloak of "love." But the end result is for no good.

Many cults use a technique informally known as "love bombing." They overwhelm a prospective member with attention, support, and affection. But it isn't really a sincere love for the prospect; it is really just a technique to gain another member. Christians – both legalistic and lascivious – can use the same technique in some way or another.

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul "Beware of the Legalist's affection"

But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing: Paul certainly isn't against zeal. He wants Christians to be zealous in a good thing always. But it is important to make sure that our zeal is in a good thing, because zeal in a bad thing is dangerous. Zeal in the service of a lie is a DANGEROUS thing!



Galatians 4

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Law and Grace: An Appeal from Paul "Please Listen to Me"

My little children: Paul rightly considers himself to be a father to the Galatians. Yet this challenge has made him feel as if he must bring them to Jesus all over again (for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you). Paul knew that his work of forming Christ in them was not complete until they stayed in a place of trusting Jesus.

The idea of Christ is formed in you is similar to the idea of Romans 8:29: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.* It would be wrong for Paul to seek to form himself in the Galatians. That is never to be the job of the pastor. He is right to seek to form Christ in them.

I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice: Paul wished two things. First, that he could be present with the Galatians. But he also wished that he did not need to speak to them in such strong words, that he could change his tone. But their danger of leaving the true gospel has made such strong words necessary, and has made Paul's doubts necessary to address.

Law and Grace: An Appeal to the Law to those who claim the Law

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law: Now Paul writes directly, both to those who promoted legalism and to those who succumbed to legalism. He writes to those who desire to be under the law, living under law keeping as the basis for their relationship with God.

do ye not hear the law?: Paul senses that he hasn't made his point yet, so he will now approach the matter with another illustration from the Old Testament. Essentially, Paul says "Let's have a Bible study. Open your Bibles to Genesis chapter 16."

Galatians 4

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Law vs. Grace

BondWoman vs. FreeWoman:

Paul explains his point from the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah in Genesis 16 without a lot of detail from the story. He assumes that they knew the story. The legalists who troubled the Galatians protested that they were children of Abraham, and therefore blessed. Paul will admit they are children of Abraham, but they forget that Abraham had two sons!

Abraham's first son was named Ishmael. He was born not from his wife, but from his wife's servant (the bondwoman), from a misguided surrogate mother scheme to "help God out" when Abraham's wife Sarah couldn't become pregnant.

The first contrast Paul draws between real Christianity and legalism is the contrast between freedom and slavery. One son of Abraham was born by a freewoman, and one was born by a bondwoman. *Which son of Abraham illustrates your life with God?*

Law vs. Grace

BondWoman vs. FreeWoman:

Ishmael was Abraham's son, but he was a son according to the flesh and unbelief (trying to make your own way before God).

It often doesn't look like it, but legalism is living according to the flesh. It denies God's promise and tries to make your own way to God through the law. This is living like a descendant of Abraham - but it is living like Ishmael instead of Isaac.

Abraham's second son was named Isaac. He was born, miraculously, through Abraham's wife Sarah (the freewoman). Isaac was Abraham's son, and he was the son of God's promise and faith and God's miracle for Abraham.

The second contrast Paul draws between Christianity and legalism is the contrast between a work done by God's promised miracle and a work done by the flesh. *Is your relationship with God based on your own works, or the work of God's promised miracle?*

Law and Grace: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

Which things are an allegory: Paul wants it understood that he speaks using pictures from the Old Testament. His reference to Hagar and Ishmael were pictures, meant to illustrate his point. Now he will bring in another picture.

The one from Mount Sinai: One covenant is associated with Mount Sinai, the place where Moses received the Law (Exodus 19-20). This covenant gives birth to bondage. Since it is all about what we must do for God to be accepted by Him, it doesn't set us free. It puts us on a perpetual treadmill of having to prove ourselves and earn our way before God.

But the Jerusalem above: The other covenant is associated with Jerusalem, with Mount Zion - but not the Mount Zion of this earth. Instead, it is associated with the Jerusalem above - God's own New Jerusalem in heaven.

The Jerusalem above is free: Paul will now tell us more about the covenant represented by the heavenly Jerusalem. This covenant brings freedom - it is free. It is free because it recognizes that Jesus paid the price, and we don't have to pay it ourselves.

Law and Grace: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

Which is the mother of us all: This covenant has many children: Every Christian through the centuries belong to this new covenant, the covenant of the heavenly Jerusalem. And every birth under this covenant is a miracle, like the fulfillment of the prophecy from Isaiah 54:1, "*Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear!*" Every one who is born-again is a miracle of God.

Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband: The quotation from Isaiah 54:1 also suggests that there will soon be more Christians than Jews - a promise that was fulfilled.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise: As Christians, we don't identify with Ishmael. We identify with Isaac, as children of a promise that was received by faith.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now: Ishmael and his descendants persecuted Isaac and his descendants. So we should not be surprised that the modern day people who follow God in the flesh persecute those who follow God in faith through the promise.

Law vs. Grace

Persecution of Christians:

The persecution Christians face will not always be by the world but also, and indeed more often by, their half-brothers - the unbelieving but religious people in the nominal church. This is the lesson of history. Today the greatest enemies of the believing church are found among the members of the unbelieving church, the greatest opposition emanating from pulpits and church hierarchies." (Boice)

Law and Grace: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman: The answer to this problem is clear, though not easy. We must cast out the bondwoman and her son. Law and grace cannot live together as principles for our Christian life.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free: For Paul, one of the great issues in this was freedom. He knew the bondage of trying to earn his own way before God, because he lived that way for decades. Now he knew the freedom of living as a son of God, free in Jesus Christ.

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