

(1) I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different than a slave --- though he is the owner of everything! But he is [put] under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

(4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons!

(6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

(8) Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God --- or rather be known by God --- how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?! You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain....

Think on these things:

- 1) According to Matthew 13:24-30, the Parable of the Tares and Wheat, it is hard to distinguish between the two kinds of plants. When can the two be differentiated?

**At harvest time when both types of plants have fully matured (v. 30).**

- 2) Similarly, Paul says in vs. 1-3 that God’s children start out indistinguishable from others. How are we described before choosing salvation (v. 3)? Because we are described this way, what does v. 2 say we need (i.e., God’s Law)?

**We are described as “enslaved to the elementary principles of the world” just like everybody else. V. 2 speaks about us needing to be guided and tutored by a guardian, or manager, until we come of age. Galatians 3:24 tells us that God’s Law was our guardian until Jesus arrived.**

- 3) What did God do at the appropriate (fullness of) time (vs. 4-5)? What was the outcome for us because of God’s action (v. 5)?

**In the fullness of time, God sent us His Son (Jesus), born of a human woman (Mary) and under life based on God’s Law in Israel. Because mankind was under the Law’s rules, Jesus came to redeem us back for God. A price had to be paid for our sinfulness that we simply could not pay --- but Jesus was able to satisfy the Law’s death demand (He is the ‘propitiation’, the one able to satisfy and appease God’s wrath for our sinfulness --- and He did it as our substitute!).**

- 4) What does the Son’s Spirit enable us to do?

**As God adopts us as His own, the Holy Spirit converts us (born-again believers) into God’s children, and we receive the privilege and right to call God our Father, and to call out to Him as even a “daddy” (Abba).**

- 5) Are you still a slave to sin? **Personal responses. We want to encourage introspection here....**

- 6) Modern humanity really doesn't worship "idols" made of wood, stone or metal. However, we have all heard sermons that people still have idols, in the sense of stealing our energy and focus away from God. Can you name a few things that steal your time from God?

**The goal here is to identify things we give our time to that negatively impact worshipping God as a believer. It could be things such as: family over church; youth sports; high-demand, high-pay jobs stealing both worship time and energy; hobbies that conflict with weekly worship; late night activities (I'd rather sleep in on Sundays); professional sports enthusiasts; city activities and events; video gaming or surfing the internet (apps), drug and alcohol addiction, etc....**

- 7) V. 9 indicates that something has happened, prompting Paul to ask the question, "How can you turn back again" to these idols, weak and WORTHLESS elementary principles of the world? So, what do you think draws our hearts to turn back like this after we become Christians?

**It is challenging to prioritize future blessings (heaven, reunited with believers, God's visible presence, and more...) over things in the here-and-now that call out to us: nice homes, good paying jobs, comfortable cars, wonderful vacation trips, physical gratifications (food, sex and such), wealth accumulation and self-glorification/sense of accomplishment. It is such a strong temptation that this was one of the 3 temptations of Christ by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:8-10). We can start off well in the Christian walk only to stumble when these allurements catch our eyes and divert us off the path of disciplined, faithful Christian living (obedience).**

- 8) V. 10 says, "You observe days and months and seasons and years!" V. 11 is Paul's expression of concern that the people did not understand what freedom in Christ really means. These non-Jewish believers are being tricked by the Jewish believers to think proper standing before God comes from following their church observances. Can you name,

Jewish Observances in the calendar year? **Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Hanukkah, Feast of Purim, Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Booths, and more.**

Christian Observances in the calendar year? **Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost (Holy Spirit baptism of the Jerusalem Church), Sacraments (water baptism, foot washings, Lord's Supper, and more).**

- 9) What is the value in these observances? What is the stumbling block?

Value – **Almost all of these are observed to remember and celebrate something great that God did for His people.**

Stumbling block – **People may think that by observing them, they are in "good standing" with the church and God Himself. However, observances do not constitute a salvation checklist. Salvation is a matter of forgiveness and faith in the heart, new birth by the Holy Spirit, and a daily Christian walk of obedience while in relationship with Jesus.**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: