



SERIES: GALATIANS

GALATIANS 4:3-11

January 11, 2010

3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to elementary principles of the world.

Children, by nature, are of a lower understanding than adults. People who have not been enlightened by the truth of God’s Word are like children who are slaves to worldly ways of thinking (also called elementary principles of the world). Our students were asked what kinds of “elementary principles” our world currently promotes, to which end they came up with the following chart:

Elementary Principal	The World Says...	The Bible says...
Sexual sin	Any and all kinds of sexual activity is permissible (and even to be sought after)	Sexual practice of any kind is for a husband and wife
Pride	Be arrogant, you are great	Be humble, God is great
Lying/deceit	Lie to protect yourself	Be honest
Abortion	Unborn babies are not people and are disposable	Unborn babies are people and possess value
Sexism/racism	Not all people are equal	All people are equal
Fame	Fame will bring happiness and is something worth pursuing	Fame leads to problems and God should be made famous
Fortune	Money is everything	Money is good but it is not everything
Selfishness	Take care of your own needs	Take care of others’ needs
Rebellion against authority	Authority should be fought against	Authority should be submitted to
Violence	Seek after revenge	Seek after peace
Immodesty	Dress to attract attention	Dress so as not to bring overt attention to yourself
Adultery	Sleeping around is good and normal	Sleeping around is sinful and punishable
Laziness	Do as little as you can to get by in life	Work hard and be productive
Political correctness	You should try not to offend anyone	You should try not to offend God
Substance abuse	Have fun	Have self-control

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were 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 your hearts, crying “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.



Instead of being slaves to the world and sin, God has saved us (Christians) and adopted us as his children. These two positions are contrasted:

Slaves (non-Christians)

- Enslaved to sin
- Treated poorly (cursed)
- Obey by obligation
- Are outsiders
- Has no inheritance

Sons (Christians)

- Free from sin
- Treated well (blessed)
- Obey by love
- Are part of the family
- Has an inheritance

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

Interestingly, the phrase "elementary principles" in verse 3 can also be translated as "elementary spirits". These spirits refer to demons who are false gods (vs. 8). Thus, worldly thinking ultimately has its source in Satan and demons.

9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to 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? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years! 11 I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Christians, who are adopted as sons (and daughters) of God ought not to go back to worldly ways of thinking. They should instead pursue righteousness and newness of mind through God's Word, prayer, and fellowship with other Christians. It is sad to know, however, that some who profess to believe are not of true faith and will fall back into the snares of sin, and those who labored over them will have done so in vain.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What elementary principles (worldly ways of thinking) do I currently believe? What can I do to think more like God does on these issues?
2. What does it mean to me that God has adopted me into his family?
3. What does it mean to me that my non-Christian friends and family are slaves to sin and apart from God?
4. How can I avoid being one of the false "Christians" who fall back into sin and subsequently cause pain to those who have taught me, mentored me, and prayed for me in vain?