

Paul's Concern

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] Let's go ahead and read our text for tonight.

That's Galatians chapter 4, verses 8 to 11. So Galatians chapter 4, verses 8 to 11.! Paul said, 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 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?

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid I have labored over you in vain. The main idea for this passage is simple.

Paul expresses concern because the Galatians are acting more like slaves than sons. Paul expresses concern because the Galatians are acting more like slaves than sons.

[1 : 04] Going at a slower pace through Scripture typically is good. We can dig more nuggets out of Scripture that way. But when we go slower, we sometimes can forget that Galatians is one letter.

And when it was first read to the original recipients, the letter likely was read in its entirety in one sitting. We know that Galatians 4.8 came immediately after verse 7 with no break.

We've had a week since we looked at verse 7. So to help set the stage for why Paul was so concerned, let's remind ourselves of what Paul said in Galatians 4.4-7.

So here are Galatians 4.4-7. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

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.

[2 : 17] We talked last time about how the theme of those verses is adoption. The Galatians were under Roman rule, and we talked about how under Roman rule, that adoption could never be revoked.

Natural-born heirs could be disinherited. Adopted heirs were permanent heirs. The Roman version of adoption had even more interesting features than that.

And when we understand those features, in addition to knowing what Roman adoption was about when it was permanent, we'll understand even better why Paul was so concerned about the Galatians.

Ancient Romans adopted male adults. Very rarely was a female adopted. And that is why when Paul talks about adoption, he talks about sons, because adoption was done with male adult young men.

Young men in their 20s and even in their 30s were adopted into wealthy families, families of status, families within the state, and any family of prominence.

[3 : 22] Even if those families had sons, they would adopt occasionally. And if they had no sons, or if they had sons that they didn't think were worthy of being the future of the family, they definitely would adopt another son.

And Roman adoption had four results. The adopted son had a new father. The adopted son was heir to his new father's estate.

All the adopted son's previous debts and responsibilities were wiped out. And if that adopted son owed anything to anyone anywhere, that was all gone.

Except for the connection with his biological family, adoption essentially erased his past life. The other thing about Roman adoption is that the adopted son was purchased from his biological family at a high price.

So consider those four benefits again. The adopted son got a new father. The adopted son became an heir to everything the father had.

[4 : 28] The adopted son's previous debts and responsibilities were erased. And the adopted son was purchased at a high price. So you can see why adoption in the Galatians context makes such a good picture of our salvation in Christ.

Add to those four things the fact that adoption was permanent. So even if a couple had an adopted son and later had biological sons, the biological sons could never supplant the adopted heir.

All the benefits of Roman adoption are why poorer families encourage their sons to be adopted.

And because those sons could maintain contact with their biological family, an adopted son could use his new position as an adopted heir to improve his biological family's quality of life.

Paul had no need to explain these benefits to the Galatians because the Galatians already knew about those benefits. Paul had simply told the Galatian believers that God sent his son to adopt them as God's heirs.

The Galatians had been taught the benefit of being heirs of God, and they'd been taught that only one gospel exists. That gospel proclaimed and still proclaims salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.

[5 : 55] The Galatians had been taught those things by Paul himself. And that is why Paul became so concerned when he heard that the Galatians were falling victim to the Judaizers.

The Galatians were believing the Judaizers lie that to be saved, the Galatians had to put their faith in Christ plus follow the laws of Judaism.

Remember some of Paul's comments in the earlier portions of this letter. Back in chapter 1, he wrote this in what we know as chapter 1, verses 6 through 9.

He said, I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

[6 : 57] And as we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Then how about what Paul said in Galatians chapter 3, verses 1 through 3. Here are Galatians 3, 1 through 3. He said, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Because Paul's letter to them originally would have been read in one sitting, those words and all of Paul's earlier comments would have been on the Galatians' minds as they heard the part of the letter that we will cover tonight.

So listen to tonight's verses one more time. Starting in Galatians 4, 8, it says, Formerly when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

[8 : 14] 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?

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid I have labored over you in vain. We'll break tonight's text into two sections.

Each section can be described by one word. And in verses 8 and 9, we see that the Galatians were confused. So confused is your first blank.

God had rescued the believers from being slaves of religion, either Judaism or pagan religion. God had adopted all the Galatian believers to be sons, but they were confused and not acting like that.

Remember that women believers received the same benefits as men, something that was a revolutionary concept when Paul wrote it. The end of Galatians 3 summarized those believers' benefits.

[9 : 22] Some of those benefits include regeneration, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, union, redemption, assurance, boldness, and prayer.

All of these things were theirs and their ours right now if we're one of Christ's believers as part of our inheritance. And as believers, we also receive eternal life and dominion over the earth.

Contrast those benefits to what life was like for the Galatians before God saved them. The same status applied to every believer before salvation, and we see that in verse 8.

It says, Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. The Christians in Galatia have received the inheritance by adoption, and they've been delivered from bondage.

Notice how Paul talks about their conversion. He describes the essence of conversion as knowing God. He reminds them that they did not always know God, but they had been delivered from spiritual slavery.

[10 : 38] Before they became Christians, the Jewish people in the Galatian congregation were in bondage because the devil took the law and twisted it for his own evil purpose.

And he did that to enslave men and women. God intended the law to reveal sin and drive men to Christ. Satan uses the law to reveal sin and drive men to despair.

God meant the law as an interim step to man's justification. Satan uses it as the final step to someone's condemnation. The bondage that the pagans had before they became Christians was even worse.

All pagan religions are products of sinful imaginations, and they bind their followers in superstitious bondage. Before their conversion, the pagan Galatians were in bondage to those who were not gods.

In reality, they were in bondage to demons. Paul here declares the foolishness of all false religions, and it's the foolish nature, too, of every unconverted heart.

[11 : 48] Man-made religions with their false gods bring a whole series of superstitious regulations and a constant striving to appease gods, and it also brings a constant fear of running afoul of those gods.

The gods can be jealous, whimsical, wrathful, and to serve them is to serve Satan and to be bound by Satan himself, because Satan ultimately is a source of all false religions.

When Paul says that the Galatian Christians formerly were enslaved by things that are not God, he's highlighting a very serious predicament. Regardless of what the Galatians had thought about their life before Christianity, before they knew God, Paul reminded them that they were being influenced by demons and demonic powers.

Regardless of whether those Christians had been Jews or pagans, they were under the bondage of a system that taught people that they had to earn their way to salvation.

And after that reminder, look at what Paul said next in verse 9. He says, So again, you see here that Paul reminds the Galatians that they know God.

[13 : 21] But this time, he reminds them of something that's even more important. He reminds them that because they're Christians, God knows them. Anyone can claim to know God, and nearly every false teacher makes that claim.

The key thing in determining if someone is a true Christian, if that person is an adopted heir and son of God, is whether God knows that person. The word translated as know means to know in a very deep and intimate sense.

Genesis, for example, says that Cain knew his wife, and she bore a son. And the term know here in our text tonight refers to God's covenant love and favor.

Amos chapter 3, verse 2, is an Old Testament passage that gives us the sense of the word know. Here are Amos chapter 3, verses 1, and the first part of verse 2.

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt. You only have I known of all the families of the earth.

[14 : 39] We know that God knows everything. And God, through Jesus, created everyone. So when he spoke these words to Amos, God obviously knew more people than just the Israelites.

What God was saying was that at that time, Israel was the only nation that he knew intimately, the only nation that he had chosen to save. The same concept carries forward to the New Testament. God reaffirms there that he knows only certain people intimately. Listen to what Jesus, God incarnate, said in John chapter 10, verse 14.

Here is John 10, 14. Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me.

Later in that same chapter, listen to what Jesus said in John 10, verses 27 through 30.

Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[15:55] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.

So, from John 10, 27, we see that Jesus knows who his people are, and we kept reading through John 10, 30, because these verses show the permanence of salvation, that same permanence that Paul demonstrated to the Galatians using the adoption analogy.

In Matthew, chapter 7, verses 21 through 23, part of the Sermon on the Mount, we also see the importance of Jesus knowing us.

Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew, chapter 7, verses 21 through 23. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do mighty works in your name?

[17:09] And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. These cross-references, and even more that we could look at, show the importance of Jesus knowing us.

And that is why Paul took the time to remind the Galatians what he said in verse 9, But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.

But look what comes after that reminder in Galatians 4 and 9. Here's that verse in its entirety. 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?

We talked about the meaning of elementary principles last week. The phrase has two possible meanings. One meaning can be basic building blocks or essential components, kind of like the ABCs.

For the Jews, the law could be considered an elementary principle. The law demonstrated a need for a savior, but the law itself could never and still can never save anyone.

[18:31] The second possible meaning was more common among the pagans. Among the pagans, elementary principles could refer to spiritual being, such as the elemental spirits of earth, air, fire, and water.

Perhaps when Paul spoke of being enslaved to the elementary principles of the world, he was referring to demonic powers. Both definitions fit here.

Going back to elementary principles would be like going back to kindergarten after graduating from high school or beyond. For believers, going back to elementary principles like the law also would show that the believers have fallen victim to demonic powers that try to convince people that salvation comes through works.

John Stott said, Our bondage was to evil spirits owing to our ignorance of God. Our sonship consists in the knowledge of God, knowing him and being known by him, in the intimacy of a personal communication with God, which Jesus called eternal life.

The last part of that John Stott quote is a reference to what Jesus said in his high priestly prayer. Listen to what Jesus said in John 17, 3.

[19:56] In John 17, 3, Jesus said to the Father, And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

So you see there that knowing God is equated with eternal life. Several times throughout Galatians, we've seen Paul contrast what believers once were to what they now have become.

The difference with the comparison that Paul makes in verses 8 and 9 of Galatians 4 is that Paul makes the contrast in relationship to our knowledge of God.

Paul is saying, Remember everything that you now know, and remember that God knows you. How could you go backward? Just in case we have any doubt about how Paul views the elementary principles, look at how he describes those principles.

He says that the elementary principles are weak and worthless. The phrase translated weak and worthless tells us the extent of the Galatians' regression.

[21:08] They were giving up the power of the gospel for the weakness of the law and the wealth of the gospel for the poverty of the law. The law never made anyone rich or powerful.

The law could only reveal man's weakness and man's spiritual bankruptcy. The Galatians were exchanging the benefits of being a son for the bondage of being a slave.

Warren Wearsby listed several contrasts between sons and servants. And those contrasts remind us of how much the Galatians were giving up by returning to the elementary principles. Let's look at those contrasts. The son has the same nature as the father. A slave does not. When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us and that means we are partakers of the divine nature, as Peter said in 2 Peter 1.4.

When the believer goes back into elementary principles, he's denying the very divine nature within and he's giving the old nature, the flesh, the opportunity to go to work.

[22 : 24] Another contrast is that the son has a father, the slave has a master. No slave could ever say father to his master.

But when the sinner trusts Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit within and the Holy Spirit tells him that he is a child of the father. We saw that when we looked at Romans chapter 8, verses 15 and 16 last week.

And we also see that when the spirit enters the heart, he says, Abba, father, from Galatians 4.6. So this shows the closeness of the child to the father.

No slave ever has this closeness with the master. Another contrast is that the son obeys out of love, the slave obeys out of fear.

The spirit works in the heart of the believer to quicken and increase the believer's love for God. When we get to Galatians 5.22, we'll see that the fruit of the spirit in part is love.

[23 : 32] Romans 5.5 tells us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The Judaizers told the Galatians that they would become better Christians by submitting to the law, but the law can never produce obedience.

Only love can produce true obedience. The son is rich and the servant is poor, so that's another contrast. We've talked about how we're both sons and heirs, and because we are adopted, placed as adult sons in the family, we may begin drawing on our inheritance right now.

God has made available to us the riches of his grace. We see that in Ephesians 1.7 and Ephesians 2.7. We also see that we have the riches of his glory.

That comes from Philippians 4.19. We have the riches of his goodness, as Romans 2.4 tells us, and we have the riches of his wisdom, and we see that if we look at Romans 11.33 and following.

All of the riches of God are found in Christ, and if you want proof of that, just look at Colossians 1.19 or Colossians 2.3. Here's one last contrast.

[24 : 56] The son has a future. The servant does not. Many kind masters did provide for their slaves in the slaves' old age, but it was never required of them.

In contrast, the father always provides for his sons. You can see that in 2 Corinthians 12.14. So when you think about those contrasts, why would anyone want to return to the slavery after being made an heir?

That question is another way to state Paul's question that he wrote, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more?

Perhaps what makes what was happening with the Galatians even more astonishing is that the Galatians were returning to bondage voluntarily. Paul said that they want to be slaves once more of the elementary principles of the world.

We see that from the last part of Galatians 4.9. We certainly can understand the language of the prodigal son who came to his father and said, I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[26 : 13] Treat me as one of your hired servants or slaves. But how can anybody be so foolish as to say, you have made me your son, but I would rather be a slave.

It's one thing to say, I do not deserve it. It's quite another to say, I do not desire it. I prefer slavery to sonship. But that was the folly of the Galatians under the influence of their false teachers.

So from verses 8 and 9, we have seen that the Galatian Christians were confused. And in verses 10 and 11, a different word describes Paul.

Paul is concerned. So Paul is concerned. Really, all four verses of tonight's passage show Paul's concern.

But the word fits even more with verses 10 and 11. In these verses, Paul gets even more specific about why he's so concerned. Look at verse 10 again.

[27 : 16] Paul wrote there, Observance of days and months and seasons and years is a general reference to a broad range of Jewish festivals, events, and celebrations.

The Judaizers were having an obvious effect on the Galatians. The Galatians, most of whom had been pagan before their conversion to Christ, had started observing Jewish festivals, events, and celebrations.

So the Galatian Christians' religion had degenerated into external formalism. It was no longer the free and joyful communion of children with their father.

It had become a dreary routine of rules and regulations and trying to comply with all of those rules and regulations. Most of those Galatian Christians were pagans who had worshipped demons, but then they were set free by the gospel.

But think about what we're seeing. Now they're turning to Jewish holy days and festivals, giving themselves to slavery and paganism again. So, we need to catch that.

[28 : 31] Paul is talking about those who celebrate these Jewish holy days and festivals as a way to get to God, and he's equating those ceremonies with the same pagan religious practices that the Galatians had escaped from.

In other words, Paul refers to these Jewish ordinances as demonic when they're approached as ways to make oneself right before God. John Stott said, the Christian life is not bondage to the law as if our salvation hung in the balance and depended upon our meticulous and slavish obedience to the letter of the law.

As it is, our salvation rests upon the finished work of Christ, on his sin-bearing, curse-bearing death embraced by faith. The Galatians were acting as if their salvation depended upon them rather than upon God.

We may never fall victim to the Judaizers, but we can fall victim to legalism. Let's think about a few things. If we go to church, sing songs, and study the Word thinking that this is how we're going to work to earn God's favor, then we're no different than the over one billion Hindus in the world today who are bowing down to their gods.

If our Christianity is a check-off box to make us feel good about ourselves before God or to save our skin on the day of judgment, then our Christianity is no different from every other religion in the world, and ultimately it will condemn us.

[30 : 10] Paul is uncovering a scheme of the devil in the first century, and that scheme continues in the 21st century. It's subtly and dangerously deceiving.

So here are some things to think about. What if Satan's strategy to condemn our souls involves not tempting us to do all the wrong things, but instead leading us to do all the right things with the wrong spirit?

What if Satan actually wants us to come to church, lead a small group, teach, and to lead our homes in an upright way? But what if he's in favor of doing all those things just so long as we think that by doing those things we're working our way to God?

Well, you might be thinking, well, I pray, but think about this. Muslims pray. You may say, well, I go to worship. Well, Hindus go to worship.

They worship all day long. You may say, I study the Bible. Well, so do Jehovah's Witnesses, and they can quote their version of the Bible better than most Christians can quote our version of the Bible.

[31 : 23] And you may think, well, I go on mission trips, but so do Mormons. Many of them give years of their lives to do that. John Wesley, one of the heroes of the faith, initially fell victim to legalism.

John Stott included this account of Wesley's life. He said, Wesley was the son of a clergyman and already a clergyman himself.

He was orthodox in belief, religious in practice, upright in conduct, and full of good works. He and his friends visited the inmates of the prisons and workhouses of Oxford.

They took pity on the slum children of the city, providing them with food, clothing, and education. They observed Saturday as the Sabbath as well as Sunday.

They went to church and to Holy Communion. They gave alms, searched the Scriptures, fasted, and prayed. But they were bound in the fetters of their own religion.

[32 : 31] They were trusting in themselves that they were righteous instead of putting their trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. A few years later, John Wesley, in his own words, came to trust in Christ and in Christ only for salvation.

And he was given an inward assurance that his sins had been taken away. After this, looking back to his pre-conversion experience, he wrote, I had even the faith of a servant, though not that of a son.

Of course, doing good works for the right reasons are good, but we should do good works because we are saved, not because we are trying to be saved. So we should pause here to address something that Paul raised in Romans 14 and also 1 Corinthians 8.

It might have crossed your mind as we've been going through this. In both Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul says that Christians have liberty to do whatever is lawful.

That's because believers are no longer bound to the bondage of legalism. However, Paul notes that we should never let our freedom in Christ become a stumbling block to a weaker believer.

[33 : 49] Let's look at Romans 14, verses 1-9. Here are Romans 14, 1-9. Paul wrote, As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but do not quarrel over opinions.

One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.

Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls, and he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

The one who observes the day observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats eats in honor of the Lord since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

[35 : 04] For none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself, for if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Skip down just a few verses in Romans 14 now and look at Romans 14 verses 13 through 19.

Paul said in Romans 14 13 through 19, Therefore, let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it is unclean. For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love.

By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[36 : 24] Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. So do you see the difference between what Paul tells us in Galatians and what he says here in Romans?

In Galatians, the people were doing some things and avoiding doing some other things because they thought that following the law was necessary for salvation. In Romans, Paul says that we should avoid doing certain things if those things would offend a weaker believer.

Instead, we should gently try to explain to the weaker believer the freedom that he has in Christ. Many of you know that we had a regular attendee here who tried his best to follow all the laws of Judaism.

His reasoning for that, whenever everybody tried to talk to him about that, was he wanted to cover all the bases. That person had physical limitations that made it difficult for him to get his own food when we had our numerous birthday fellowships, Monday night potlucks, and other dinners.

And if you've been to even one of those dinners, you know that nearly every one of those meals has food that is not kosher. But in the case of that regular attendee, Jerry, James, and others were good at modeling how to avoid offending the weaker believer.

[37 : 53] Whenever they filled the weaker believer's plate, they avoid giving him pork or anything else that would have violated his conscience. And they and several others also repeatedly tried to show him from Scripture why he no longer needed to be in bondage to the Jewish law.

Well, we have one more verse to cover tonight. And going back to Galatians 4, Paul reminds us of his concern and he summarizes it by saying in verse 11, I am afraid I may have labored over you in

vain.

Paul fears that all the time and trouble that he spent over the Galatians has been wasted. Instead of growing in the liberty with which Christ had set them free, they have slipped back into the old bondage.

So remember the main idea. Paul expresses concern because the Galatians are acting more like slaves than sons. The way for us to avoid the Galatians folly is to heed Paul's words.

Let God's word keep telling us who and what we are if we are Christians. We must keep reminding ourselves that what we have is great and what we are in Christ is even better.

[39 : 13] One of the great purposes of daily Bible reading, meditation, and prayer is just this, to get ourselves correctly oriented and to remember who and what we are.

We need to say to ourselves, once I was a slave, that God has made me his son and put the spirit of his son into my heart. How can I turn back to the old slavery?

And then we need to say it again, once I did not know God, but now I know him and I have come to be known by him, how can I turn back to the old ignorance?

By the grace of God, we must remember and be determined to remember that once we were unsaved and we should never want to return to that.

We need to remember what God has made us and we need to conform our lives to that. John Stott's commentary on Galatians includes the story of John Newton.

[40 : 11] I'm sure many of you have heard that story before. He's best known for writing the hymn, Amazing Grace. But consider these facts about Newton. He was an only child and he lost his mother when he was seven years old.

He went to sea at the tender age of eleven and later became involved in the words of one of his biographers in the unspeakable atrocities of the African slave trade.

He plumbed the depths of human sin and degradation. When he was 23 on March 10, 1748, when his ship was in imminent peril of foundering in a terrific storm, he cried to God for mercy and he found it.

John Newton was truly converted and he never forgot how God had mercy upon him, a former blasphemer. He sought diligently to remember what he'd previously been and what God had done for him.

And to imprint that on his memory, he had written in bold letters and fastened over the wall of the mantelpiece of his study, the words of Deuteronomy 15.15. Deuteronomy 15.15 says, Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman, another word for slave, in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.

[41 : 36] So we can make Christianity just like every other world religion and do our checkboxes every week and go through the routine and the ritual, or we can step into the intimate presence of God.

We ought not to be a people who prayed a prayer a while ago and now are just trying to do our best to get things right with our lives. We should be people who walk with God and know him intimately. We ought to serve God wholeheartedly, not because we're trying to make ourselves right, but because we have been made right with God by God's grace. We will walk with him as sons who know him and love him and enjoy him and glorify him, no matter what it costs us.

There's another aspect of Roman adoption that we skipped during our overview. Roman adoption took place in two stages. First, there was a private ceremony at which the son was purchased.

Then there was a public ceremony at which the adoption was declared openly before the officials. In the public adoption ceremony, according to one source, there were seven witnesses, and yes, that is seven witnesses, and they were designed to establish the legality of it and to testify to it.

[43 : 01] Because think about what would happen when the father passed away. The other children of the wealthy family likely would be tempted to contest that adoption.

When the estate started getting passed out, other family members would be overlooked, and there could be conflict. In believers' adoption as sons of God, Christians have experienced the first stage. We have been purchased by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. We are awaiting the second stage, the public declaration at the return of Christ when we shall be like him.

And 1 John chapter 3, verses 1 through 3, tells us that we one day will be like him. We are sons and heirs, and the best part of our inheritance is yet to come.

So we've heard what Paul has said about our inheritance as believers. Listen to how Peter describes our inheritance. These verses are 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 through 5.

[44 : 04] 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 3 through 5 say, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for the reminder of what you have done for us when you have adopted believers into your family.

When we become tempted to do certain things in your name because we are trying to earn favor with you, let us remember that you've already accomplished everything necessary for us to be in favor with you.

Let us be motivated to do things for you, instead to show our gratitude to you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. Amen. Thank you.