

I always wanted a nanny. I grew up on Mary Poppins and on Sound of Music and if Julie Andrews had been my nanny, I would have been the perfect child. If you were born after 1985, you probably do not know who these people are. The nannies of your generation are Nanny 911, or Super Nanny. I love Super Nanny! But the only problem is she doesn't stick around to actually raise the child.

Paul tells us in today's Scripture that the law acted as a nanny for God's people. Because the world was not a God-embracing environment, God provided the law so that we could be tutored in the ways of God. We were subject to elemental spirits that controlled and enslaved us and the law was like a nanny because it kept before us God's principles. That nanny lets the child of God know through discipline, encouragement, and help, what is acceptable behavior.

This is a revolutionary change. Why have things changed? Let's READ (Galatians 3:23-4:7)

We needed a nanny because it's a tough and dangerous world, spiritually. Sin resides in the world and sin resides in us. In fact, we are enslaved by it. Slavery is a devastating thing. I don't think we realize the immensity of the bondage. In 1841 there was an African American man who was a free citizen of the state of New York. He was kidnapped and sold into slavery, ending up in a remote area of Louisiana. He was enslaved for 12 years before being rescued and set free.

When someone is subject to slavery, he or she is subject to the demands, the provisions, the protection, and the moral beliefs of the slaveholder. When the slaveholder was good, things went relatively well for the slave. When his owner was cruel, his life suffered the brunt of that evil. Mr. Northup, who wrote the book, describes slavery as "the threshold of unutterable wrong, and sorrow, and despair."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps God saw our enslavement to sin in a similar light and thus God's extraordinary effort to rescue us and restore us to liberty.

Do you ever see sin that way, as something that creates sorrow and despair and is unutterably wrong? Do you ever feel in bondage to sin or enslaved by sin? I do! Do you have a quick temper or a critical nature? Are you impatient or greedy or depressed or selfish with money? *Do you say to yourself, I can never change!*

This Scripture says God sent Jesus to rescue us out of all of that. He came in to rescue his kids. Jesus had faith. That faith played out in his saving action, which demonstrated God's faithfulness to the promise God made to Abraham. The act of Jesus in coming to earth is an act of God as well – an act of faith, or faithfulness. Do you realize that?

So, it was the faith of Jesus Christ which he exercised when he became incarnate that rescued us from slavery to sin. It was his faith that opened up the opportunity for us to inherit the promise to Abraham. Jesus had faith, and his faith leads to our faith. Jesus had faith, and in like manner, we respond with faith. It is dual faith – Christ's perfect faith and obedience to leave heaven and come here to live among us, awakens our own faith to hear and respond to God. Those two elements lead to our adoption as God's children. We share in the life of God.

---

<sup>1</sup>Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1996), 11.

So we have been babysat or supervised and protected by the law, but now our Father has come for us and clothed us in the robes of the perfect faith of the Son. We are God's children. But what does it mean exactly, to be God's child?

The best way to get a picture of that is the example of my son David and his 15-month-old daughter, Evie. When they are with us at our home, I love to watch her. She adores her daddy. The feeling is mutual. She hangs out with him and wants to be noticed. She shows him her toys and shares them with him, no matter what he's doing. She doesn't understand when he leaves; she doesn't know where her food comes from when he sets it before her; she doesn't understand the work he does to provide her with clothes and other things. But he rocks her world. She loves him and he loves her. He is the center.

Do you see the role of the rules? Do you see why it's not about the rules? We have our dad now, in a way that we can see him. Jesus has given us that. Jesus Christ has activated the new way of relating to God, in faith. We are clothed in it; we are submerged or baptized in it; we belong. The Heidelberg Confession says, "I belong to God, body and soul, in life and death." Are you estranged? Are you distant? Or is God your center?

But many of us have broken human families in one way or another. We have failed one another and division occurs. It's hard to overcome division in an intact family, and harder still in a blended family. I want to share with you that it can be done, though. We have six children and we have harmony and fellowship among all the parents and children, even to the point of joyfully celebrating holidays together. It didn't begin that way for us, but we grew into it. Estrangement from God and one another can be overcome by the child of God.

God takes us all in and there is no longer any division. Let's reread: <sup>28</sup>"There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." Today we might substitute step or foster relations or denominational differences for "Jews and Greeks." Perhaps our own denomination needs to understand this, because we are fraught with differences. What brings us together? Being clothed with Christ. Being united to Christ. Loving him first and most. Belonging to Christ and letting his character come alive in us.

So through faith, ours and Christ's, we gain this new family, a family characterized by unity, by newness of life, by a God who loves us, and who then gives us an inheritance. Did you hear it? Listen again:

<sup>29</sup> And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you."

Do you feel like an heir, or do you feel more like an orphan? We have this gigantic windfall and we don't seem to see it. Can you feel the love? Do you see that you are no longer subject to the nanny, or the law, rather, you have a father now, who has adopted you and given you an inheritance?

One of my children says, "You think my brother is more special than me!" Just in case you are like him and don't feel special or wanted, Paul tell us to certify that truth, <sup>4:7</sup>God has sent the

Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba!" "Father!" You are no longer a slave, you are now a child; and if a child, an heir."

We must get off the fence of the law, of questioning whether we are acceptable to God, of judging ourselves as unwanted and unworthy because we don't measure up. Embrace with joy that you are simply beloved. You have a Father, and you are his child. Do you have an intimate, Spirit-filled moment by moment relationship with God where he is your center of existence, like my son and his daughter? Though she doesn't understand everything, she trusts. Don't hold back! Cast yourself into that love the way you are, good and bad, trusting that God accepts you.

Sometimes it's hard to trust, isn't it? Life's hard breaks make us think God isn't here, or that God doesn't care. Paul's message to us in this passage, in fact, this whole book is laden with God's love and care.

Once a pastor named S.M. Lockridge wondered about the love of God and so he went through Scripture and compiled something to help us understand it. Listen to it as I read it:

"He's the one who made you, it is He who made us and not we ourselves. The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork. No means or measure can define His limitless love and no farseeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of His shoreless supply. I'M TELLING YOU TODAY YOU CAN TRUST HIM

No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing. He's enduringly strong and He's entirely sincere. He's eternally steadfast and He's immortally graceful. He's imperially powerful and He's impartially merciful. He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He's God's Son, He's the sinner's Savior, He's the centerpiece of civilization. I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU CHURCH, YOU CAN TRUST HIM!

He does not have to call for help and you can't confuse Him. He doesn't need you and He doesn't need me. He stands alone in the solitude of Himself. He's august and He's unique. He's unparalleled, He's unprecedented, He's supreme, He's preeminent, He's the loftiest idea in literature, He's the highest personality in philosophy, He's the supreme problem of higher criticism, He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology, He's the cardinal necessity of spiritual religion, He's the miracle of the age, He's the superlative of everything good you can call Him. I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU CHURCH, YOU CAN TRUST HIM!

He can satisfy all your needs, and He can do it simultaneously. He supplies strength for the weak and He's available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He sees. He guards and He guides, He heals the sick, He cleansed the Leper, He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers the captives, He defends the feeble, He blesses the young, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent, He beautifies the meek, I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU CHURCH, YOU CAN TRUST HIM!

He's the key to knowledge, He's the well spring of wisdom, He's the doorway of deliverance, He's the pathway of peace, He's the roadway of righteousness, He's the highway of holiness, He's the gateway to glory, YOU CAN TRUST IN HIM!

He's the master of the mighty, He's the captain of the conquerors, He's the head of heroes, He's the leader of legislators, He's the overseer of the overcomers, He's the governor of the governors, He's the prince of princes, He's the king of kings, He's the Lord of lords, YOU... CAN... TRUST... HIM!!!

His office is manifold, His promise is sure, His life is matchless, His goodness is limitless, His mercy is everlasting, His love never changes, His word is enough, His grace is sufficient, His reign is righteous, His yoke is easy, His burden is light, I wish I could describe Him too you, He's indescribable because He's incomprehensible, He's irresistible because He's invincible. You can't get Him off your hands, you can't get Him off your mind, you can't outlive Him and you can't live without Him. Pilate couldn't stand it when he found he couldn't stop Him, and Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him. And the witnesses couldn't get their testimonies to agree and Herod couldn't kill Him, and death couldn't handle Him and thank God the grave couldn't hold Him. (AMEN)

There was nobody before Him and there will be nobody after Him. He has no predecessor, He'll have no successor, you can't impeach Him and He's not going to resign. YOU CAN TRUST HIM!!!”

AMEN.