

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

GALATIANS 4:1-11, *AN ILLUSTRATION OF FAITH OVER WORKS AND AN APPEAL*

- A. An illustration from family life (1-7)
1. There is no difference between the heir who is a child and that of a slave (1-2), ***I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.***
 - a. Paul expands on his description of the Law in Galatians 3:23-29 with another illustration.
 - 1) It is like a prison warden in Galatians 3:22, *But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*
 - 2) It is like a baby sitter (guardian of the person) in Galatians 3:24, *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*
 - 3) Now, it is like a legal guardian who protects the estate of an heir who is still a child.
 - 4) Paul added the word *managers* which gives added emphasis to the idea of *one who has authority over something or someone.*
 - b. The need for a legal guardian is because of immaturity.
 - 1) A child is incapable of handling affairs on his own even though he may have a large inheritance.
 - 2) The Law is the guardian no longer needed once a person trusts Christ.
 - 3) A Christian is spiritually able to function by faith instead of by works, led by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.
 - c. *until the date set by his father*
 - 1) This pictures the time in which a person is released from bondage.
 - 2) Spiritually speaking, it is when Jesus Christ came to redeem sinners.
 - a) Mark 1:15, *and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*
 - b) 1 Timothy 2:6, *who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*
 - c) Note Galatians 4:4, *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,*
 2. There was no difference for a Jew or Gentile before they came to faith (3), ***In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.***
 - a. *In the same way we also*
 - 1) Paul compares everyone who comes to faith to a child under a guardian.
 - 2) Jews and Gentiles were held in bondage until freed by faith in Christ alone.
 - b. Paul expanded the concept of guardian or captor with the description *the elementary principles of the world.*
 - 1) He used this term here and in Galatians 4:9. Also, he used a similar descriptor in Colossians 2:8 and 20, *elemental spirits of the world.*
 - 2) The word *elemental* means *placed side by side in a row*, like ABCs which are basic principles of reading.
 - 3) These elemental things are basic philosophical or religious teachings.
 - a) For Jews, the elemental things refers to the Law which was also a protective covering for the nation of Israel. Warren Wiersbe, *So, when the Judaizers led the Galatians back into legalism, they were leading them not only into religious bondage, but also into moral and spiritual infancy and immaturity.*
 - b) For Gentiles, they would have been teachings of pagan religion directed by Satan whose purpose is to destroy. Robert Wilkin, *... even Gentiles were held captive by the elements of the world. Most likely this is a generic reference to any type of legalistic way by which some tried to gain acceptance with God.*
 3. Jesus Christ came making possible the release of captives destined to be adopted sons of God (4-5), ***But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.***
 - a. *But*
 - 1) Paul looks back to verse 3 which reminds us of the time of enslavement.
 - 2) Now, he reveals God's time of release for sinners even as in Roman culture the father determined the proper time of passage to adulthood of children.

- b. *when the fullness of time had come*
 - 1) The emphasis Paul is making is probably not that it was the right time because of conditions. It is true that conditions were ripe where Roman civilization brought peace and road system which enabled spreading the Gospel. The Greek language became the means of communication throughout the region. Also, Jewish synagogues were spread throughout the region promoting monotheism and a coming Messiah.
 - 2) Here, Paul refers to the appearing of Jesus Christ
 - a) The transition period of guardian to sonship took place at the appearing of Jesus Christ.
 - b) Faith replaces law because Jesus Christ redeems captives from the law.
 - c. God sent His Son because Jesus alone can redeem.
 - 1) Jesus is fully God because He is God's Son.
 - 2) He is fully man because He was born of a woman.
 - 3) Jesus was born under the Mosaic Law but alone fulfilled it perfectly, Matthew 5:17, *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*
 - 4) Jesus paid the curse, Galatians 3:13, *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—*
 - d. The reasons why God sent His Son.
 - 1) *to redeem those who were under the law.*
 - a) It was not intended for mankind to remain as children under the Law.
 - b) Why should the Galatians want to be placed under the law when Jesus came to redeem them from it?
 - 2) *adoptions as sons*
 - a) Christ's finished work at the cross secures for believers full rights of sons.
 - b) A Christian is no longer a child under a guardian but a son of God.
 - c) John Stott, *Notice that God's purpose was both to 'redeem' and to 'adopt;' not just to rescue from slavery, but to make slaves into sons.*
 - 3) Max Anders, *These rights (redemption and sonship) come as a gift, or they don't come at all. Human effort can never secure them.*
 - e. O, foolish Galatians, why go back?
4. Those adopted as sons receive the indwelling Holy Spirit (6), ***And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"***
- a. Paul makes his appeal to the Galatians very personal.
 - 1) He declares *because you are sons.*
 - 2) He wants them to picture themselves as what they are instead of what they were.
 - 3) O, foolish Galatians, why go back?
 - b. Adopted children of God receive the Spirit of His Son.
 - 1) All sons and daughters possess the Holy Spirit, Romans 5:5, . . . *because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*
 - 2) He is a gift received at salvation as a down payment of our inheritance, Ephesians 1:13-14, *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*
 - 3) He confirms that the recipient is a child of God, Romans 8:15-16, *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*
 - 4) The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart which is the seat of the will.
 - a) Proverbs 4:23, *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life..*
 - b) John Stott, *God has sent His Spirit into our hearts. And the way He assures us of our sonship is not by some spectacular gift or sign, but by the quiet inward witness of the Spirit as we pray.*
 - c. Adopted children of God are directed by the Holy Spirit to address God as Father.
 - 1) *Abba*
 - a) It is the Aramaic word for *Father*.
 - b) It was used by small children in addressing their fathers and is similar to the English word *Daddy*.
 - 2) It conveys the idea that as children of God our relationship to God is intimate rather than formal.
 - a) Timothy George, . . . *it would be presumptuous and daring beyond all propriety to address God as Abba had Jesus himself not bidden us to do so.*
 - b) Matthew 6:9, *Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

- d. Adopted children of God are empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) H. B. Swete, *The purpose of the Son's mission was to give the rights of sonship; the purpose of the Spirit's mission, to give the power of using them.*
 - 2) John Stott, *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.*
5. Those who are sons of God are heirs not slaves (7), ***So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.***
 - a. *so*
 - 1) This marker looks back to verse 5, emphasizing the result of *adoption as sons*.
 - 2) Paul lists the results of adoption as children of God.
 - a) A Christian is no longer a slave.
 - b) A Christian is a son.
 - c) Because a Christian is a son, he is now God's heir.
 - 1] We are co-heirs with Christ according to Romans 8:17, *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*
 - 2] Grant Osborne, *Roman law stipulated that an adopted child had a right of inheritance only if the natural child (a non-adopted sibling) allowed it, so our inheritance comes by the agreement of both the Father and the Son.*
 - b. Comparisons of a son to a servant (from Warren Wiersbe)
 - 1) *The son has the same nature as the father, but the servant does not.*
 - 2) *The son has a father, while the servant has a master.*
 - 3) *The son obeys out of love, while the servant obeys out of fear.*
 - 4) *The son is rich, while the servant is poor.*
 - 5) *The son has a future, while the servant does not.*
 - c. Max Anders, *Paul concludes that the Galatians were no longer slaves but were sons and heirs. Thus, under grace we have progressed from being slaves to being sons and heirs. Grace is adulthood. Law is childhood. With the privileges of adulthood, why regress back to the law?*
- B. Paul's appeal to the Galatians (8-11)
 1. Paul asked the Galatians why would they want to return to slavery when they have a relationship with the true God (8-9), ***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?***
 - a. Paul spoke to the Gentile Galatians concerning their past.
 - 1) He said ***you*** *were enslaved to false Gods, or elemental principles.*
 - a) They did not know God.
 - b) 1 Corinthians 8:4, *Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."*
 - 2) Now, they are considering turning back to *elemental principles*, the Law.
 - a) G. B. Caird, *The demonic forces of legalism, then, both Jewish and Gentile, can be called 'principalities and powers' or 'elemental spirits of the world.*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *Both Jewish and Gentile converts had lived bound to worldly elemental forces until Christ released them. These forces include everything in which people place their trust apart from God: their gods to which they become slaves.*
 - c) Richard Longenecker, *Though the pre-Christian experiences of Jews and Gentiles were decidedly different, Paul thinks of both as times of enslavement.*
 - b. Paul reminded them of their present.
 - 1) They *have come to know God* (the means of knowing is: God calls and man responds).
 - a) They are no longer slaves but adopted children of God.
 - b) They are co-heirs with Christ.
 - c) They had experienced the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is the seal of their sonship.
 - 2) Paul explained himself by saying *rather to be known by God* which emphasizes the divine initiative.
 - a) Romans 3:11, *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*
 - b) Romans 8:29-30, *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- c) Acts 16:14, *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*
 - d) Galatians 1:6, *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—*
- c. Paul encouraged them concerning their future.
- 1) Paul asked them why should they turn back to weak things that once enslaved them.
 - 2) Donald Campbell, *Paul was amazed and dismayed. Did they understand that they would be going back to a state of religious slavery? Was this their desire? If so, why would they be attracted to a system that was weak (it could not justify or energize for godly living) and miserable (it could not provide an inheritance).*
 - 3) O, foolish Galatians, why go back?
2. They had turned to observing the Mosaic calendar in hope of gaining favor with God (10-11), ***You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.***
- a. Paul spoke to them of their transition from faith to works.
- 1) Judaizers urged them to observe Mosaic rituals.
 - 2) One way was through observing feasts, Max Anders, *These seasonal events included special days (weekly Sabbaths), months (new moons), and seasons (Festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles).*
 - 3) Paul as a Jewish Christian observed the feasts for different reasons.
 - a) 1 Corinthians 16:8, *But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *He did not observe them because God expected him to do so but because they were a part of his cultural heritage. He also did so because he did not want to cast a stumbling block in the path of Jews coming to faith in Christ.*
 - 4) The Galatians Jews were turning to the feasts in hopes of gaining favor with God.
 - a) Colossians 2:16, *Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.*
 - b) Donald Campbell, *But Paul had already made it clear that works could not be added to faith as grounds for either justification or sanctification.*
- b. Paul feared his ministry to the Galatians was for nothing.
- 1) If the Galatians turned away from faith to works, Paul feared his ministry to the Galatians was wasted.
 - 2) He was concerned about their salvation. Since justification is by faith, a Galatian turning to works would call salvation into question.
 - 3) Max Anders, *If they continued in legalism, Paul feared that his efforts on them would have been wasted. This could mean one of two things. It could mean that the Galatians were true Christians but that Paul's efforts to spur them on to spiritual maturity in Christ were not fruitful. Or it could mean that he feared that not turning from their legalism could indicate that they were never Christians in the first place.*

CONCLUSION

- A. A Christian is adopted into the family of God and is a co-heir with Christ.
- B. A Christian's position is confirmed by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- C. It is foolish to give up freedom in Christ for enslavement to works.