

5/31/98

Sons Of Freedom Or Slaves Of Bondage?
Galatians 4:1-11

Every so often you read of an individual who inherits a great fortune and due to his young immaturity he throws it away by his choice of life-style.

The most natural response of any person would be, “Why would he choose to throw it all away and settle for so little in life?”

This is precisely what Paul was saying to the Galatians who desired to be slaves under the law rather than sons of God through faith in Christ according to promise.

The Galatians had acted like unappreciative heirs who were willing to throw away the riches of their inheritance as sons of Abraham, in order to be slaves of the law.

Therefore Paul points out to them the difference between an heir of the law and an heir of grace by declaring three truths to them. 4:1-11

- I. The inferior position of an heir under law. vs. 1-3
- II. The superior position of an heir under grace. vs. 4-7

III. The inferior regression of an heir under grace to law. vs. 8-11

I. The inferior position of an heir under law. vs. 1-3

* Inferiority not in source but only in that law was temporary and preparatory for grace.

- A. The explanation of inferiority. 4:1-2
 1. The heir under law was a minor. vs. 1a-b
 - a. The word child “nepios” was a child under age, a minor in contrast to an adult child.
 - b. One who could not discern things clearly and in need of ongoing and future instruction.
 2. The heir under law did not differ at all from a slave, though he was master of all. vs. 1c-d
 - a. Both were minors children.
 - b. Both were under others control.
 3. The heir to be was under guardians and he could not do as he wanted. vs. 2
 - a. The word guardians “epitropos” refers to one who has the care of a child's person.
 - b. The person would be like an overseer.
 4. The heir was under stewards and he managed nothing. vs. 2

- a. The word stewards “oikonomos” means a manager of a household with financial responsibilities.
 - b. Jesus used it in this parable of the faithful and wise steward at His return. Lk. 12:42
5. The heir was on probation until the time appointed by the father. vs. 2
- a. This illustration is more from Greek and Roman law, not Jewish.
 - b. The Greeks, 7-18 cared by father, then at 18 he entered into full responsibility as an adult.
 - 1) It took place at the festival of “Apatouria”.
 - 2) The child passed from his father to the state.
 - c. The Romans at age 14 the child was released of the guardian and 25 years of the steward.
 - 1) It took place at the family festival called “Liberalia”.
 - 2) It was held annually on the 17th of March.
 - 3) The young man was acknowledged and adopted as a son and heir, receiving a garment called "Toga", thereby becoming a citizen with full rights.

- d. The Phrygian law varied more in age and custodian function at the discretion of the father.
- B. The application of inferiority. vs. 3
- 1. The Jews who were heirs under law were minor children spiritually. vs. 3a-b
 - a. Even so “we” , the Jews were children under the law.
 - b. The Jews were kept under guard by the law. 3:23
 - c. The law was a tutor to bring them to Christ. 3:24-25
 - 2. The Jews who were heirs under law were in bondage under the law. vs. 3c
 - a. They were in bondage under the elements of the world.
 - b. The word elements “stoicheia” is a military term and means a row, rank or series of things, referring to basic principles such as ABC of the alphabet.
 - 1) It is used of the basic principles of the world opposed to the revelation of God's Word. Col. 2:8, 20
 - 2) It is used of basic principles of God's Word for the Christian. Heb. 5:12
 - * The context will determines meaning.

- 3) It is used of the physical elements that are to melt with fervent heat,.. 2 Pet. 3:10
- c. Paul is using the word in this verse to refer to the elements of the law, that is the duties and methods prescribed, due to the fact that they were preparatory and temporal to that which was to come and not an end in themselves. vs. 2

Illustration

The inferiority of an heir under law was so because of his temporary and preparatory relation to the heir in Christ, much like a baby in the 9 month development and after being born.

Application

Some times people in the church get caught up with legalism of self-righteousness and begin to emphasize certain things as marks of true righteousness and true spirituality.

1. Some begin to impose a diet of vegetables rather than meat as a sign of being more spiritual. Rom. 14:1-3
- a. The principle is that we are to receive the one who is weak in the faith and not to disputes with them over doubtful things. vs. 1
- * Doubtful things, are those of personal conscience which the Scriptures say

- nothing about and they are not sin in and of themselves!
- b. The second principle is that the one who eats all things is the stronger spiritually and the one who is unable to eat the meat and only vegetables is the weaker spiritually. vs. 2
- * This is only if it is a choice due to the defilement of their conscience, if it is by choice of health or a mere choice without attaching any spiritual superiority, then it does not mean they are spiritually weaker or immature!
- c. The third principle is that the one who eats is not to despise him who does not eat and he who does not eat, not judge him who eats; for God has received him. vs. 3
- * There is to be given to every individual room to grow and mature in Christ and what God judges most is our attitudes towards others!
2. Some will always bring up the Sabbath day and how we as Christians are to keep it.
- a. Their reasoning is that it is in the ten commandments and we are to called to keep the ten commandments.
- b. Their lack of reasoning is recognizing that none of us keep the ten commandment every time or at all times.
- c. The covenant of the Sabbath was made with Israel. Ex. 20:8

* "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

- d. The church was never commanded nor was it even mentioned at the first church council, when they discussed the fact of circumcision and what the Gentile Christians were obligated to do according to the law. Acts 15
- 1) They said, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. Acts 15:28-29
 - 2) And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." Mk. 2:24, 27-28

The position of an heir under law was inferior!

II. The superior position of an heir under grace. vs. 4-7

* Superiority in that having a relation to the law it is the fulfillment of the law!

- A. The explanation of superiority. 4:4-5
1. The heir under grace and God's plan. vs. 4
 - a. The plan of grace stands in sharp contrast to the law. vs. 4
 - 1) The word "But" is a contrasting conjunction.
 - 2) The phrase "the fullness of time" is another contrast to the temporal time of the law. vs. 2
 - 3) The phrase also marked the end of God's preparatory time through the law, the sum total or completion of prophetic fulfillment. vs. 4a
 - b. The word time "chronos" refers to linear or running time.
 - 1) We get our word chronology from it.
 - 2) Paul is signifying the set and God appointed time in man's history for the New covenant of grace and the proclamation of the gospel to appear.
 - c. The various things that existed at the time to make the gospel reach many were incredible.
 - 1) The Scriptures had been gathered under Ezra under the Great Synagogue, the canon was established..

- 2) The synagogues were instituted to study the Scriptures anticipating a Savior.
- 3) The Greek language had been established as the common tongue by Alexander the Great.
- 4) Rome had united the empire by extensive roads for travel and communication.
- 5) Rome was in a time of unity and peace known as "Pax Romana" and the shrine of the god of war, Janus, was closed.
* The Month of January is named after him.
- 6) The world was experiencing a time of a religious void.
 - a)) Time appointed by God the father. vs. 2
 - b)) Paul told the Corinthians that the end of the ages had come. I Cor. 10:11
 - c)) The author of Hebrews tells his audience that they were in the last days. Heb. 1:2
- d. The phrase "God sent forth His Son" marked The Son's commission. vs. 4b
 - 1) The phrase sent forth "exapostello" means out of one who sends another with a commission. Heb. 3:1 deity.

- 2) The pre-existence of Jesus is not the Paul's intent in the context as some often point out, though it can be inferred. Mic. 5:2, Jn. 1:1
- c. The phrase "born of a woman under the law", refers to his humanity and the method.
 - 1) Born of a woman simply refers to a physical human birth.
 - a)) The phrase is used of John the Baptist's birth also. Matt. 11:11, Lk. 7:28
 - b)) Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. Job 14:1
 - 2) Some interpret this to mean the Jesus was born of a virgin birth but it is foreign to the context, Paul is emphasizing the commission and method of His birth.
* Gen. 3:15, Jn. 1:14, Phil. 2:7-8, Heb. 2:9
- d. The phrase "under the law" reveals His mission, to fulfill the Law through perfect obedience.
 - 1) He put Himself subject to and obedient as a man to perfect fulfillment.
 - 2) I do always those things that please the Father. Jn. 8:29.
 - 3) Which of you convicts me of sin? Jn. 8:46

* Yet He was born without sin.
Rom. 8:3, 2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 7:26-27.

2. The heir under grace and God's purpose.
vs. 5

a. To redeem those who were under the law.

* The word redeem "exagorazo" means to buy out from the slave market in view of his freedom. 1:4, 3:13, I Cor. 6:20, I Pet. 1:18-19.

b. To receive the adoption as sons.

1) The word adoption "huiiothesia" means the placing of a son.

2) The word is used in Roman law to give the Place of a legitimate son to whom it didn't naturally belong.

3) Paul uses it five times in the New Testament. Rom. 8:15, 23, 9:4, Gal. 4:5, Eph. 1:5

B. The application of superiority. 4:6-7

1. The heir under grace is an adult son, not a minor or slave as those under the law.
vs. 6a, 7a

a. The word sons "huios" is an adult son, found four times in verses six and seven.

1) Sons of Abraham. 3:7

2) No longer under guardians and stewards. vs. 2

2. The heir under grace has received the Holy Spirit of God's Son in his heart. vs. 6b

a. The word heart "kardia" stands for man's entire personality of intellect, will and emotions.

1) Without God's Spirit, man's heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and all manner of evil comes from it. Jer. 17:9, Matt. 15:19

2) With God's Spirit, man is able to keep his heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Prov. 4:23

b. Called the Spirit of Christ and eternal Spirit. Rom. 8:9-10, Heb. 9:14

-The entire trinity is present. vs. 6

3. The heir under grace has received a new and superior relationship crying out Abba, Father. vs. 6c-d

a. The word "Abba" is Aramaic for daddy, a loving, confident and intimate relation, appearing three times in the New Testament.

b. Jesus used it in prayer regarding the Father. Mk. 14:36.

c. Paul says, "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba Father". Rom. 8:15.

- d. It is the Spirit that cries out not the person. Rom. 8:15
 * Even as it is the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that can not be uttered, according to the will of God. Rom. 8:27
- 4. The heir under grace is an heir of God. vs. 7b
 - a. Through Christ.
 * To the Romans he says that through the person of Christ, we are joint heir. Rom. 8:17
 - b. According to the promise. 3:29
 * No works, not law, but faith and grace!
 - c. Our inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven. 1Pet. 1:4
 - d. Our inheritance is called an eternal inheritance. Heb. 9:15

Illustration

In his splendid book of anecdotes entitled Bible Windows, Ivor Powell tells the story of a rich man who died and left no heirs. When his household goods were auctioned off, an elderly lady dressed in shabby garments was the only one to bid on the picture of the dead man's son. It had been greatly cherished by the wealthy father because his only child had died at an early age.

But the crowd that had gathered for the sale showed no interest in it. When the woman who bought the portrait was asked why she wanted it, she said she had been the boy's nurse many years before, and had loved him dearly.

Later she examined the picture closely and noticed a bulge in the heavy paper on the back. Making a small cut, she removed an envelope which turned out to be the man's missing will. The document very clearly stated that he wanted to leave his property to the person who still held dear the memory of his beloved son. #660

-Our Daily Bread

Application

1. If the covenant of grace had not been given to Abraham, there would still be a "wall of separation" and all would be lost apart from the Jews who were given the promised covenant. Eph. 2:14
2. God did not redeem us by winking at our sin or going through mere religious motions but He did by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. Rom. 8:3, 2Cor. 5:21
3. The deposit of God's guarantee and sincerity to each of us is His Holy Spirit, it could be translated an "engagement ring." Eph. 1:14
 * We have been betrothed to one husband, even Christ a chaste virgin. 2Cor. 11:2

The position of an heir grace was superior!

III. The inferior regression of an heir under grace to law. vs. 8-11

* Regression is always inferior and progression is always superior, for the reverse is going from Freedom to Bondage!

A. The Galatians' life in the past. vs. 8

1. The Galatians did not know God, they were in spiritual ignorance.
 - a. At Lystra Paul and Barnabas were taken for gods Jupiter and Mercury. Acts 14:8-12
 - b. The Priest was ready to sacrifice to them. Acts 14:13
 - c. Their ignorance is proclaimed. Acts 14:14-16

* They worshipped through a religious system but it did not reveal God or provide a personal knowledge of God.
2. The Galatians served those who were not gods by nature.
 - a. Luke says they were serving worthless things and idols. Acts 14:15
 - b. Material idols are not divine. Acts 17:29-30

- c. Their essential character was after the nature of creation and not creator. Rom. 1:18-23

* The word served “douloo” means to be a slave to, in context ascribing supernatural power that can work for or against the person.
 - d. The Galatians had turned from their vain idolatry to the Living God. Acts 14:15
 - e. Paul had preached to them. Gal. 4:13, 3:1-2
- #### B. The Galatians' life in the present. vs. 9-11
1. The Galatians are known of God. vs. 9a-b
 - a. Notice Paul supplements his statement to reveal both the divine and the human co-participation in salvation.
 - 1) God is the initiator of salvation, not man.
 - 2) Man is the responder, not God!
 - 3) The word known “ginosko” means to know by experience.
 2. The Galatians were turning from God. vs. 9c
 - a. They had been set free from ignorance of idols but now wanted to turn again to weak and beggarly elements.

- b. The word elements “stoicheia” means basic principles as ABC, same as in verse three.
- c. The rituals and works of the law were being put on the same level by Paul as those they practiced as pagans prior to knowing God because they were as useless to bring justify them, Christ having come. vs. 3
 - 1) Weak because they were powerless to justify or redeem man.
 - 2) Beggarly because they were bankrupt to atone for man’s sins in comparison to the riches of grace in Christ.
 - 3) The law only spoke of shadows and things to come!
 - * Their choice had made them poor and paupers.

C. The Galatians were choosing bondage. vs. 9d-10

- 1. They thought to be progressing, but instead were regressing.
- 2. They had served those which by nature were not gods. vs. 8c
- 3. Now they wanted to be in bondage to those things which were given to lead men to God.
 - a. The observed days meant Sabbath days and feast days.

- b. The observed months meant New moons, Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles.
 - c. The observed years meant Sabbatic every seven years and Jubilee the 50th year of release.
 - 1) The word observe “paratereisthe” means to stand besides and watch carefully and scrupulously.
 - 2) The word is used of Jesus, to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. Lk. 6:7
- D. The Galatians were in danger. vs. 11**
- 1. Paul expresses his concern and fearful distress for them, not himself. vs. 11a
 - a. This is the first statement of passionate concern out of his love for them and others will follow. vs. 16, 19, 20
 - b. For three and a half chapters, Paul has been rebuking them.
 - c. The only word of affection has been “brethren” but now, “I am afraid for you!”
 - d. They had deviated from total dependency on Christ. vs. 11a
 - 2. Paul expresses his fear, lest he had labored for hem in vain. vs. 11b
 - a. They had ignored the labor of Paul over them.

- b. The word labor, “kopiao” to labor to point of exhaustion. vs. 11b

Illustration

High atop the United States Capitol dome in Washington stands the statue of the stately "Freedom Lady," almost 20 feet high. Her face is framed by a crest of stars. A shield of stars and stripes is in her left hand.

The sculptured Freedom Lady was brought from Rome during a fierce storm and the captain ordered some cargo thrown overboard. The sailors wanted to include the heavy statue, but the captain refused, shouting above the wind, "No! Never! We'll flounder before we throw Freedom away."

-James C. Helley #1781

Application

1. One of the most radical statements that any person can make is to say that all who do not believe and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, do not know God. Jn. 14:6
 - a. They may have known that there is a God by evidence of the creation and conscience. Rom. 1:20, 2:15
 - b. They may know things about God but that doesn't mean they know God, this is the consistent evidence through the Scriptures. * Jn. 1:10, I Thess. 4:5, 2 . 1:8, Eph. 2:12

2. One of the most grievous things for a Pastor is to see people turn back to religion or the world.
 - a. They became insensate as their gods. Ps. 115:4-8
 - b. They fail to see the obvious error. Is. 44:19-20
 - c. Paul calls them worthless devices of men. Acts 14:15, 17:29
 - d. They worship devils or demons by idolatry. I Cor. 10:20, Deut. 32:17
3. How sad and heart breaking it is to see people turn back to the world and live as they did before.
 - a. It begins by drifting slowly. Heb. 2:1-4
 - b. It moves to unbelief in the Living God. Heb. 3:12
 - c. It is said to be a most dangerous thing. Heb. 6:4-6, 10:26-29
 - d. It all is base on not exercising faith. Heb. 11:1, 6
 - e. It is bondage all over again, the latter end being worst than the first. 2 Pet. 2:18-22
4. Be careful that you not mix any religious practices as a means of righteousness.
 - a. Robbing you through philisophy, empty deceit and tradition, according to the to the basic principles of the world and not Christ, in Whom you are complete. Col. 2:9-10, 19-23
 - b. He who observes the day does it to the Lord. Rom. 14:6

- c. No one is to judge you in food, drink, festival or new moon or Sabbaths which are shadow of things to come. 2 Cor. 8-9, Col. 2:16-17
- 1) Catholic religion there is Lent, a 40 day penitence of self-denial beginning with Ash Wednesday!
 - 2) What are you allowing to be mixed with God's word and turning to bondage?

The regression of an heir of grace to law is inferior!

Conclusion

Therefore Paul reveals to them the difference between an heir of the law and an heir of grace by proclaiming three truths. 4:1-11

- I.** The position of an heir under law was inferior and still is!
- II.** The position of an heir grace was inferior and still is!
- III.** The regression of an heir of grace to law is inferior and still is!