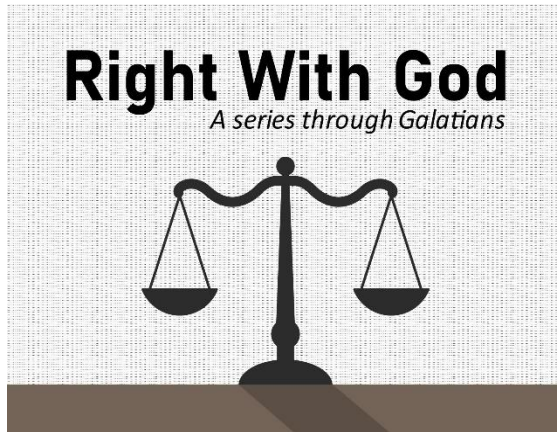




Part 10 – No Longer Slaves

Galatians 4:1-7

The Judaizers – “false brothers” – troubling the churches of southern Galatia believed that taking up the laws and regulations of the covenant with Moses represented a step forward for Christians; a sign of increasing maturity. Indeed, they believed and taught that conformity to those old covenant ceremonies and regulations was a necessary means of being made right with God. In this section, Paul demonstrates from Israel’s own history that the opposite is true. Rather than representing the height of Christian maturity, the old ceremonies and regulations

were instead like an elementary school teaching young Israel the most basic principles. The elementary truths of the old covenant regulations were preparation for something deeper and higher and permanent: Jesus Christ and the message of the gospel.

1. Know your history.

Vv. 1-3

- The whole sweep of redemptive history, from God’s promise to Abraham to the fulfillment in Jesus Christ, is central to Paul’s apologetic against the Judaizers. Paul helps the Galatian Christians to place themselves in this history by tracing God’s dealings with Israel. Namely he uses the language of imprisonment, captivity, and slavery to describe Israel’s relationship to God’s law. In addition to these words Paul further develops the idea of the law as a schoolmaster (*pedagogue*) which he introduced in chapter 3.
- The language Paul uses in these verses points specifically to Israel’s captivity in Egypt. God’s miraculous deliverance of his people and their exodus into the Land of Promise foreshadowed the redemption that was purchased by Christ upon the cross. Though Israel was God’s son (Exodus 4:22) he had labored for hundreds of years under the cruel taskmaster Egypt. But God delivered his adopted son Israel by his mighty power. The miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea was yet another foreshadowing of God’s great salvation through Jesus Christ. We’re told elsewhere that the Holy Spirit was present during the Red Sea deliverance (Isaiah 63:11; Haggai 2:4-5). Theologian John Fesko writes:
 Notice the overall pattern here – Israel, God’s son, was delivered from Pharaoh’s bondage and then God placed his Holy Spirit in their midst by bringing them through the Red Sea, an event described by Paul elsewhere as a *baptism* (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).¹
- Paul’s anger over the teaching of the Judaizers owes in part to the fact that it represented a forfeiture of their freedom. In essence, the false gospel spreading among the churches in Galatia was a rejection of having God as their Father and instead preferring bondage in Egypt. The false gospel of meritorious religion seeks to turn back the clock on redemptive history as though Jesus Christ had not come; as though he had not lived and died and rose again for the redemption of sinners.

2. Know your Savior.

Vv. 3-5

- Now we are ready to understand with greater clarity the matchless significance of God’s entry into the world in the Person of Jesus Christ. Israel was incapable of freeing themselves from the curse of the law because they were incapable of freeing themselves from their bondage to sin. But what sinners cannot do for themselves, God has done through Jesus Christ. God waited for the perfect time in human history to send the perfect Savior.
- The advent of the Son of God into the human family in the person of Jesus is the chief turning point in all of human history. This was a Divine act. “Paul is not saying that Jesus decided to start a new religious movement. He is saying God acted in Christ...God has been working his purpose out through history,

¹ John Fesko, *Galatians* (Powder Springs, GA: Tolle Lege Press, 2012) p. 105

and it was only when the right time came that he sent his Son. Paul is not talking about a more or less casual happening: *God*, no less, *sent his Son*, no less.”²

A) Our Savior is fully Divine

- “God sent forth his Son...” – Sinners need a Savior who is no less than God in the flesh. Only God could be pure enough to be a sufficient sacrifice for sinners.

B) Our Savior is fully Human

- “...born of woman...” – Sinners need a Savior who is like them in their humanity. Through the miracle and mystery of the incarnation God fully identified with our humanity that he might represent us before his own bar of justice.

C) Our Savior is fully Sufficient

- “...born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.” – Being both fully divine and fully human, Jesus was able to be the fully sufficient Savior. Jesus took upon himself the curse of the law even though he was sinless so that he could fully pay for the sins of his people.

3. Know your status.

Vv. 5-7

- Believers have been “redeemed,” Paul says, so that “we might receive adoption as sons.” As a result of this redemption, believers are made sons of God through adoption by the Holy Spirit.

A) “You are no longer a slave...” (vs. 7)

- Christians are no longer enslaved either to worldly paganism or old covenant ceremonies.

B) “...but a son.” (vs. 7)

- Believers are sons of God by adoption through the Holy Spirit. The designation “son” has to do with status. What was once only granted to male heirs belongs to all believers male and female alike.

- Paul uses language that helps us understand the blessing of our status as sons.

“Abba, Father” (vs. 6)

- Notice the Trinitarian language. God sends the Holy Spirit “into our hearts.” God’s activity is not “a minor disturbance on the surface of life.”³ John Stott notes that the activity of the Spirit is “not by some spectacular gift or sign but by the quiet inward witness of the Spirit as we pray.”⁴ The term “Abba, Father” indicates relational intimacy. In Christ we are not outsiders but household insiders; sons of God. So, by the Holy Spirit God adds to our status as sons, the experience of being a chosen child of God, given the language of a family member.

“Heir” (vv. 1, 7)

- Befitting their status as sons, believers in Jesus have been written into the will of God. That is, they have been made heirs of all the benefits and blessings that God has to bestow upon his beloved sons.

“Adoption” (vs. 5)

- Of the believer’s adoption, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* offers the following summary:
All those who are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation. (12:1)

² Leon Morris, *Galatians* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1996) p. 129

³ Ibid, 131

⁴ John Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1968) p. 12