

05/14/2023

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GALATIANS

SONS, NOT SLAVES GALATIANS 4

I. REVIEW

A. You're being lied to – word, the devil, and the flesh

1. Lie behind the lie – You can change on your own. We change others apart from God - ***Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?***
2. Are you convinced that you are completely dependent on God to do what He has called you to do?
3. Are you wholly convinced that you are completely depended on His Spirit to be who He has called you to be?
 - a) We would all nod our heads yes but that true answer to that question isn't found in what we say but how we live
 - b) If you want the honest answer to that question, examine your prayer life
 - c) If we are convinced that apart from Jesus we can do nothing we will pray.
 - d) If we don't pray we believe we can become what we are supposed to be and do what we are supposed to do with or without God

B. Paul's exhortation in chapter 3

1. You received the Spirit of God through hearing of faith – by listening and trusting – and that is how you walk in the Spirit – by listening and trusting
 - a) We do not trust until we obey
2. The law says try harder, the Spirit says listen closely and trust more
 - a) The law is obedience without relationship – the Spirit is relationship that leads to obedience
3. Paul has made it clear that this isn't a new truth that he has dreamt up – he covers 2,000 years of Old Testament history to prove that this was God's plan from the beginning
 - a) Through the promise given to Abraham, and the law given to Moses, and fulfillment of the law and the promise lived out through Jesus Christ – so that everyone who is driven to Christ by the law receives the promise given to Abraham
4. We ended last week with Paul declaration – undermined the false gospel and he is replacing it with life bringing truth – ***Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.***

Gal 4:1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by

the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. 8 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 9 But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? 10 You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

II. A SON OR A SLAVE

A. The terrible reality of this sin cursed world is how common slavery has been throughout human history

1. Because of recent American history the word slave itself is emotionally charged as it should be
2. Important to understand that slavery in the New Testament and the Old Testament had nothing to do with skin color and this idea that the Bible condones the kidnapping, and buying and selling of human beings is a disgusting lie and reflects a complete lack of understanding of the value of human life in the scriptures

B. Much of the New Testament was written at the height of the Roman Empire, slavery was a reality of everyday life

1. *"According to Gaius, a second-century Roman lawyer, 'The principal distinction made by the law of nature is this, that all human beings are either free people or slaves' (Institutes 1.9). 'Slave,' 'freed slave' and 'freeborn' were fundamental categories of identity. A person's status determined their legal rights (or lack of rights), their ability to protect their own bodies against abuse and their capacity for social honour."*
2. When Paul writes about slaves he isn't prescribing slavery, he is describing it
 - a) Paul writes that in Christ **"there is neither slave nor free"** which would have been a radical claim – our identity is in Christ!

C. In chapter 4 Paul would have us consider a child who is an heir

1. An heir to a fortune – one day it will all be his. But that day hasn't come yet because he is still a child. Because he is a child he doesn't differ from a slave, in that he is told when to get up and when to go to sleep and when to eat and what to eat.
 - a) He is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father
2. Paul writes – Even so (so with us), when we were children (Old Testament days before Christ had come) – we were in bondage
 - a) Heirs to a promise made to Abraham but in bondage to the law – the promise had not been fully realized or experienced – the law was our taskmaster or tutor
3. ***in bondage under the elements of the world.***
 - a) 'elementary' things, reading, writing, and arithmetic – ***Heb 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.***
 - (1) In bondage to the basics - the Old Testament period was the basic education of the people of God

III. WHEN THE FULLNESS OF THE TIME HAD COME

A. The time when the law was a tutor has come to an end.

1. 1,300 years of trying and failing. 1,300 years of sacrifice after sacrifice. 1,300 years of knowing who you are supposed to be and falling short of it, longing for relief, longing for something more, longing for something better.

B. In God's perfect timing He accomplished three things – verse 4 and 5

1. God sent forth His Son to redeem those who were under the law
 - a) Fully man, born to Mary, and fully God - born under the law – fulfilling the law on our behalf so that He may buy us back from the grave
2. Not only redeeming us, but adopting us
 - a) Didn't just rescue, He brought us home with Him and sat us at His table – Jesus the Son of God made us sons and daughters of God - Jesus our brother

C. Because you are His children, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts

1. This is the cry of His Son – Abba, Father – term used when in close communion with God

2. ***Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.***

3. What moral thing, what good thing can a Christian do that an atheist cannot do? Mike Winger's answer – we can love God. We can call out to Him as a child calls out to their father knowing He is listening, and He cares. There is nothing better than that.

4. You are no longer a slave but a child of God, as a child of God an heir of God through Christ – a son of God through the Son of God

5. This is the antidote to works based righteousness, to moral therapeutic deism, to Spiritual burnout, to a relationship without God built around contractual obligations

- a) We are no longer slaves to the law or slaves to sin, we are children of God – listen and trust

D. The heart of Paul's questions

1. Why are you turning away from this? I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel... Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

2. ***now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?***

3. Having been set free from the law, having become sons and daughters of God, redeemed, adopted, filled with the Spirit of His Son, why are you returning to slavery?

- a) Like the Israelites in the wilderness, why do you desire to return to Egypt?

4. The Christian life is one of freedom, not slavery. It is the faith of sons, not slaves. We do best to remember that.

- a) That is why John Newton, who was involved in the unspeakable horrors of the slave trade before Christ saved him, had the words of Deut 15:15 written across the mantel in his study - *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you..*

- b) John Stott writes *"If only we remembered these things, what we once were and what we now are, we would have an increasing desire within us to live accordingly, to be what we are, namely sons of God set free by Christ."*

IV. PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

- A. Paul seems to shift gears, as he often does and now turns his focus to his relationship with the churches in Galatia

Gal 4:12 Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. 13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. 14 And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? 17 They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. 18 But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, 20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

- B. Brothers – family – this is why Paul did not abandon any of the churches, they were his family

1. If only we would start seeing our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ this way – ***Eph 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***
2. They will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.
3. So far in Galatians we have heard from Paul the theologian, Paul the intellectual, Paul the apostle (defending the faith), but now we hear from Paul the pastor, Paul the compassionate brother who cares about his family

- C. Become like me – seems a little presumptuous

1. It is an invitation – come and experience what I have experienced – and what had Paul experienced? True freedom!
2. ***Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." 29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."***
 - a) That is what it means to be a city on a hill, that is what it means to be the light in the darkness, or the salt of the earth
 - b) What if we wouldn't wish our lives on anyone? What if we can't imagine making this claim "Be like me, experience what I have experienced." That is the point of Paul's letter. You are experiencing what it means to be a child of God but you have bought into another gospel. A gospel that leads you away from Jesus. Come home!

V. THE GALATIANS AND PAUL

- A. Paul thinks back to when he ministered to them in person - You did me no wrong, you have not injured me at all

1. Paul may have caught a disease that caused him to stay in Galatia
 2. Because of a physical infirmity, I preached the gospel to you – and you still received me – in my trial you did not despise me or reject me
 - a) Some suggest malaria but we can gather that whatever the sickness was it was visible and unpleasant and affected his eyesight (you were so gracious you would have given me your own eye sight)
- B. Paul asks this question – if I was sickly and frail - What then was the blessing you enjoyed? What did I have to offer you that was any benefit to you? Why did you receive as if I was a messenger of God or even Jesus Christ himself?
1. It wasn't me, it was the message
 2. Paul was physical weak, but the message he carried was strong
 3. If only we as pastors today would figure this out – it is not about strength of personality, it is about strength of character and content
 - a) To the credit of the churches of Galatia – they looked past Paul's condition and saw his character - *'you resisted any temptation to show scorn or disgust at the state of my poor body'*
 - b) We will not see revival in the church until we value character and content in our pulpits over personality
 - c) How do people talk about their pastors? He is so gifted, he is so energetic, he is such a good storyteller, he is so funny. Let me boast about my pastor – he has been faithful – faithful to his wife, faithful to his church, and most importantly faithful to the Word of God – character and content – that is how a pastor should be judged – not by his appearance but by his loyalty to the message
- C. Paul's question now is "What has changed?"
1. When I was with you, you were drawn to the message, not the messenger – but now you are being carried away by messengers even though they bring a false message
 2. ***Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?***
 - a) Be careful not to turn friends into enemies just because they tell you the truth – this is actually the mark of a true friend – they are willing to sacrifice how you feel about them for your greater good
 - b) Instead guard yourself against those who always tell you what you want to hear because they have an agenda
 - c) They do not have something other than your best interests in mind
 3. John Stott writes *"In order to win them to their perverted gospel, the false teachers fawned on them and fussed over them."*
 - a) Their real motivation – they want to shut you out so that you will make much of them– Jesus said in Matthew 23 – *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."*
 - b) Paul's ministry was to make much of name of Jesus, these false teachers desired to make much of themselves - as a preacher once said "If ministers wish to do any good, let them labor to form Christ in their hearers, not to form themselves"

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. Paul furthers his point through the story of Isaac and Ismael
1. We are not children of the bondwoman (law) but of the free (the Spirit)