

It's Time To Grow Up

Galatians 4:1-18

“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. 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.”

One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a "second childhood" of Christian experience. The Galatian Christians, like most believers, wanted to grow and go forward for Christ; but they were going about it in the wrong way. **Their**

experience is not too different from that of Christians today who get involved in various legalistic movements, hoping to become better Christians. Their motives may be right, but their methods are wrong.

This is the truth Paul is trying to get across to his beloved converts in Galatia. The Judaizers had bewitched them into thinking that the law would make them better Christians. Their flesh felt an attraction for the law because the law enabled them to do things and measure the external results. As they measured themselves and their achievements, they felt a sense of accomplishment, and, no doubt, a little bit of pride. They thought they were going forward when actually they were regressing.

Paul takes three approaches in this section as he seeks to convince the Galatians that they do not need legalism in order to live the Christian life. They have all they need in Jesus Christ!

First of all, he explains their adoption. Look at verses 17, “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, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, Abba, Father! Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Among the blessings of the Christian experience is “adoption.” We do not enter God's family by way of adoption, the way a homeless child would enter a loving family in our own society. Jesus tells us in John 3:3 the only way to get into God's family is by “regeneration,” being “born again.”

It will do us good to stop and see here that the customs have changed somewhat in years past. When Paul was writing this letter, and before, the child worked along side of the slaves and servants until he, or she, became of age (that is, until they were considered

adults). It did not matter how much money your parents had, you were still in the working class of the "hired help."

Paul uses this idea to share the truths of the Christian's relationship to the Law. The Old Testament saint lived in shadows ... he lived in the dimness of the Law. Paul indicates that the Old Testament saint was a "babe"...immature, not realizing the glory and fullness of his future inheritance in Christ. He was in slavery under the "elements of the world" or the Law!

The promise was made in Genesis 3:15 that would rid man of that burden, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." From that moment until the day that Jesus was born, all hell did everything possible to prevent the "seed" that would "bruise" the serpent's "head." And the Bible tells us, "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law... " But Satan did not stop trying, but in the "wilderness" sought once more to stop the mission of Jesus Christ to be fulfilled as God would have it.

Satan, realizing that he could not change what had already taken place, he sought not to keep Jesus from being "Messiah," but rather to be his kind of Messiah! Therefore, Satan told Jesus, "Follow my example," "Obey my desires," "Bypass the Cross and still get the crown that you are here after." But the example of Jesus was the Father, and it was the blood that was shed on the Cross that washed away my sin! Glory to God!

And because of my faith in that finished work of Jesus Christ, I have become a son and an heir. You will notice that the whole Trinity is involved in our spiritual experience: God the *Father* sent the *Son* to die for us, and God the Son sent His *Spirit* to live in us, and 1 John 3:1-3 tells us that one day "we shall be like Him."

Secondly, Paul laments their regression. Look at in verses 811, "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 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? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”

What really happened when the Galatians turned from *grace to law*? To begin with, they abandoned *liberty* for *bondage*. They were giving up the *power* of the Gospel for the *weakness* of law, and the *wealth* of the Gospel for the *poverty* of law. The *law* never made anybody *rich* or *powerful*; on the contrary, the law could only reveal man's *weakness* and *spiritual bankruptcy*!

In verse 8 Paul reminds us that everyone has some kind of god, which we allow to dominate our activities and/or our way of thinking. If it is not the God of heaven, then it will be the gods of this world! He goes one step further by indicating that the Galatians had let the *Law* become their god.

To prove what he is saying, Paul goes on to say in verse 10, "You observe days, and months, and times, and years." **We have too many people that come to church just because it is Sunday, or just because it's Easter, or Mother's Day, etc.** God longs for true worship because we love Him, not because we feel that it is a responsibility!

Thirdly, Paul seeks their affection. Look at verses 12-18, “Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. 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. 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. Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.” **Paul surely had a heavy heart when he uttered these words in Galatians 4:16.** I can almost hear the quivering of his voice as he tenderly looked upon the people here at the church at

Galatia, who at one time loved him and what he had to preach, but now was mad at the preaching of the "truth."

My mind goes back to a man by the name of Amos who was called into the ministry by God to preach to the nation of Israel. He started preaching about the sins of the nations that were all around Israel, and all the people said, "Amen, Amos, preach on!" By then Amos started to preach the real truth about what sin really is, and we are told in Amos 7:12-13 that the reply came back this way, "Get out of here, you prophet! Go on back to the land of Judah, and earn your living by prophesying there! 13 Don't bother us with your prophecies here in Bethel. This is the king's sanctuary and the national place of worship!"

Every Preacher that preaches the truth of the Word of God, without regard to whom it might offend, knows how easy it is for those who profess to be our best of friends to very quickly turn and become a bitter enemy, doing exactly opposite of what they had been accustomed to do. The preaching of the Word of God many times causes people to become mad at God and they take it out on the preacher.

I am reminded of the words found in Proverbs 27:6 that says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Paul had proved his love to the Galatians by telling them the truth; but they would not accept it. They were enjoying the "kisses" of the Judaizers, not realizing that these kisses were leading them into bondage and sorrow. Christ had made them sons and heirs, but they were rapidly becoming slaves and beggars.

They had not lost the experience of salvation they were still Christians, but they were losing the enjoyment of their salvation and finding satisfaction in their works instead. Sad to say, they did not realize their losses. They actually thought they were becoming better Christians by substituting law for grace, and the religious deeds of the flesh for the fruit of the Spirit.