

10. From a slave to a son

January 31, 2013

We all like a story that ends like a fairy tale – a frog turning into a prince after a kiss by a princess; a wounded soldier who lost his legs at war coming home with a heart-felt welcome from the whole town; and nobody becoming somebody. Yes, they are heart warming stories and tear-jerking ones. But I don't think that anyone of them can beat this true story – slaves becoming sons and daughters of the most powerful King in the whole universe and they live happily ever after.

Sounds too good to be true? Well, believe it, because you are one of the slaves who became a son and a daughter of the King of kings if you are a born-again Christian.

But instead of believing and thanking the Lord for His grace, the believers of Galatian churches chose to earn the grace of God, as if they could. We've been studying this for the last nine weeks. Obviously the apostle was not done with his exhortations for them yet.

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 with a total bratty attitude. The Galatian Christians, like most of today's believers, wanted to grow and go forward for Christ; but they were going about it in the exact opposite 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.

A. THE LAW THAT PREPARED THE WAY TO THE SAVIOR

Galatians 3:23-26 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Here Paul uses an illustration that was familiar to all his readers, though not to us – the child guardian. In many Roman and Greek households, well-educated slaves took the children to and from school and watched over them during the day. Sometimes they would teach the children at home, sometimes they would protect and prohibit, and sometimes they would even discipline. This is what Paul means by 'tutor' in v24. But we should not read into this word our modern idea of a school - teacher, rather it is more of 'guardian'.

By using this illustration, Paul is saying a couple of things about the Jews and their Law.

1) The Jews were not born through the Law, but rather were brought up by the Law.

The slave was not the child's father; he was the child's temporary guardian.

2) The work of the guardian was preparation for the child's maturity.

Once the child came of age, he no longer needed the guardian. So the Law was a preparation for the nation of Israel until the coming of the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. The ultimate goal in God's program for the Law was His coming.

During the centuries of Jewish history, the Law was preparing for the coming of Christ. The demands of the Law reminded the people that they needed a Savior. The Law has performed its purpose: the Savior has come and the “guardian” is no longer needed. It is tragic that the nation of Israel did not recognize their Messiah when He appeared.

The Law cannot change the promise, because it is not greater than the promise. But the Law is not contrary to the promise: they work together to bring sinners to the Savior.

B. THE GRACE OF GOD FOR ALL

Galatians 3:27-29 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.

I despise the terms of hyphenated Americans – such as, Mexican-American, African-American, Irish-American, of course, Swedish-American, etc. America is a melting pot that every single race of the world came to this country for freedom and better living.

Now those who want to be politically correct separating this once -great country by using “hyphenated” terms that put their emphasis on their original countries over the country they chose to be in and chose to be citizens of it. I am not a Korean-American, nor Swedish-American. I am an American. If they don't like it? Then, they can get out of my country.

This is what v27 is saying. Once the Jews were under the Law; they had to live under the confinement of the Law. The Law separated the Jews from the Gentiles, but now under the banner of the grace of God, there is no distinction – neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, we are all one in Christ Jesus. You talk about “Equal opportunity Savior”, that is our Jesus.

Then, the apostle beautifully draws us into his logical thought line: Since we belong to Christ who is Abraham's Promised Seed, we also get to receive the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15.

I tell ya, I hate to go against apostle Paul in debate. He is so logical, so flawless in his presentations. But then again, the Holy Spirit is the One who inspired him to write all these, so naturally they are perfect.

The phrase “put on Christ” in v27 refers to a change of garments. The believer has laid aside the dirty garments of sin and, by faith, received the robes of righteousness in Christ. But to the Galatians, this idea of “changing clothes” would have an additional meaning. When the Roman child came of age, he took off the childhood garments and put on the toga of the adult citizen.

In other words, the OT Law was not a waste. It prepared the Jews to receive the Messiah. In the Old Testament we have preparation for Christ; in the Gospels, the presentation of Christ; and in Acts through Revelation, the appropriation of Christ.

C. THE HEIR BY THE ADOPTION

Galatians 4:1-7 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.

According to the ancient Roman custom, no matter how wealthy a father may be, his infant son or toddling child cannot really enjoy that wealth, because the child was still a child, under the supervision of a servant. In fact, the child himself was not much different from the servant who guarded him. The servant was commanded by the master of the house, and the child was commanded by the servant.

This was the spiritual condition of the Jews under the age of the Law. 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.

In v4, the expression the fullness of the time refers to that time when the world was providentially ready for the birth of the Savior.

Alexander the Great, the great king of Greece, desired to rule the world. In just ten years he conquered the entire civilized world. But he did not realize that he was not building the kingdom for himself; rather he was actually only a pawn in the big chess game of life by God. He was just an individual that God was moving to accomplish His purposes.

Two of the ways Alexander colonized his kingdoms was by having his subjects learn the Greek language and building vast highways and roads over all of his provinces so that he could have access to his ever-expanding kingdom. By the time Alexander died at thirty-three, he had actually designed a world perfect for preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ in language and travel.

In addition to that, historians tell us that the Roman world was in great expectation, waiting for a Deliverer, at the time when Jesus was born. The old religions were dying; the old philosophies were empty and powerless to change men's lives. Strange new mystery religions were invading the empire. Religious bankruptcy and spiritual hunger were everywhere. God was spiritually preparing the world for the arrival of His Son.

Again apostle Paul brings up comprehensive comparisons between a slave and a son in

5-7:

1) The son has the same nature as the father, but the servant does not.

When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live within us; and this means we are partakers of the divine nature. The Law could never give a person God's nature within.

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2) The son has a father, while the servant has a master.

No servant could ever say "Father" to his master. When the sinner trusts Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit within, and the Spirit tells him that he is a child of the Father.

The word "Abba" is an Aramaic word that is the equivalent of our English word "daddy." This shows the closeness of the child to the Father. No servant has this.

3) The son obeys out of love, while the servant obeys out of fear .

The Spirit works in the heart of the believer to quicken and increase his love for God. The Judaizers told the Galatians that they would become better Christians by submitting to the Law, but the Law can never produce obedience. Only love can do that.

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

4) The son is rich, while the servant is poor .

We are both "sons and heirs." And since we are adopted – placed as adult sons in the family – we may begin drawing on God's spiritual riches right now that He has made available to us through His grace, His glory, His goodness, His wisdom, and all of the riches of God are found in Christ.

5) The son has a future, while the servant does not.

While many kind masters did provide for their slaves in old age, it was not required of them. Our gracious Father always provides what we need according to His riches in glory and much more.

D. APPLICATION

It is better to obey the Lord and His Word out of our love than fear because we are His children and joint-heirs with Christ.