

IN CHRIST WE ARE SONS - NOT SLAVES

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.” (Gal 4:7)

Everybody knows what a slave is. Everybody knows what a son is. The Good News is, that because of Jesus Christ, we are no longer “slaves”, but “sons. In order to understand this truth more clearly, let us take a closer look at Paul’s letter to the Galatians. It is different from his other inspired letters in at least two different ways:

1. It is Paul’s only letter specifically sent to a group of churches (Gal. 1:2). His other letters were written to either single churches or individuals. It is interesting to note that the Scriptures never refer to “churches” in a city. The word “churches” is found 37 times in the Scriptures but every time it refers to churches in a country - as in the seven “churches” of Asia (Rev. 1:20). The Christians in a single city are called a “church” as in the “Church at Ephesus” (Rev. 2: 1), the “Church at Smyrna” (Rev. 2:8), etc.

2. It is Paul’s only letter that does not say anything good about the people who received it. In this letter Paul states his credentials and then immediately marvels that they so quickly abandoned the “grace” of Christ for a perversion of the Gospel (Gal. 1:6).

THE GALATIANS WERE TRYING TO BE JUSTIFIED BY LAW

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing-- if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” (Gal 3:1-5)

Note what the Galatian letter has to say about law::

- No one is justified by works of law (Gal. 2:16).
- Paul died to the law that he might live for Christ (Gal. 2:19).
- Faith comes by hearing but not by law (Gal. 3:2).
- Miracles are a result of faith and not works of law (Gal. 3:5)
- Those depending upon works of law are cursed (Gal. 3:10). Whoever keeps the whole law and offends in only one point is guilty of it all (James 2:10). Even Moses could not be saved by law (Nu. 20:12).
- No one is justified by law before God (Gal. 3:11).
- The law is not of faith but salvation is (Gal. 3:12).
- Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13).
- The law cannot change the fact that Abraham was justified by faith 430 years before the law was given (Gal. 3:17).
- If a law could have been given that imparted life then righteousness would be by law (Gal. 3:21).
- Being under law is like being in prison (Gal. 3:23)
- The law was not given to save us, but was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24).
- Being under the law is like slavery (Gal. 4:3).
- Jesus came to redeem those under the law and make us His sons (Gal. 4:5).

- The law was like Ishmael who was born to a slave (Gal. 4:21 - 25).
- The Gospel is like Isaac who was born free (Gal. 4:25 - 28).
- Those who seek to be justified by law are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).
- All the law is fulfilled in one word - love (Gal. 5:14).
- If we are guided by the Spirit we are not under the law (Gal. 5:18).
- There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23).
- To carry one another's burdens is to complete the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

WHY WOULD THE GALATIANS WANT TO BE UNDER LAW?

Obviously they were deceived for law does have an "appearance of wisdom". It seems like will work. That's why we have laws in the country, laws in the city, laws in the schools, and even laws in the church. When you want to control somebody, the first inclination is to write a law. If you want people to be holy, for example, it only seems natural to order them: "**Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!**" (Col 2:21) Such commandments, however, have only an appearance of wisdom. They do not work! Note carefully: "**Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.**" (Col 2:23).

Let me illustrate. We are in a spiritual meeting today. We are talking about spiritual things. I don't want anybody here to think about chocolate cake. I'm serious. Thinking about chocolate cake has no place in this meeting where we are talking about the eternal destiny of those who are lost. I don't care if the chocolate cake just came out of the oven. I don't care if the icing on the chocolate cake is the most delicious you have ever tasted. DON'T THINK ABOUT CHOCOLATE CAKE!

Now - what are you thinking about? You are probably thinking about chocolate cake. Sometimes commanding people not to do something causes them to think about and do the very thing you want them to avoid.

Paul said it like this: "**What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet."**" (Rom 7:7)

Please consider these verses about law:

- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (1 Cor 15:56)
- Law brings wrath (Rom. 4:15).
- The law was added so that the trespass might increase (Rom. 4:15)
- Sin had dominion over you when you are under law (Rom. 6:14).
- Our sinful passions are aroused by the law (Rom. 7:5).
- Sin used the commandments to produce covetous desires (Rom. 7:8).
- Apart from the law sin is dead (Rom. 7:8).
- These Scriptures could easily be multiplied!

Remember! God did not give us the law to save us, but to bring us to Jesus that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24). Remember! The law given that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God (Rom. 3:19).

THE LAW SEEMS TO BE STRONG BUT IS ACTUALLY WEAK

- The law was written in stone. It was cold, rigid, inflexible, and without mercy.
- When the law was given 3,000 people were killed by the Levites (Ex. 32:28).

- Levi proved his anger against sin by killing all the men of Shechem because one of them had raped his sister (Gen. 34:25).
- When the Israelites sinned at Mt. Sinai the Levites killed the sinners even though they were brothers, friends, and neighbors (Ex. 32:27).
- Under the law victims died without mercy (Heb. 10:28).
- Even though the law was cold, rigid and inflexible, Moses knew that it would not make people better. He predicted that after he died the people would be worse than they were when he was alive: **“Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!”** (Deut 31:26-27) Moses was right. The people did become even more sinful.
- Jesus also knew that the law would not make people better. He said: **“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”** (Matt 23:15)
- Aaron, the first high priest, was a sinner but he was not as bad as Caiaphas and Annas who were the high priests involved in the crucifixion of Jesus.
- THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO BECAUSE IT WAS WEAKENED BY OUR SINFUL NATURE, GOD DID ACCOMPLISH THROUGH JESUS CHRIST!
- The Scriptures state that God found fault with the old law and decided to write a new one. **“For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: “The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”** (Heb 8:7-8)

THE NEW COVENANT

“The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Heb 8:8-10)

One reason the Old Covenant failed was because it did not deal with man’s sinful nature. It established a code of righteousness “without” man when the real problem was “within”. Jesus said it like this: **“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”** (Matt 15:19) Obviously, the only way to really change a man is to change his heart. The heart of unconverted man is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9) In order to change man God has to change his heart. This is precisely what God promised to do hundreds of years before the New Covenant became a reality. **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”** (Ezek 36:26-27). The Old Covenant tried to “conform” man by pressure from

without. The New Covenant seeks to “transform” men by pressure from within (Rom. 12:2)

In order to understand the power of the New Covenant to change our lives, think for a minute about the power of seeds. It is not at all uncommon for a blade of grass or tree to grow and push its way through asphalt or concrete. The biggest trees in the world are redwood trees and come from a seed about the size of a tomato seed. Seeds that are allowed to grow have the potential to destroy a sidewalk, parking lot, or highway.

The first time seeds are mentioned in the Bible is in Gen. 1:11. In this passage we are told that life comes from seeds and that every seed reproduces after its own kind. Jesus used this principle to teach Nicodemus about the new birth. Jesus said: **“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:6)** Nicodemus had physical life because his earthly father, planted a physical seed inside of his earthly mother. If he wanted to have spiritual life he must receive it from a spiritual seed. He would have to be “born again”.

Peter put it like this: **“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet 1:23)** It is not by accident that the first time Jesus is mentioned in the Bible He is called the “Seed of woman” (Gen. 3:15). This prophecy, as you know was fulfilled in Jesus. Paul put it like this: **“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds”, meaning many people, but “and to your seed”, meaning one person, who is Christ.” (Gal 3:16)**

When Jesus is received into our hearts by faith, we are “born again”. We become new creations in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17).

THE PRIVILEGE OF SONS

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,” (Gal 3:26)

AS SONS OF GOD WE POSSESS THE NATURE OF GOD - Just as we have a likeness to our earthly father because we are born of his seed. We also have a likeness to our Heavenly Father because we are born of His seed. **“And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.” (1 Cor 15:49)** **“No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.” (1 Jn 3:9)**

AS SONS OF GOD WE HAVE BOLDNESS IN PRAYER - The devout Jew would not even attempt to pronounce the name for fear that he might be taking the name of God in vain. Because we are sons, we not only call God our Father, but we call him “Abba” or “daddy” (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15). **“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matt 7:9-11)**

AS SONS OF GOD WE ARE HEIRS OF GOD - Isaac, as you know, represents those who are born again. Remember, it was Isaac, and not Ishmael who inherited everything that Abraham owned: **“Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac.” (Gen 25:5)** **“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” (Rom 8:16-17)** **“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal 3:29)**

AS SONS GOD DISCIPLINES US AND GIVES US GUIDANCE - "because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Rom 8:14-15) "If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons." (Heb 12:8)

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW SICK AND SINFUL WE ARE - GOD LOVES US AND WANTS US TO BE HIS CHILDREN!

Biography Magazine (March, 1999) tells the story of a little boy born in Africa near the fabled city of Timbuktu. His name was Mohammed. He was born crippled - he had a clubbed foot. His father died when he was young and when his country had a terrible famine his mother moved Mohammed and his 5 sisters to Nigeria to try and find food. When Mohammed was about 7 years old his clubbed foot got infected and he tried to cure it himself. First he poured boiling water on his foot and when that didn't work he poured battery acid on the wound. It did stop the gangrene but also ate away half of his foot. Before he was 9 years old he was hit by a car which broke his collar bone, shoulder, arm and ribs. Then he was grabbed by Nigerian soldiers, separated from his family and sent back to his home country of Mali. Mohammed walked with his right ankle bone on the ground, his back was curved like an "S", he had TB of the spine, polio, and 3 different kinds of malaria.

In 1984 a famous American reporter named Diane Sawyer went to Africa to cover the famine for CBS News. She found the little crippled boy named Mohammed and his face appeared on a news program in America for 18 seconds. On August 11, 1985 a woman named Cheryl Stotts was cleaning her kitchen in Indianapolis, Indiana. She already had 3 children but when she saw little Mohammed God spoke to her and she wanted Mohammed to come to America and be her son. She quit her job, maxed out her credit cards, and borrowed \$12,000. CBS news put her in touch with Missionaries in Africa, they helped her find Mohammed and fill out all the necessary papers.

On Dec. 7, 1985 little Mohammed arrived in Indianapolis. They had a big banner saying: "WELCOME TO AMERICA, YOU'LL NEVER BE HUNGRY AGAIN. Unfortunately, Mohammed couldn't read. The next morning Mohammed was up early and in his broken English asked: "Where is the grass cutting machine? Where is the rug cleaning machine?" When Cheryl Stotts asked why he wanted those things Mohammed said: "Didn't you bring me here to be your houseboy?" "No!" she responded, "I want you to be my son". Mohammed said: "I don't know what it means to be a son. You'll have to teach me!"

IN CHRIST JESUS WE ARE NOT SLAVES ANY LONGER. WE ARE SONS! MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT HELP US TO LEARN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SONS OF GOD!

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal 3:26-29)

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