

No Longer Slaves, But Sons

Galatians 4:1-7

A. Sons, but living like slaves 1-3

1. A child may inherit great power, but still be ordered about like a slave
 - a. Paul expands on his thought of the law as a guardian to emphasize how it restricted one's freedom
 - 1) Having dealt with the law's purpose and shown our share with Abram is based on union with Christ
 - 2) Paul offers an illustration to clarify his argument, one that follows up on the 'pedagogue' language
 - 3) Under the supervision of the law the child, though an heir, was in some ways no different than a slave
 - 4) The Greek 'lord of all' is more literal than our 'owns the whole estate' and helpful in making his point
 - 5) A child will one day rule the household, but as a child he has little room to exercise his own will
 - 6) From the time he rises in the morning until he goes to bed at night, others dictate what he will do
 - b. For his own good, the child is subject to others who guard his ways and make his decisions for him
 - 1) At least in later times, the guardian and the trustee played different roles in the life of a child
 - 2) The guardian was in charge of the child's daily life (when he would eat, do chores, study, play, etc)
 - 3) The trustee was in charge of the young heir's possessions that would one day be his to control
 - 4) Under Roman law, at the age of 14 a boy was no longer under the supervision of his guardians
 - a) unless his father decided to change that, perhaps due to the boy's continuing immaturity
 - b) Until that day arrived the boy's schedule, choices and plans were mostly determined by others
 - c. It is interesting that this practice, at least among the wealthy, has not entirely passed away
 - 1) In 1999 the duke of Northumberland went to court to block his son from his inheritance at 18
 - 2) The son was to inherit a castle, over a million dollars, a yearly income of ½ million, and more
 - 3) He was only 14 at the time, but the duke had seen how too much too soon had ruined others
 - 4) So the duke and his wife set up a trust to manage the young earl's fortune until he was 25
 - 5) The restrictions involved were not meant as punishment, but as preparation for a better life
2. Former advantages of being a Jew were still being promoted as a goal
 - a. We notice that Paul says in vs 3 'when we were children', an indication he was speaking of fellow Jews
 - 1) In the context he was speaking of those supervised by the law, and Gentiles were not 'under the law'
 - 2) Also, Paul does not directly address the Gentiles directly in this section until he reaches vs 8
 - b. Yet, problems were arising because Judaizers were advocating the days under this guardian as a goal
 - 1) They wanted the Gentiles to join in living in the days of spiritual childhood with law as a guardian
 - 2) And since legalism tends to multiply new laws, followers would likely find a whole new set to live by
3. Living under the law was not a step forward, but a step backward
 - a. Paul compares those who lived under the law to children who were in slavery
 - 1) The Jews may have had great promises of what the future held (eg, the new covenant)
 - 2) but before the gospel of grace they were like children bound by rules they often did not understand
 - 3) The rules were useful, even necessary to enjoying God's grace, but not the freedom Jesus would offer
 - b. Paul compares the law itself to the basic principles, the ABCs of the spiritual life
 - 1) Since these principles were the first things learned in a literary education, it came to mean 'rudiments'
 - 2) The law was not superior to faith as Judaizers were saying, it was the elementary precepts of religion
 - 3) Vs 9 shows 'basic principles' can be taken in more than one way, but here it is applied to the law
 - 4) No matter how old are useful the basics were, they were not the advanced principles some were saying
 - 5) They were the grammar school materials and the teachings of Christ were the graduate school studies
 - c. It may sound odd to refer to the law God gave as being 'of the world', but it is one way the word is used
 - 1) The word 'world' is related to the word 'worldly' in Heb 9:1 where the tabernacle is called 'earthly'
 - 2) The root of the word 'worldly' is the one from which we derive our English word 'cosmos'
 - 3) Both the tabernacle and the law are worldly in the sense that they relate to life in this world
 - 4) The earthly tabernacle is a shadow of the heavenly one; the law on tablets is now written on our heart
 - 5) To go from the gospel of grace back to the days when the law was in force is to move backwards
 - 6) It is to move back into the time of spiritual childhood and not on to greater spiritual maturity

B. The Son who came to set us free 4-5

1. Judaizers minimized the importance of living in the age of fulfillment
 - a. Jews had lived under the law for over a thousand years, but the time had come in God's plan for change

- b. For centuries they had been awaiting the arrival of the Messiah, and the time for waiting was full
 - c. God sent his Son at just the right time, not one moment too late or one moment too early
 - d. The end of that long night with no word from God ended with the arrival of the Word himself
 - e. The spiritual maturity of his people had finally come, but Judaizers acted as though little had changed
 - f. There are critical times in history and in our lives that once reached we can never go back to what we were
2. The dawn of this new age had come with the arrival of God's Son
 - a. At just the right moment, when events, rulers and spiritual air was just what God wanted, he sent his Son
 - b. There are two ideas concerning the nature of our Lord that are involved in God sending his Son
 - 1) The Son was somewhere when the Father sent him, in other words, he existed before he was sent
 - 2) The root of this verb is the word from which we derive 'apostle,' the One sent was sent with authority
 - c. Whatever claims could be made for the value of the law, they could not compare with Jesus' qualifications
 - 1) His arrival in our world brought a light on the character and will of God that will always be unequalled
 - 2) His presence changed the course of history so that pouring old wine into new wineskins is impossible
 3. He came into our world as fully human, and even more, as Jewish
 - a. Jesus was preexistent, in fact, eternal, and yet he still came into the world like we did, born of a woman
 - 1) Tho he was the eternal Son of God he was at the same time fully human, our perfect representative
 - 2) He was the seed of woman who was promised from the beginning, and throughout the Old Testament
 - b. Hebrews looks at other implications, but Paul focuses on what it means for His relationship to the law
 - 1) Jesus was born under law, he lived out his life on earth as one obligated to fulfill all its demands
 - 2) Part of this duty required obedience to the law, an obligation our Lord would have delighted in
 - 3) Part of it though meant taking on himself the law's curse against sin for all those he represented
 - 4) By his death on the cross he satisfied the law's penalty against sin for all he came to save
 4. He came for the very purpose of freeing us from the law as a guardian
 - a. Redeeming those born under the law was not incidental to His coming, it was the heart of why he came
 - b. We come into this world as children of Adam as sinners living under the curse of the law
 - c. Jesus came to pay the price demanded for transgressing the law thus freeing us from its oppressive features
 - d. Now we no longer follow the law out of fear, but because we find its guidance a comfort and joy
- C. Sons who no longer live as slaves **5-7**
1. With this redemption we now live as God's sons with all due rights
 - a. Jesus was sent to redeem us so 'we might receive the full rights of sons' or 'receive the adoption of sons'
 - b. There was more to redemption than just keeping us out of hell; it was about ushering us into God's family
 - c. In the OT God called Israel to be his 'first-born son' (Ex 4:22), providing background for this teaching
 - d. The language of adoption itself was drawn from the culture of that day where adoption was common
 - e. Jesus came so 'we might not only be delivered from the greatest evil but be crowned with choicest blessing
 2. It is not the law, but the Spirit of God that is part of our inheritance
 - a. Our position as sons and our reception of the Spirit are inseparable aspects of our redemption
 - b. The Spirit is given to us to confirm and illumine the work of the Son, to strengthen faith and assurance
 - c. The law may bring us to bend our will to meet its demands, but the Spirit transforms the whole person
 - 1) No longer is it just our will that leads to obedience, it is our emotions, desires and intellect involved
 3. As sons, we know God not just as Lord of Sinai but as our Father
 - a. We are able to address the Lord in such intimate, familial terms because the Spirit dwells in our hearts
 - b. We do not just mimic Jesus' address, his Spirit calls out from within us as sons to the heavenly Father
 - c. The Spirit does not just give gifts and strength to serve, he tells us our relationship with the Father is real
 - d. The presence of the Spirit inspires within us a childlike trust in God as our loving, watchful Father
 - e. This heartfelt love for and devotion to God is as much a sign of spiritual life as any spiritual gift we have
 4. By grace we have been made heirs of God, coheirs with Christ
 - a. False teachers raised the question of who the heirs of God's promise were?
 - b. Were the heirs those who believed in Christ, or those who believed in Christ and lived under the law?
 - c. Paul insisted that those who had placed their faith in Christ were already sons of God, heirs with Christ
 - d. This faith is where our doctrine of eternal security rests for it is based on Christ's obedience, not ours
 - e. God alone is the source of our salvation and thus to him alone is glory due for our heavenly inheritance