

GALATIANS 16
Paul's Fear For the Gentiles Part I
Galatians 4:7-11
September 2, 2012

Paul is arguing in Galatians chapter four that if God has redeemed the Jews out from under the law; if he has done away with the law with respect to them; if he has brought them to a better way in Christ; if they have grown out of childhood and come to the maturity of sons; if they are no longer servants but heirs in Christ; if they have been taken out of the bondage of the law; if Christ has removed the schoolmaster from them; then don't let anyone tell you Gentiles that you should put yourselves under that old law.

The Mosaic Law was a pre-Christ religion. Yes, those Jews who rejected Christ kept right on under that law. They are kept there, not by the precepts of Christ, but by their own choice. They have voluntarily stayed there even though God says the law condemns; even though God says the law is done away. And these Judaizers who have rejected Christ, are telling the Gentiles that they also must put themselves under the law.

"You must be circumcised," they said. And Paul is angry at such a thing. Teaching such a thing flies in the face of the pure gospel of grace in Christ. And Paul has proved in Galatians chapter four that even the Jews themselves are redeemed from the law.

Notice verse five. God sent forth his Son . . .

To redeem them that were under the law.

Galatians 4:5

And if that pre-Christ law system is no longer applicable to the Jews then it should also not be applicable to the Gentiles.

You will notice that the Jews have been made sons in verse five and the Gentiles have been made sons in verse six. Both have been brought into the family as mature sons and as full heirs. Both share equally in the kingdom of Christ. That old system has been done away and if it is done away then it is not

still there. And if it is not still there, then the Gentiles cannot be under it.

Now the Jews may have been offended that after such a long service under the law that they stood no better than the Gentiles in the gospel. The Gentiles never had to bear that old yoke. The Gentiles were never slaves to the law. The Gentiles lived in utter ignorance and uncontrolled depravity while the Jews were disciplined daily by that old schoolmaster. And the Jews might have thought it was unfair that under the gospel they stood on equal footing with the Gentiles. After all, the Jews labored for 1500 years under the law. And then when the promises came true in Christ, the Gentiles were invited in as well.

Some think that the parable of the laborers in the vineyard is pertinent to this Jews/Gentile question.

Read Matthew 20:1-16

You find in this parable that some worked all day and received a wage. But others came at the last hour and received the same wage. And by this, perhaps Christ intimated that the Gentiles would be brought in at the last moment and they should receive the same blessings as the Jews. And this certainly is the case. These Johnny-come-lately Gentiles are brought right in and they are made sons just like the Jews.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 4:7

Let me introduce the next few verses by establishing that they apply principally to the Gentiles in Galatia. Paul is describing the Galatian Gentiles in verses 7-11.

(7) *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

(8) *Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.*

(9) *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in*

bondage?

(10) *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

(11) *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

1. First of all notice the change in pronouns from verse five to verse six. This indicates that Paul is changing his focus from the Jews to the Galatian converts.

2. His description of his subjects in verses eight and nine are Gentile descriptions. He says in verse eight, "When ye knew not God." This is an apt description of the Gentiles. The Jews knew God. The Jews had the law. God spoke to the Jews. God delivered the Jews with great miracles. They were the one nation in all the earth that knew God. The characteristic of the Gentiles was that they did not know God. They did not have his law. God did not speak to them. God left them to their own devices. Also, notice what Paul says about them.

Ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.
Galatians 4:8

Even though the Jews often fell into idolatry and worshipped such false gods as Baal and Ashtaroah, this would seem to more accurately describe the Gentiles. The Gentiles worshipped anything and everything because they did not know God. They worshipped men and they worshipped beasts. If it crawled on the face of the earth they were prone to worship it. This is where depravity will take you when God turns you loose.

*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image
made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted
beasts, and creeping things.*

Romans 1:22, 23

*Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these
dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

I Corinthians 12:2

3. Verse eleven says that Paul has bestowed labor on them.

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

Galatians 4:11

Paul is obviously speaking to his Galatian converts here. Paul did not bestow labor on the Jews. He was the Apostle to the Gentiles. He rarely went to Jerusalem. His contacts with the Jews were usually in the nature of disputing and arguing for the gospel. But he bestowed labor on the Gentiles.

A description of the Gentiles under the gospel

1. Thou art no more a servant. (v.7)

This is a principle that was first learned in relation to the Jews. It was the Jews that were servants under the law. It was the Jews who were in bondage to the law. But the principle is also applicable to the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not have the Mosaic Law, but they had law. There was a dark image of the law that was written on their consciences.

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:19, 20

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts.

Romans 2:14

So, although the law applied first and foremost to the Jews, it also applied to the heathen. The moral law of God is universal. All men have a sense of it. God has written it in their hearts. So, in this sense, the Gentiles had the law of God. And when the Gentiles committed all manner of sin, they were seared in their consciences because their consciences convicted them.

And in this sense they were also servants of the law. They were in bondage to the moral law of God. Their

consciences accused them when they did wrong. When they committed murder their conscience told them it was wrong. When they committed fornication and adultery they knew it was wrong. And they were in bondage to that law that told them they were sinners against God.

And Paul says,

Thou art no more a servant.

Just as the Jews were brought out from the condemnation of the Mosaic Law, the Gentiles were brought out from under the condemnation of the moral law of God when God saved them by the gospel. They were no longer servants but free men – free in the grace of Jesus Christ.

2. You are a son. (v.7)

You might have thought that the Gentiles would occupy some lower rank than the Jews in the gospel kingdom. But not so. Look, the Jews are sons (v.5) and the Gentiles are sons. (v.7) Paul is very adamant that the Gentiles come right into the kingdom of Christ on equal footing.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26-28

3. You are an heir of God. (v.7)

This is the same language that is used to describe the blessings upon the Jews. They are no longer servants. They are sons. They are heirs. And Paul says to the Galatians, You are not servants. You are sons. You are heirs.

Just a word about heirs. A servant is never an heir. But a son is an heir. And a son is an heir not by virtue of his accomplishments but by virtue of his birth. The son of a wealthy man isn't wealthy by his own work, but he is an heir to a fortune. The moment he was born he was a son and an heir to a fortune.

In exactly the same way, the moment we are born into the kingdom of God we are sons. The moment that we are born again and made alive in Christ, we are heirs. We are not heirs by anything we have done, but we are mere beneficiaries of the grace of God. Who do we have to thank for the fortune that is ours by inheritance? We have Christ to thank for everything.

Think about this. We are not heirs of some rich and mighty man. But we are heirs of God, the almighty Creator of all things. If a person could ever appreciate what it means to be a son and an heir of God, he would count as dung the riches of the world. The world itself and all of its riches is chump change in comparison with our heavenly blessings. We have quite a few older people in our congregation. And what are they going to do with a million dollars. What good is a mansion here in this world when you will leave it all behind in just a little while?

This is why Paul said, "I greatly desire to depart and to be with Christ." (Phil.1:23) This is actually the great hope of every Christian, for when we depart this world and go to the next, it will be an end to all our miseries and the beginning to all our happiness.

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

Philippians 1:23

Note: Paul says, we have these things through Christ. Paul always says, "through Christ" or "in Christ." This is undoubtedly to show that eternal blessings come only through Him. They do not come from the law. They do not come by works. They do not come by rituals and ceremonies. But they come through Christ. If Paul talks about righteousness, it is by Christ. As often as he speaks of grace, it is by Christ. If there is any good thing to be had like adoption or inheritance and spiritual blessings, it is by Christ. Jesus Christ is everything. Whatever we have it is by and through Christ. Leave Christ out and all you have is empty religion. But you have fullness and unspeakable riches – through Christ.

The theological error of the Gentiles

They were listening to the Judaizers and returning to the dictates of the law. Now here is an interesting thing. The Gentiles were never under the Mosaic Law, and yet Paul says how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements. He says you are observing days, and months and times and years. Why does Paul say they are returning to the law when they were never under it?

The law without Christ is a form of idolatry. Judaism with no view to Christ is as much idolatry as all those former evil practices of the Gentiles. The Gentiles worshipped images of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. And now they are going back to another form of idolatry – Christless Judaism. And so, now that they are putting themselves under the law, they are actually returning to idolatry.

Christless Judaism is nothing but idol worship. They worship the animal sacrifices. They worship the rituals and ceremonies. They have made a god out of their religion. And their religion is not the true God. And it appears here in our text that Judaism is equated to the idolatry of the ignorant Gentiles.

Now here is Paul's argument. Before you knew God, you Gentiles served things that were not gods. How is it that after you have come to know God, you want to go back to worshipping that which is not god?

Paul's fear

Paul is afraid that all of his labor was useless. This may be one of the great fears of all preachers and pastors. Sometimes they don't see any fruit. In fact, sometimes they see regression. People take in the gospel for a moment, and then they fall back. Sometimes their condition is worse than it was before. And Paul looked at all his work and he feared unless his work was in vain.