

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Six arguments in chapters 3 and 4:
 - 1. The Personal Argument (3:1-5);
Paul asks the Galatians to recall their personal conversion experience with Christ.
 - 2. The Scriptural Argument (3:6-14);
Paul quotes six OT passages to prove his point.
 - 3. The Logical Argument (3:15-29);
Paul reasons with his readers about what a covenant is and how a covenant works.
 - 4. The Historical Argument (4:1-11);
Paul explains the place of the Law in the history of Israel.
 - 5. The Sentimental Argument (4:12-18);
is the apostle appealing to the Galatians to remember his love and their happy relationship.
 - 6. The Allegorical Argument (4:19-31);
which is based on the life of Abraham and his relationships with Sarah and Hagar. [WWW]
- B. The Judaizers had bewitched them into thinking that the Law would make them better Christians. Their old nature felt an attraction to the Law because the Law enabled them to do things and measure external results.
- C. 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. [WWW]

THE HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

A. HE EXPLAINS THEIR ADOPTION (4:1-7).

- 1. Adoption:
 - a. The NT word for adoption means "to place as an adult son." It has to do with our standing in the family of God: we are not little children but adult sons with all the privileges of sonship. [WWW]
 - b. It is unfortunate that many translations of the NT do not make a distinction between the children of God and the sons of God. We are the children of God by our initial obedience to Christ, born into God's family (Jn. 3:3). [WWW]
 - c. But every child of God is automatically placed into the family as a son, and as a son has all the legal rights and privileges of a (adult) son. A new Christian is considered a babe in Christ who needs to grow (1Pet. 2:2-3), but as far as his position is concerned, he is an adult son who can draw on the Father's wealth and can exercise all the wonderful privileges of sonship. [WWW]
 - d. No child of whatever culture is to be trusted with an inheritance until the age of responsibility. The word here rendered "child" really "means babe," as Paul used the same word in 1Cor. 3:1 for a child needing a milk diet; but the evident meaning here is simply that of "a minor." As McGarvey noted, "In this paragraph Paul resumes the metaphor of 3:24ff, but from a slightly different point of view." There it is the pedagogue which is stressed; here it is the child himself. [JBC]
 - e. Note the following scriptures on adoption (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15; 9:4; Eph. 1:5).
(Gal 4:5) so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
(Rom 8:15) For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"
(Rom 9:4) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,
(Eph 4:5) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

2. What we were: children in bondage (4:1-3):

Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, **2** but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. **3** So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

- a. This is the spiritual condition of the Jews under the age of the Law. The Law, you recall, was the "guardian" that disciplined the nation and prepared the people for the coming of Christ (3:23-25). 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. [WWW]
- b. Legalism, then, is not a step toward maturity; it is a step backward into childhood (and immaturity). The Law was not God's final revelation; it was the preparation for that final revelation in Christ. It is important that a person know his ABCs for they are the foundation for understanding all of language. But the man who sits in a library and recites the ABCs instead of reading the great literature that is around him, is showing that he is immature and ignorant, not mature and wise. [WWW]
- c. Peter himself described the Law of Moses in this same terminology (Ac. 15:10); and when one considers the incredible number of rules and regulations which were enforced by it, it becomes clear enough that it was indeed slavery. [JBC]

3. What God did: redeemed us (4:4-5):

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, **5** so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

- a. The fullness of time ...
has the meaning of "At God's appointed time." All of the grand events of God's plan for the redemption of mankind were scheduled in advance, and from the beginning, even the final judgment itself being a planned and scheduled event. " God has appointed a day, etc." (Ac. 17:31). [JBC]
- b. While true enough that Christ was born of a woman, that is not the word Paul used. Huxtable believed a better translation is made to be of a woman, preferring it because "Such a translation would imply a previous state of existence (a thought most certainly in the context), whereas born does not." [JBC]
- c. Paul has told us who came--God's Son; he has told us when He came and how He came. Now he explains why He came: "to redeem them that were under the Law" (4:5). Redeem is the same word Paul used earlier (3:13); it means "to set free by paying a price." [WWW]
- d. Perhaps at this point a chart may help us understand better the contrast between being a "child of God" and a "son of God." [WWW]

The Child
by regeneration
entering the family
under guardians
cannot inherit

The Son
by adoption
enjoying the family
the liberty of an adult
an heir of the Father

- e. Adam was the "son of God" by creation (Lk. 3:38), a status that does not pertain to any of Adam's posterity due to the disastrous behavior of the great progenitor which involved the entire human race in ruin. God's purpose of redemption is that of adopting all of us "Adamites" into the status of sonship with the Father. [JBC]

4. What we are: sons and heirs (4:6-7):

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" **7** Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

The contrast here is between servants and sons.

- a. *The son has the same nature as the father, but the servant does not.*
When we become a Christian the Holy Spirit comes to live within us; and this means we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pet. 1:4). The Law could never give a person God's divine nature. [WWW]
- b. *The son has a father, while the servant has a master.*
The word "Abba" is an Aramaic word that is the equivalent of our English word "papa." This shows the closeness of the child to the Father. No servant has this. [WWW]
- c. *The son obeys out of love, while the servant obeys out of fear.*
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. "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15). [WWW]
- d. *The son is rich, while the servant is poor.*
God has made available to us the riches of:
 - 1) His grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:7).
 - 2) His glory (Phil. 4:19).
 - 3) His goodness (Rom. 2:4).
 - 4) His wisdom (Rom. 11:33ff).
 and all are found in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:19; 2:3). [WWW]
- e. *The son has a future, while the servant does not.*
God, the Father, always provides for His sons (2Cor. 12:14). [WWW]
5. In one sense, our adoption is not yet final, because we are awaiting the return of Christ and the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23). [WWW]
6. Christians have experienced the first stage: we have been purchased by Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. We are awaiting the second stage: the public declaration at the return of Christ when "we shall be like him" (1Jn. 3:1-3). We are "sons and heirs," and the best part of our inheritance is yet to come (1Pet. 1:1-5). [WWW]

B. HE LAMENTS THEIR REGRESSION (4:8-11).

However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. **9** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? **10** You observe days and months and seasons and years. **11** I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

1. The phrase "weak and beggarly elements" or "weak and worthless elemental" tells us the extent of their regression. They were giving up the power of the Gospel for the weakness of the Law, and wealthy of the Gospel for the poverty of the Law. [WWW]
2. How were they doing this? By adopting the OT system of religion with its special observances of "days, and months, and times, and years" (4:10). [WWW]
3. Sabbatarians have done their best to eliminate the meaning of this passage, but as Huxtable tells us, the words used here "were used by Josephus for the keeping of Sabbath days"; and when read in conjunction with Col. 2:16 there cannot be any doubt that the sin of the Galatians was simply that of keeping, after the Jewish manner, the Sabbaths, festivals and special days of the Old Covenant, which if persisted in, would mean their total loss to Christianity. The whole thesis of this epistle is that "Judaism and Christianity do not mix." [JBC]
4. The NT makes it clear that Christians are not to legislate religious observances for each other (Rom. 14:4-13). We are not to praise the man who celebrates the day, nor are we to condemn the man who does not celebrate. But if a man thinks he is saving his soul, or automatically growing in grace, because of a religious observance, then he is guilty of legalism. See Eph. 4:15-16. [WWW]

THE SENTIMENTAL ARGUMENT

C. HE SEEKS THEIR AFFECTION (4:12-18).

I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong; **13** but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; **14** and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*. **15** Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. **16** So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? **17** They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them. **18** But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

1. Paul was a wonderful spiritual father; he knew just how to balance rebuke with love. Now he turns from "spanking" to "embracing" as he reminds the believers of their love for him and his love for them. At one point they were willing to sacrifice anything for Paul, so great was their love; but now he had become their enemy. The Judaizers had come in and stolen their affection. [WWW]
2. Bible students wish Paul had been more explicit here, because we are not sure just what events he is talking about. When Paul had originally visited them, he was suffering from some physical affliction. If, as noted in Galatians 1, Paul wrote this letter to the churches of south Galatia, then he is referring to his first missionary journey, recorded in Acts 13-14. [WWW]
3. Endless speculations concerning the illness (that is the way it must be understood) that caused Paul to preach to the Galatians have found no general agreement among scholars; but the most reasonable explanation of it would seem to be that advocated by William M. Ramsay and accepted by Dummelow, Barclay and many others to the effect that when Paul came to Perga in Pamphylia on the first missionary journey (Ac. 13:13ff), he did not preach there (at Perga), due to a sudden onset of malaria, taking refuge in the highlands of Pisidian Antioch (and later going to the other cities of the first tour). The question is not really important. [JBC]
4. Whatever it was, it must have made Paul somewhat repulsive in appearance, because he commends the Galatians for the way they received him in spite of how he looked. To them he was an angel of God. [WWW]
5. It is a wonderful thing when people accept God's servants, not because of their outward appearance, but because they represent the Lord and bring His message. [WWW]
6. *So then am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?*
In context, the thought is, "Surely one whom you have loved so much cannot become your enemy merely by telling you the truth about people who are now trying to exploit you." [JBC]
7. One of the marks of a false teacher is that he tries to attract other men's converts to himself, and not simply to the truth of the Word or to the person of Jesus Christ. A true servant of God does not "use people" to build himself up or his work; he ministers in love to help people know Christ better and glorify Him. Beware of that religious worker who wants your exclusive alliance because he is the only one who is right. [WWW]
8. The task of a spiritual leader is to get people to love and follow Christ, not to promote himself and his ministry. [WWW]

NEXT LESSON.

The next lesson in this series is from Gal. 4:19-31 and discusses the Bond and Free Allegory.