

GALATIANS: CHARTER OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (study 4)

FROM ALIENATION TO ADOPTION

ABRAHAM AND ABBA

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ... But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him ... For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs... ROMANS 8:1,9,14-17 (NRSV)

CURSING & BLESSING – LAW & PROMISE (3:11-14)

3:11,12 Two principles of life contrasted – faith and obedience (Deut.27:26; James 2:10)

[1] [3:12] You will more easily unite fire and water, than reconcile these two statements, that men are justified by faith, and that they are justified by the law ... We must bear in memory what I have already stated, that to do the law is not to obey it in part, but to fulfil everything which belongs to righteousness; and all are at the greatest distance from such perfection. [Calvin 90-91]

3:13,14 How did Jew AND Gentile both benefit from the Abrahamic covenant, in contrast to the Law?

[2] [3:13] For God has laid our sins, not upon us but upon Christ, His Son. If they are taken away by Him, then they cannot be taken away by us. [Luther 279]

[3] [3:14] It is indeed a characteristic token of the difference between the two covenants, that under the Law the 'fear of the Lord' holds very much the same place as 'faith in God,' 'faith in Christ,' under the Gospel. Awe is the prominent idea in the earlier dispensation, *trust* in the later. [Lightfoot 159]



KJV gives misleading impression

The paedagogus or tutor, frequently a superior slave, was entrusted with the moral supervision of the child. Thus his office was quite distinct from that of the [*didaskalos*], so that the [KJV] rendering, 'schoolmaster,' conveys a wrong idea. [Lightfoot 148]

The [*paidagogos*] ... accompanied the free-born boy wherever he went, from the

time he left his nurse's care. It was his duty to teach the boy good manners (with the use of the birch, if necessary), take him to school (carrying his satchel and other effects), wait for him there ... then take him home and test his memory by making him recite the lesson he had learned. During the boy's minority the [*paidagogos*] imposed a necessary restraint on his liberty until, with his coming of age, he could be trusted to use his liberty responsibly. [Bruce 182]

Therefore God has to make use of that hammer of His, namely, the Law, to break, bruise, crush, and annihilate this beast [the presumption of righteousness] with its false confidence, wisdom, righteousness, and power, so that it learns that it has been destroyed and damned by its evil. Then, when the conscience has been terrified this way by the Law, there is a place for the doctrine of the Gospel and of grace, which raises it up again and comforts it; it says that Christ did not come into the world to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick (Isa.42:3) but to announce the Gospel to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives (Isa.61:1). [Luther 314]

COVENANT CONFUSION – WHICH IS NULLIFIED? (3:15-22)

3:15-18 Which promise must we depend on? (Rom.8:1,9-11,14-17)

[4] [3:17] God's dealings with Abraham and Moses were based on two different principles ... What is the difference between them? In the promise to Abraham God said, 'I will ... I will ... I will ...'. But in the law of Moses God said, 'Thou shalt ... thou shalt not ...'. The promise sets forth a religion of God – God's plan, God's grace, God's initiative. But the law sets forth a religion of man – man's duty, man's works, man's responsibility. [Stott 86]

**"I will ... I will
versus
"Thou shall ...
thou shall not"**

[5] [3:18] Therefore the promise and the Law are as far apart from each other as heaven and earth. For the Law demands: "Do this!" The promise grants: "Accept this!" [Luther 303]

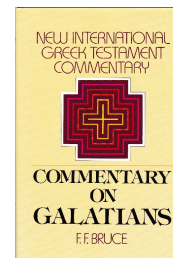
3:19-22 In what way did the Law imprison rather than free man?

[6] [3:19] There was an early Jewish doctrine of three epochs in world-history – the age of chaos, the age of law, and the messianic age – each lasting for 2000 years, after which the eternal sabbath rest would be enjoyed ... [Bruce 176]

[7] [3:19] For when the rabble hear from the Gospel that righteousness comes by the sheer grace of God and by faith alone, without the Law or works, they draw the same conclusion the Jews drew then: "Then let us not do any works!" And they really live up to this. [Luther 305]

[8] [3:20-21] *God is one*, because he always continues to be like himself, and, with unvarying regularity, holds fixed and unalterable the purpose which he has once made ... He charges his adversaries with the offence of making God contradict himself. For from him the Law and the promises have evidently proceeded: whoever then alleges any contradiction between them blasphemes against God: but they do contradict each other, if the Law justifies. [Calvin 103-104]

[9] [3:22] Unlike the law, the promise is absolute and unconditional. It depends



on the sole decree of God. There are not two contracting parties. There is nothing of the nature of a *stipulation*. The giver is everything, the recipient nothing. Thus the primary sense of 'one' here is numerical. The further idea of unchangeableness may perhaps be suggested ... [Lightfoot 147]

LAW OR LIBERTY – SERVANTS OR SONS? (3:23-4:7)

3:23-25 Nevertheless, how was the Law of great benefit to Israel? (Psalm 119)

[10] [3:24] In like manner, the *law* was the grammar of theology, which, after carrying its scholars a short way, handed them over to *faith* to be completed. ... for what end did sacrifices and washings serve but to keep the mind continually fixed on pollution and condemnation? When a man's uncleanness is placed before his eyes, when the unoffending animal is held forth as the image of his own death, how can he indulge in sleep? How can he but be roused to the earnest cry for deliverance? Beyond all doubt, ceremonies accomplished their object, not merely by alarming and humbling the conscience, but by exciting them to the faith of the coming Redeemer. In the imposing services of the Mosaic ritual, every thing that was presented to the eye bore an impress of Christ. [Calvin 108-109]

[11] [3:23] But this is [the Law's] chief use and end: to reveal death, in order that the nature and enormity of sin might thus become apparent. It does not reveal death in a way that takes delight in it or that seeks to do nothing but kill us. No, it reveals death in order that men may be terrified and humbled and thus fear God. The text of Ex.20:20 itself shows this clearly: "Do not fear," it says, "for God has come to prove you, and that the fear of Him may be before your eyes, that you may not sin." [Luther 335]

The Law revealed death, that man might fear God and the results of sin

3:26-29 Who ONLY become Abraham's seed ultimately, and thus children of God as well?

[12] [3:26] It would not be enough to say that we are no longer children, unless it were added that we are freemen; for in slaves age makes no alteration. [Calvin 110]

[13] [3:28] It is not unlikely that Paul himself had been brought up to thank God that he was born a Jew and not a Gentile, a freeman and not a slave, a man and not a woman. If so, he takes up each of these three distinctions which had considerable importance in Judaism and affirms that in Christ they are all irrelevant ... Paul's statement was echoed later in those gnostic circles which held that, in the new age, man would no longer be separated into 'male and female' but would revert to a (supposedly) pristine androgynous state ... It is not their distinctiveness, but their inequality of religious role, that is abolished 'in Christ Jesus'. [Bruce 187,189]

4:1-3 Even an appointed heir must be readied for his role, spending time under the temporary guardianship of custodians or stewards (i.e. servants)

[14] [4:1,2] In Roman law the heir, until he came of age at 14, was under control of a *tutor*, nominated by the father in his will; then, until he reached the age of 25, he was under a *curator* ... [Bruce 192]

[15] [4:3] Therefore just as guardians treat a young heir harshly, lording it over him and giving him orders, and just as he is compelled to be subject to them, so the Law accuses, humbles, and enslaves us, so that we are slaves to sin, death, and the wrath of God, which is surely the most miserable and terrible form of slavery. [Luther 361]

4:4-7 How will a son respond to his appointed role, in contrast to a servant? (1 John 4:10-21; cf. *Knowledge* p.191)

[16] [4:4] Why is the period of Christ's coming termed 'the fulness of the time' (AV)? Various factors combined to make it such. For instance, it was the time when Rome had conquered and subdued the known inhabited earth, when Roman roads had been built to facilitate travel and Roman legions had been stationed to guard them. It was also the time when the Greek language and culture had given a certain cohesion to society. At the same time, the old mythological gods of Greece and Rome were losing their hold on the common people, so that the hearts and minds of men everywhere were hungry for a religion that was real and satisfying. Further, it was the time when the law of Moses had done its work of preparing men for Christ, holding them under its tutelage and in its prison, so that they longed ardently for the freedom with which Christ could make them free. [Stott 105]

[17] [4:6] Two sure signs of the indwelling Spirit, for Paul, are the spontaneous invocation of God as 'Abba' and the spontaneous acknowledgement of Jesus as [*kurios*], 'Lord' (1 Cor.12:3) ... So far as can be ascertained, Jesus was unique in applying this designation to God – not the [*abinu*] ('our Father') of synagogue prayers nor yet the more personal *abi* ('my Father'), but the domestic term by which a father was called in the affectionate intimacy of the family circle. [Bruce 199]

No period of probation for God's children

God does not put repentant sinners on probation to see how they will turn out; he gives them an unrestrained welcome and invests them as his true-born sons. For Jesus, and for Paul, the initiative always rests with the grace of God. He bestows the reconciliation or redemption; men receive it. 'Treat me as one of your hired servants', says the prodigal to his father, but the father speaks of him as 'this my son'. So, says Paul, 'through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir' ... The transition from leading-strings to liberty is crucial for religious development, although there are some who never attain it but prefer to live indefinitely under spiritual direction. John Wesley, looking back in spiritual maturity on his Christian career before the crisis which is commonly called his conversion, said very aptly, 'I had even then the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a *son*' ... [Bruce 39,200]

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