

GALATIANS: CHARTER OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (study 5)

The PARADOX of APPEARANCES TWO COVENANTS, TWO TYPES, TWO SONS

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

GALATIANS 4:7

PARADOX 1: WE PREFER THE WORTHLESS (4:8-20)

4:8 How can we be slaves to 'gods' that don't exist? (Ezekiel 14)

[1] [4:8,9] Therefore every man who falls away from the knowledge of Christ necessarily rushes into idolatry; for he must invent a form for God that does not exist anywhere ... it is all a vain imagination and a dream, the invention of an idol in the heart. For nowhere has God promised that He intends to justify men and save them on account of religious orders, observances, and forms of worship that have been thought up and established by men. In fact, as all Scripture attests, nothing is more abominable to God than such self-chosen works and forms of worship; He even overthrows kingdoms and empires on account of such things. Therefore all those who trust in their ability and righteousness are serving a god who by nature is no god but is a god only in their opinion. [Luther 397]

The assurance of a son, the insecurity of a servant

... the way He assures us of our sonship is not by some spectacular gift or sign, but by the quiet inward witness of the Spirit as we pray ... In other words, your religion has degenerated into an external formalism. It is no longer the free and joyful communion of children with their Father; it has become a dreary routine of rules and regulations ... But how can anyone be so foolish as to say: 'You have made me your son; but I would rather be a slave'? It is one thing to say 'I do not deserve it'; it is quite another to say 'I do not desire it; I prefer slavery to sonship'. Yet that was the folly of the Galatians, under the influence of their false teachers. [Stott 107-108]



4:9-11 In what, characteristically, does 'weak and worthless' religion consist? (i.e. What is its APPEAL?)

[2] [4:9] Paul reminds the Galatians whence they had derived the knowledge of God. He affirms that they did not obtain it by their own exertions, by the acuteness or industry of their own minds, but because, when they were at the farthest possible remove from thinking of him, God visited them in his mercy. What is said to the Galatians may be extended to all; for in all are fulfilled the words of Isaiah, "I am sought by them that asked not for me: I am found by them that sought me not." (Isaiah 55:1.) The origin of our calling is the free election of God, which predestinates us to life before we are born. On this depends our calling, our faith, our whole salvation. [Calvin 123]

[3] [4:9] Paul's swift correction ... may be calculated not only to stress the divine initiative in this reciprocal knowledge, but also to exclude any gnostic inference from his words ... For Paul, there is no real distinction between being known by God and being chosen by him (Rom.8:29). [Bruce 202]

[4] [4:9] From the context it may be gathered that the [*stocheis tou kosmou*, elemental things] 'cover all the things in which man places his trust apart from the living God; they become his gods, and he becomes their slave' (H.H. Esser, *NIDNTT* II, 453 ...). [Bruce 204]

[5] [4:11] The central point at issue between Paul and the Judaizers concerned merely the logical – not even the temporal – order of three steps. Paul said: (1) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) at that moment you are saved; and (3) immediately you proceed to keep the law of God." The Judaizers said: (1) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and (2) keep the law of God the best you can; and then (3) you are saved." [Machen 49]

**Put these 3 verbs
in their correct
order: believe,
obey, be saved**

False teachers keep you in perpetual dependence

[4:17-19] ... he seems to be accusing the false teachers of flattering the Galatians insincerely. In order to win them to their perverted gospel, the false teachers fawned on them and fussed over them ... But the false teachers were not sincere in their devotion to the Galatians. Their real motive was that *they want to shut you out* (verse 17), that is, to exclude you from Christ and from the freedom that is in Christ; and they want to do it, in order *that you may make much of them*. When Christianity is seen as freedom in Christ (which it is), Christians are not in subservience to their human teachers, because their ambition is to become mature in Christ. But when Christianity is turned into a bondage to rules and regulations, its victims are inevitably in subjection, tied to the apron-strings of their teachers, as in the Middle Ages ... The difference between Paul and the false teachers should now be clear. The false teachers were seeking *themselves* to dominate the Galatians; Paul longed that *Christ* be formed in them. They had a selfish eye to their own prestige and position; Paul was prepared to sacrifice himself for them, to be in travail until Christ was formed in them. [Stott 115-117]

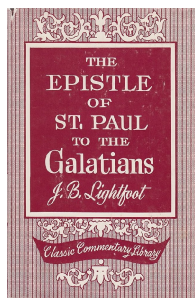
4:12-15 What 'blessedness' had the Galatians once enjoyed?

4:16-20 When will Paul consider his 'labour' over? (Ephesians 4:10-24; Col. 3:12-17)

[6] [4:19] 'my little children,' a mode of address common in St John, but not found elsewhere in St Paul. [Lightfoot 178]

[7] [4:19] For the Word proceeds from the mouth of the apostle and reaches the heart of the hearer; there the Holy Spirit is present and impresses that Word on the heart, so that it is heard. In this way every preacher is a parent, who produces and forms the true shape of the Christian mind through the ministry of the Word. [Luther 430]

[8] [4:19] That Christ should be formed in us is the same thing with our being formed in Christ; for we are born so as to become new creatures in him; and he, on the other hand, is born in us, so that we live his life. Since the true image of Christ, through the superstitions introduced by the false apostles, had been defaced, Paul labours to restore that image in all its perfection and brightness. This is done by the ministers of the gospel, when they give "milk to babes, and strong meat to them that are of full age," (Heb.5:13,14) and, in short, ought to be their employment during the whole course of their preaching. But Paul here compares himself to a woman in labour, because the Galatians were not yet completely born. [Calvin 132]



PARADOX 2: 'SUCCESSFUL' SONS & FREE SONS (4:21-31)

4:21 What mistake regarding the Law do JW's – and many Christians – commonly make?

4:22-23 Does Paul here contradict God? [Gen.22:2 -- a pet Muslim argument for Ishmael being the *true* seed of Abraham]

[9] [4:23] These two sons became the patterns for a spiritual truth. Ishmael was a son born in the natural way and he is representative of all who have experienced only natural birth, not the second birth from above (see John 3:1-8). He was born into slavery and he symbolizes those in bondage to the law. [MacArthur 87]

[10] [4:23] [*kata sarka*, according to the flesh] means 'in the ordinary course of nature'. No moral censure is implied: unlike Philo ... Paul does not call Ishmael illegitimate ... It is simply recognized that there was nothing exceptional about Ishmael's birth. [Bruce 217]

4:24-26 In finding allegory or type in Genesis, is Paul encouraging us to abandon literal interpretation?

[11] [4:24] St Paul uses [*allegoria*] here much in the same sense as he uses [*tupos*] 1 Cor.x.11 [*tauta de tupicos sunebainen*], not denying the historical truth of the narrative, but superposing a secondary meaning. [Lightfoot 180]

[12] [4:24-27] Now Paul moves into his underlying meaning of the true piece of

history familiar to any Jew. Allegory is normally not a legitimate approach to Scripture interpretation, but here Paul writes under inspiration of the Holy Spirit and calls the story of Abraham's two sons an "allegory" (v.24). It is the only stated allegory in all of Scripture. [MacArthur 88]

[13] [4:24] But as the apostle declares that these things are *allegorized* ... Origen and many others along with him, have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense. They concluded that the literal sense is too mean and poor, and that, under the outer bark of the letter, there lurk deeper mysteries, which cannot be extracted but by beating out allegories. And this they had no difficulty in accomplishing; for speculations which appear to be ingenious have always been preferred, and always will be preferred, by the world to solid doctrine ... This was undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage ... Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning. [Calvin 135-136]

**“a contrivance
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[14] [4:26] As the wilderness tabernacle was to be constructed according to the pattern shown to Moses on Sinai (Ex.25:40), so the temple and city of Jerusalem were regarded as material copies of eternal and heavenly archetypes. [Bruce 221]

[15] [4:27] Those who were mighty, satisfied, alive, righteous, blessed, rich, and glorious will be feeble, hungry, sentenced to death, sinful, condemned, poor, and shameful; and, on the other hand, the feeble and the hungry will be mighty and satisfied. [Luther 442]

4:27-31 The paradox of appearances – who is REALLY free, in type & fulfilment? (John 14:30; 16:31-33; cf. Dan.9:26)

[16] [4:29] If someone does not want to endure persecution from Ishmael, let him not claim that he is a Christian. [Luther 451]

[17] [4:30] Now if even the Moral Law of God, the Decalog, gives birth only to slaves – that is, does not justify but only terrifies, accuses, condemns, and brings consciences to the point of despair – how, I ask you, could the laws of the pope or human traditions justify? Therefore anyone who teaches or urges either the Law of God or human traditions as something necessary for righteousness in the sight of God does nothing other than give birth to slaves. [Luther 443]

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