

## **GALATIANS AND YOU**

Studies in the Epistle of Paul  
to the Galatians

by

C. Norman Bartlett

1948

### **Chapter Six**

#### **DOCTRINAL EXPOSITION**

*Galatians 3:1-4:31*

#### **Maturity in CHRIST Acquired (3:23-29)**

In the portion of Galatians to be covered in this chapter, the apostle shows first how with the coming of CHRIST the dispensation of law has given way to that of grace (3:23-29), and then enlarges upon the wonderful privileges that belong to those who have become children of GOD through faith in the Redeemer (4:1-7).

#### **Preparation for CHRIST (verses 23, 24)**

**"But before faith came, we were kept under the law."** Paul refers here, not to faith on the part of the individual believer as a subjective experience, but rather to the coming and spread of the Gospel. Prior to the advent of the SAVIOUR the Jews were, in the picturesque "**kept under the law**" and "**shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.**" The illustration is that of prisoners guarded by a jailer "kept in ward" until the time comes for handing them over to a higher authority. The law was standing guard over its subjects, preventing sinners from escaping into some kind of illusive freedom which in the nature of the case could be nothing more than a mirage. The Mosaic law served but to prepare and discipline men for the new order of grace. It brought condemnation for sin, but was powerless to affect deliverance from its relentless grip. There are many calling themselves Christians today who do not seem to have to any real understanding as to the relation of law to grace. They appear still to think that works have some part, if not in procuring, at least in preserving, their salvation. There are still others who spurn the grace made manifest and available in the blood of JESUS and seek to earn a passage to heaven by their own righteousness. They err most grievously who make the law, which GOD designed as a preparation for the Gospel, to be a substitute for the Gospel. The law might be likened to a police officer, while GOD is the Judge who Himself in the person of His Son pays the infinite penalty He imposes.

**"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."** The word "schoolmaster" speaks of a "pedagogos", a slave, usually of very

superior caliber, who had charge of a boy in a wealthy home from the age of six up to about sixteen. He was charged with the responsibility of supervising the boy continually in all matters pertaining to his physical and moral well-being. As Findlay put it, "In his food, his clothes, his play, his walk - at every point - the pedagogue was required to wait upon his young charge and to control his movement." This figure of the pedagogue, then, represents the childish and undeveloped state of those living under the dispensation of the law as compared with those who were to become sons of GOD through faith after the ushering in of the age of grace. The law gave instruction concerning CHRIST, showed the need of CHRIST, operated until CHRIST came; but it could not justify.

### **Culmination in CHRIST (verses 25-27)**

**"But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."** Since even Jews are not any longer under the law, it is absurd, Paul argues in effect, to try to fasten its shackles upon believing Gentiles. The coming of faith mentioned in this verse has to do with the appearance of the Gospel as a historic event; it does not refer to the subject experience of faith on the part of believers. Nevertheless, it must be ever kept in mind that the faith which has come into the world must become a faith in the soul to be the medium of salvation. The powerhouse sends its currents of electricity only into the homes that are wired for it. Even so faith wires the soul for "the faith." Putting the same truth another way, "the faith" is the bridge that CHRIST by His death on Calvary has built across the gulf which sin has dug between GOD and man. "My faith" steps across that bridge from bondage into freedom, from death to life. What we believe governs what we receive. Apart from appropriating faith, justification is of no avail so far as the individual sinner is concerned.

**"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."** The word translated "children" speaks of sonship. It is not so much a matter of relationship as of position and privilege that Paul has in view. Regeneration makes us all sons of GOD; and as sons we are not in servitude, but we enjoy liberty and freedom in CHRIST. As those who have been made His own at the price of the precious blood of JESUS, we are the objects of God's filial favor, the recipients of eternal blessings and privileges. Our status of sonship carries with it freedom from bondage. It will be noted that in this verse the apostle makes a sudden shift from the first to the second person plural pronoun, thus indicating an extension from the Jewish to the Gentile world. He assumes their adoption into the family of GOD on the basis of their acceptance of JESUS CHRIST as LORD and SAVIOUR.

**". . . In Christ Jesus."** While it is true that we became children or sons of GOD with all the unspeakable privileges belonging thereto the very moment we embraced JESUS CHRIST by faith, the thought of the apostle here is that we live in the faith by which we were saved, even as we live by breathing. CHRIST is the very air we breathe, the life in and by which we live. It is to be feared that many Christians fall far short of the full measure of happiness and satisfaction in JESUS because, while they cling firmly to the truth that CHRIST died for them, they have not come to a real understanding of their mystical union with the SAVIOUR whereby they live in CHRIST and CHRIST in them.

**"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."** While the apostle has the rite of baptism in mind as the symbol of baptism by the SPIRIT, we must not

forget that water baptism by itself avails nothing for salvation; it is but the outer sign - albeit a sacred one divinely ordained - of an inner change. Baptism beautifully symbolizes the believer's identification with CHRIST in His death and resurrection. We die with CHRIST to the old life of sin and rise with Him into newness of life, as is so forcefully set forth in Romans 6:3, 4: **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."** We die positionally in JESUS to the sin for which He died, and in Him we enter the portals of eternal life. Baptism, furthermore, eloquently pictures forth the glorious reality of the believer's baptism by the HOLY SPIRIT into the Body of CHRIST, the church invisible. This was probably the dominant idea in the mind of Paul when he wrote these words.

**". . . have put on Christ."** We cannot be certain what underlying illustration or metaphor Paul was thinking of when he used this expression. He may have had in mind the donning of the manly toga which marked the high point in the birthday festivities celebrating a Roman youth's entrance upon manhood's estate. Or, perhaps more likely, the custom of candidates for baptism in putting on new, white robes at the time of the observance of this ordinance may have suggested the apostle's picturesque phraseology. Again, he may have had in view the use of a signet ring that entitled its wearer to all sorts of special favors and rights. But whatever the metaphor behind them, the words **"have put on Christ"** are freighted with precious and sacred significance. Alas, for any who have **"put on Christ"** hypocritically, or in mere pretense. Such falsity invites frightful condemnation. When we **"put on Christ"** sincerely and in faith, we are clothed in His imputed righteousness; we enter upon a new life as children of GOD; we are arrayed invincibly in the invulnerable armor of light, even CHRIST JESUS Himself: **"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof"** (Romans 13:12-14).

In connection with advertising by clothiers and dressmakers, we are constantly informed as to "what the well-dressed student will wear," "what the well-dressed society woman will wear." Is it not time more earnest thought were given to what the well-dressed Christian will wear? The only raiment worthy of a born-again child of GOD is the imputed righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, **"who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"** (I Corinthians 1:30). Why do so many professed Christians seem ashamed to appear in public arrayed in these spiritual garments, beside which all the costliest apparel of royalty is but tawdry rags? Imagine a young woman recently engaged covering a costly diamond ring with a bandage every time she went out in the evening for fear some of her friends might see it! And yet many a professed follower of CHRIST is ashamed to wear the name of JESUS in public! Chosen by the King, and afraid to own Him!

### **Unification in CHRIST (verses 28, 29)**

**"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."** In CHRIST, Paul says, all distinctions of race and state and sex are abolished. That is to say, while such differences do obtain on the surface, they are lost in that deeper and eternal unity whereby all who believe in JESUS are one in Him. None

of them is or can be a barrier to salvation or a preventive to growth in grace. In no other way than through CHRIST can men thus be brought together. He is the mightiest solvent in all time of prejudices and alienations. Would that we who claim to be followers of the Redeemer might grasp this great truth! How trivial, after all, are the accidentals that divide us in the world, as compared with the fundamentals that unite us in the LORD! This unity in CHRIST we cannot produce - it is GOD alone who has made it a reality; but we should do everything within our power to give concrete expression to it before the eyes of the world. That oneness in the SAVIOUR which it cost the Triune GOD so much to accomplish is certainly worth every sacrifice on our part to keep in good repair. Lamentable beyond words are those sinful divisions, jealousies and enmities that rend the garment of the unity of the Church.

**"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

These words hark back to what Paul has unfolded at some length in verses 6-22 of this same chapter. Through faith in CHRIST we become spiritual descendants of Abraham and heirs of promise. Why is it that men will resort to the most desperate means to break a will for the sake of obtaining a temporal legacy, and at the same time turn a deaf ear to entreaties to yield their wills to CHRIST and thereby gain **"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that faded not away, reserved in heaven"** for them if they will but accept JESUS as their one and only SAVIOUR for time and eternity? (I Peter 1:4). We who are the children of promise by spiritual descent are at the same time children of promise for spiritual ascent; the most brilliant genius entering upon his chosen career does not begin to have the promise for the future possessed by the humblest follower of the LORD JESUS who has found in Him the key to eternal life and satisfactions that will unfold into ever greater fullness forever and ever. We become heirs with promise when we become heirs of heirs. And yet multitudes of men and women would rather put on airs of pride than become heirs of faith.

### **Prosperity of Sons Described**

**"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant. . . . Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world."** In these first three verses of chapter 4, Paul draws a comparison between the position of an heir during the years of his minority and the status of Israel under the law. Until he reached the year of his majority, the rights and privileges of the heir were held in abeyance. In fact, he was as much under authority as any of his father's slaves. The tutors referred to in the second verse were charged with watching over his person, while the governors were stewards managing his property. The father was free to appoint as many of these supervisors as he would to serve at the same time or one after another. Even so, the apostle reminds his readers, Jews and Gentiles were classed together before the coming of CHRIST as being in the childhood of the race, and as such, they had to be subjected to definite rules of order and justice as a necessary preparation for the freedom of the SPIRIT which would follow in the wake of the Gospel. By **"the elements of the world"** Paul means the rudimentary teachings of a non-Christian character, the elementary lessons of outward things, such as legal ordinances and various rites and ceremonies.

**"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."** Doctrinally this verse is of pivotal importance. What a world of truth is packed into a few words! It is a searchlight flashed upon the incarnation. The CHRIST who came was eternally pre-existent. He was God's Son. **"Made of a woman"** clearly points to His miraculous birth. How anyone can read this verse and maintain that Paul knew nothing of the

virgin birth of our LORD is difficult to understand.

**"Made under the law"** As the preceding words bring CHRIST into relation with the human race, these bring Him into relation with the Jewish nation. He thus took upon Himself all the general obligations imposed by GOD upon mankind in the law written in their hearts (Romans 2:15), and the particular duties imposed by GOD upon the Jews in the law given at Sinai. Never must it be forgotten that unless CHRIST had met all the requirements of the law, His death on the Cross would have been devoid of all atoning efficacy.

CHRIST came **"when the fullness of the time was come."** GOD does nothing prematurely. He had been preparing the world for the coming of His Son. Roman rule; Greek culture, including the universal spread of that language throughout the empire; and the Hebrew dispersion - all combined to facilitate the rapid spread of the Gospel in the first century. Students will benefit by consulting any good Church history for an expansion of this point.

**"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman . . ."** Where can we find a clearer statement of the fact that CHRIST was both divine and human? He was possessed of perfect deity and perfect humanity. For analogies of the relation between the two natures in JESUS CHRIST, the reader is referred to the author's book *The Triune GOD* (pages 135-160). To go into the subject in this book would take us too far afield and hopelessly beyond the limitations of space at our command. It is important, however, to remind our readers that when we refer to CHRIST as GOD made man, we are not to think that when He became man He was no longer GOD. Sacrificing none of His deity - although laying aside His pre-incarnate glory - He took upon Himself a perfect human nature (Luke 1:35), as we might think of light fashioning for itself a lamp through which to shine, the perfections of CHRIST's human nature being the parts of the lamp. Or, we might think of CHRIST's deity as analogous to the genius of a great organist, and His fullness of humanity as like a perfect organ at the command of the organist.

**"to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."** CHRIST came down from where He was to where we were that He might lift us where we were to where He eternally is. The Son of GOD became Son of Man that sons of men might become sons of GOD. In passing, we might allude to a vivid contrast between the tower of Babel and the Cross of JESUS: in the one we behold the pride of man reaching up to GOD sinfully; in the other we see the grace of GOD reaching down to men savingly. **"God sent forth his Son . . . that he might redeem . . ."** Think what it cost *the Son of GOD* to make me *a son of GOD!* GOD gave His Son to make us His sons. Do we value our privileges as sons of GOD in the light of the sacrifice of the Son of GOD? If GOD sacrificed His Son for our sins, why are many of us so reluctant to sacrifice our sins for His Son, by confessing them and thereby finding forgiveness and cleansing? Never must we let the privilege of our sonship make us forgetful of the sacrifice of our SAVIOUR.

**"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."** In Romans 8:15-17 we have a beautiful and striking parallel passage that we do well to consider in connection with Galatians 4:6, 7. **"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear"** (Romans 8:15a). The verb "received" points to the time when the believers were baptized into a new relationship with GOD through JESUS CHRIST. The SPIRIT of GOD, the third Person of the Trinity, coming into our hearts should banish the spirit of fear as

a state of mind. As Christians, instead of shrinking from GOD in dread, we now cling to Him in love and trust; and yet how many Christians fail to enter into the full blessedness of their filial bonds with GOD! How an earthly parent sorrows when his child is afraid of him for some reason or other - probably without any real foundation! And who shall say that our FATHER in Heaven does not grieve when His children fail to trust Him as they ought?

**"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."** Too many ill-instructed believers agonize and plead for the HOLY SPIRIT to come into their hearts, not realizing that as Christians they already have the SPIRIT dwelling within them, else they would not even be saved, born-again children of GOD. **"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"** (Romans 8:9). Our birth in GOD is proof of our worth to GOD, not because of what we were in ourselves, but because of what He wrought for us and in us to make us His children.

**". . . crying Abba, Father."** "Abba" was the Aramaic word for father. Used with "FATHER" in this way, it is suggestive of a tender and joyous response to GOD on the part of a child of His. If we could but realize more fully how our heavenly FATHER loves us, our hearts could not contain the love and joy we should find in Him. The ecstasy experienced by an earthly father when his little one first cries, "Daddy!" is a faint but touching picture of the happiness that must flood the heart of GOD when a new-born babe in CHRIST first prays, "Dear FATHER."

**"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son, and if a son then an heir of God through Christ."** Not only have we been delivered from bondage, but we have become sons of GOD, not mere children. The word for "sons" is expressive of the rights and privileges belonging to those who have entered their majority. From the penalty of sins to the legacy of sons - what an amazing transition! But let us never forget at what price our inheritance in CHRIST has been made a reality; then shall we prize it more highly and use it more wisely in this life. Although we're no longer slaves but sons, let us ever bear in mind that blessing means duty, and that privilege entails sacrifice. Let our heirship in CHRIST prove an airship in which we soar above the regions of storm into the peace of GOD that passeth all understanding.

Memorize Galatians 3:24-26; 4:4-7.

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