

SONS OR SERVANTS

BIBLE TEXT : Galatians 4:1-31; 5:1-15

LESSON 399 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Galatians 4:1-31

1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;
2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.
3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:
4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
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.
12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all.
13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.
14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.
15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, *if it had been possible*, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Bible References:

Notes:

Sons of God

To be a Christian means to be a follower of Christ, to be Christ-like. But there is much more to being a Christian than our life here on earth. When we give ourselves wholly to the Lord we become heirs of eternal life. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). That promise meant eternal life for Abraham and all who would have faith as Abraham had. "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). He was looking for a "better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

When we are saved by faith we are born into the family of God. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). When we are born again we are "joint-heirs with Christ" and shall some day be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

The Glories of Heaven

The night before Jesus was crucified, when His spirit was heavy because of the suffering He knew lay before Him, He put aside His own troubles and prayed long and earnestly to the Father for His disciples. At the close of His prayer He said: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). He wants us to enjoy with Him greater glories than we shall ever see on earth.

Another time Jesus said: "in my Father's house are many mansions: . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3).

All these promises are to the sons of God, those who have been born into the family of God, and have been made righteous through faith.

Servants

In today's lesson the Apostle Paul was trying to explain that when people were worshiping under the Law, before they were saved by faith, they were as servants. They could not be heirs of the promises of God until they became sons of God, even though they were Israelites. Jesus came in "the fullness of the time," the time that the prophets had said He would come, to fulfil the Law, to give Himself as a ransom for sin, so that no more animal offerings would need to be made. He came to free people from the bondage of trying to observe all the forms and ceremonies that had been commanded in the Law of Moses. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Observing the ceremonies of the Law had not changed their hearts.

Through Christ's death they could receive forgiveness for sins the moment they repented and believed on Jesus, and they would

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?
 17 They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.
 18 But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in *a* good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.
 19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,
 20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.
 21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?
 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.
 23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise.
 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.
 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.
 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.
 27 For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.
 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.
 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.
 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.
 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Galatians 5:1-15

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty

not have to offer fresh sin offerings every year as they had done under the Law. The Blood of Jesus would wash away their sins and give them power to go and sin no more. It would be possible for them to live without sinning, if they truly followed Jesus.

Turning Back

Paul had been brought up to be very strict in matters of the Law, and it had been hard for him to believe on Jesus, and to understand that His teachings were greater than the Law. After he was convinced and converted to Christ he worked that much harder to make the Gospel plain to others. Then after all his hard work, some of the Galatians were turning back to the works of the Law, and were quarrelling among themselves. Paul told them, "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15). And he asked: "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desires again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11). They were again making themselves only servants after they had become sons of God with great privileges and blessings.

Loving the Truth

When Paul had first preached the Gospel to these people they had loved him very much. When a person is first saved, the love of God so fills his heart that he loves everybody. But if one is not careful to read the Bible and pray faithfully, Satan may try to snatch that love away. When the ministers preach the truth of God's Word, the enemy may whisper, "You do not need to be so strict. It is not necessary to walk so carefully before the Lord." The Apostle Paul asked these people who had once loved him and the truth he preached, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16).

If a person is truly born of God and continues in the love of God, he wants to know the will of God; and he will be obedient to faithful ministers who are watching over him to see that he lives so as to be ready to go to Heaven. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isaiah 1:19). Do you sometimes feel that people are too strict when they show you what a Christian should do? Do you dislike the person who holds up the true Christian standard? Does that person become your enemy for telling you the truth? If so, you should look into your own heart and see if the love of God is still there, which you felt when you were first saved. Have you lost that "first love"?

The Old and New Covenants

In order to illustrate the great difference between a son and a servant, the Apostle gave an allegory of Abraham and his two sons. God had promised Abraham a son through whom Jesus would come to be a blessing to all the world. It was twenty-five years from the time the promise was given until Isaac was born, and during that long waiting period Abraham wondered just how God would fulfil the promise. In those days men sometimes had more than one wife, so when his first wife, Sarah, had no children, she suggested that he also take Hagar, a servant in their home, to be his wife. But Ishmael, the son who was born to them, was a son of a servant (hence a servant) and was not the son of promise for whom Abraham was waiting. When Isaac was born, the prophecy was fulfilled; and through him (the free-born) the promise was passed on to posterity.

Paul used the difference of the birth of the two sons as a comparison of the difference between the Old Covenant (the Law given on Mount Sinai) and the New Covenant (justification by faith). The Law had been hard to keep, even in form. The laws

wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

8 This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

of the Sabbath were particularly strict. The people were even forbidden to build a fire on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3). One time a man was picking up sticks on the Sabbath, and he was stoned to death (Numbers 15:32-36). Under the Law the principle was "Do or die."

The Apostle Peter told some people who were trying to force the disciples to worship according to the Law: "Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (Acts 15:10, 11).

Anyone who tries to be a Christian and live as the Bible teaches, without being born again, has a very hard time. He is in bondage. But when he is born again and becomes a son of God, he enjoys blessed freedom. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). He has God-given power to overcome sin, and live a happy Christian life in the strength he gets from Heaven.

Why should anyone want to go back to the bondage of trying to keep the Law when he has been so gloriously saved from sin through the Blood of Jesus? But there are people even today, as the Seventh Day Adventists and the British Israel people, who are trying to bring others back into the bondage of the Law. When people go back to keeping the Law (or trying to keep it), they ignore Jesus, and therefore cannot be saved. The Blood He shed to redeem mankind does not do that kind of people any good. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The fact that we are free after we are saved does not mean we are at liberty to commit sin. We are free from sin, and have power to live without committing sin. The law that the Lord wants us to keep is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). When Jesus puts His love into our heart when we are saved, we love Him supremely, and also love our fellow men. We would not want to do anything to displease God or to hurt others. In that way we fulfil the law of God.

QUESTIONS

1. What is a Christian?
2. What was Abraham looking for when he was on earth?
3. Who are the sons of God?
4. What are some of the promises given to the sons of God?
5. How was the Blood of Jesus of more value than the blood of bulls and goats?
6. How were the Galatians making themselves servants after they had been made sons of God?
7. Some of the Galatians did not love Paul any more. Why not?
8. How do you feel when someone tries to tell you how to be good?
9. What is the only Name through which we can be saved?
10. What is the "fulfilling of the law"?