

GALATIANS 15

The Universal Nature of the New Covenant

Galatians 4:6

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The whole objective of Paul in the book of Galatians is to prevent the Galatian converts from adopting the old Jewish restrictions which were a part of the Mosaic Covenant. He is trying to convince them not to adopt the provisions of the Jewish Law as requirements of salvation.

You remember that Jewish teachers had come into the churches and had perverted that pure gospel of Christ. The gospel says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." This is the gospel that Jesus Christ personally taught the Apostle Paul after his conversion and this is the gospel that Paul preached to the Galatians. And now, Jewish teachers were trying to subvert the gospel by bringing these new converts under that old law system. They were teaching them that they must be circumcised to be saved. And I am sure that if they were successful in incorporating circumcision into the gospel then they would have incorporated the Mosaic eating requirements and the Mosaic feast days. Pretty soon the Galatian converts would have been making regular trips to the temple in Jerusalem to see the priests with their animal sacrifices.

You see the seriousness of the issue. It is interesting that we tackled the books of Hebrews and Galatians back to back because the same core issue is at hand. In the book of Hebrews it was the Jewish element in the church that was threatening to go back into Judaism. But in the book of Galatians it is the Gentiles who are reverting to Judaism. In either case, Paul is compelled to show that Judaism was an incomplete, insufficient and momentary measure which faded away when Christ came.

So, Paul spends a good bit of argument in chapters three and four convincing the Galatian churches that Jewish religion under the Mosaic Covenant was always an inferior form of religion. You will remember that it was a mere addendum that had no effect on that better Abrahamic Covenant. And now that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant has come in the person of Christ, it is not a good thing to aspire to Judaism.

Here are some of the faults of that old Jewish religion:

- (1) It was a temporary religion. It came along after the Abrahamic promise and was in force only until the seed should come.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.
Galatians 3:19

- (2) It was not a saving religion. Judaism was a legal system. It was called the law. And the law was never designed to save anyone. The only thing the Law can do is tell sinners the bad news. The Law was like a spiritual MRI machine. It would do a scan and tell you whether or not you were a sinner. And furthermore it would tell you how far sin has progressed. But it could only reveal your sin; it could not take it away.

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident.
Galatians 3:11

Now because men were sinful,

- (3) It was a cursing kind of a religion. The law had the effect of pronouncing a curse on sinful man. The law was sheer mathematics. You either were a sinner or you were not. And every man in the Jewish nation was proven to be a sinner under the law. So, the law was a curse upon sinful men.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.
Galatians 3:10

- (4) It was a works kind of a religion. The law says do this and don't do that. Continue to do it. And do all of it.

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Galatians 3:10

- (5) It was not a grace kind of religion. Anyone who operates under a works kind of religion does not operate by grace. Anyone who operates under grace does not operate by works. The two are polar opposites. A

circle is not a square and a square is not a circle. And grace is not works.

And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

Romans 11:6

Now you know by now that the nation of Israel was made up of many, many lost people and a comparatively fewer number of saved people. The law had a condemning effect on those reprobates within the nation. It condemned them to death and they died in unbelief. And they went to hell in their unbelief and in their rebellion against God. God didn't stop them at the gates of hell and say, "Wait a minute, aren't you are a physical descendant of Abraham?" There was no immunity for anyone just because they were a part of the nation of Israel.

But, on the other hand, there were saved people within the nation. God was merciful unto salvation to some people within Israel. And we have seen that he was merciful to them not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of faith. It was salvation pursuant to the promise to Abraham, not pursuant to the Mosaic Covenant.

So, the law had a cursing or a condemning effect on Israel. But with regard to the elect within Israel, the intent of the law was mercy after all.

The question is, "What effect did the law have on them who were elect within Israel?" On those who were elect the law had a different effect than it did on the reprobate. On those who were elect the law served as a schoolmaster and a tutor and a governor. It was a temporary disciplinarian. The law was never a final solution for the elect within Israel. Rather, the law was a temporary measure to prepare them for the age of grace in Christ. Let me ask a question. Let's say that you were a saved person in the nation of Israel 400 years before Christ. Were you saved because you offered animal sacrifices? No. Animal sacrifices do not make atonement for sins.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Hebrews 10:1

Even those who were saved during the law period were saved because God imparted faith to them and they believed God and they were saved on the basis of the future sacrifice of Christ himself. So, since by faith they were looking forward to the sacrifice of Christ, was it necessary to bring animal sacrifices to the temple? Was it necessary to observe all the ceremonies? The answer is that it was necessary to obey these ceremonies because they prefigured the object of their Christ. This was the working out of their faith. They brought animals to suggest that the Christ was coming.

Now this period in the history of Israel is what Paul calls the period of their childhood. They were under a system of religion that is called bondage. They were under the bondage of the law.

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Galatians 4:3

The law was a burdensome thing not only for the lost in Israel but also for the saved. It was a yoke around their necks. It was a hard, daily discipline even for the saved.

Example: You know, when a person is a child he is under all the rules and regulations of his father. He has to do his chores. He has to do his lessons. He has to be home at a certain time. He can't do this and he can't do that. And, oftentimes a child looks forward to the time when he will no longer have all the rules. He looks forward to the time when he will get his own house and his own car and his own things. He looks forward to the time when he is deemed responsible enough to be on his own. But until he comes of age, he is under the rules of his father's house.

And those of Israel, even those who were saved, were like children who were looking forward to that time when they would be set free from all the rules and regulations. They looked forward to that time when the schoolmaster would be sent home to come no more. And who is the schoolmaster? It is the law. (3:25)

So, I would like for you to take note that the law was never the final and perfect system of religion even for the elect within Israel. It was a

temporary, disciplinary and instructive device during their childhood and the goal was always to come out from under the tutelage of the law and to be grown up and free in the liberty of Christ.

We saw last time that the hard road of Judaism finally came to an abrupt end at the foot of the cross. And those who were elect within the nation were brought to the maturity of faith in the true Savior. And they were mercifully redeemed from under the law.

God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive adoption of sons.

Galatians 4:5

What a glorious goal God had for his people within the nation of Israel. After years of bondage under a hard, legal system of religion, Israel was finally set free from that burdensome, childhood religion and introduced into Christianity proper. Judaism was in a sense, pre-Christian. Judaism was Christ prefigured. But Christianity is Christ realized. And this was where the road of Judaism always led and where it came to an end.

Now the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the Savior of the world has come. He has finally come! He came as a man and he lived a righteous life. And he died for sins. And after he lay in the tomb lifeless, he was raised the third day. The gospel message is no longer, "He is coming." But the gospel message is, "He has come!" This was always the goal of Judaism. It was to finally get to the cross.

Example: When I was a kid, our family occasionally travelled across country from Los Angeles to Memphis to see family - Mom and Dad and six kids. And, it would take us about three days to make the trip. It seemed like three months with all of us piled in one broken down station wagon whose air conditioner seemed never to work. But when we finally approached the Memphis/Arkansas bridge we would all start the countdown with great excitement. 10, 9, 8 we would count as we crossed the last mile markers. And when we crossed the state line we would shout for joy. We had finally reached our destination.

And the long awaited goal of Judaism was to finally get to the cross. And when Jesus died the long road of Judaism was finally over. It had

finally reached its ultimate destination. And the elect within the nation clapped their hands and shouted for great joy for they were no longer under that old system of religion but under a new, freer system in Christ.

Now it says of the Jews in verse 5 that they were redeemed from under the law and that they received the adoption of sons.

The condition of the Jews before Christ was that they were treated more like servants or slaves. (4:1) They were treated like a child. They were not given their inheritance because they were children. They were under that old schoolmaster – the law. But after the coming of the Messiah, they were taken out from under the law and they were considered not servants, but adopted sons.

This was the great day of promise for Israel. God promised this new day for Israel in the Old Testament.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jeremiah 31:31

And this Old Testament prophecy to Israel was fulfilled in Christ. God finally made a real atonement for them and made them sons indeed. And that Old Covenant waxed old and vanished away. And Israel now operated under that glorious New Covenant that was promised way back in the days of Jeremiah.

But there was a great difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. There were actually many differences. But there is a great difference as to the parties of the covenants. The Old Covenant was an arrangement between God and one nation – Israel. Only Israel was subject to the Old Covenant. But the New Covenant incorporated another group into the arrangement. And this other group is the Gentiles.

You see, that Old exclusive arrangement with Israel was only a temporary arrangement until Christ came. And when Christ came God gave Israel a New Covenant. But look, God included Gentiles in this new arrangement.

Look at verse six.

Because ye are sons.

Galatians 4:6

You will notice that Paul goes back to the third person pronoun. This is characteristic of this whole passage. Paul flip flops back and forth. He says, "It was like this for Israel, and it is now like this for you."

In verse five, "We" received adoption of sons. That is, "We the Jews." But in verse six, "Ye" are sons. Paul is not speaking of "we" in verse six, but of you, the Galatians. The Galatians, of course, were mainly Gentile converts. And Paul says, "You are sons."

It appears here that Paul is confirming a great difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old Covenant was made only with Israel. Whatever benefits and curses there were under that Old Covenant were reaped by Israel only. But the New Covenant was made not only for the benefit of Israel, but also for the benefit of Gentiles.

Paul is saying in verse six, "The Jews were made sons and you were made sons."

This was a great stumbling block for the Jews because they had grown accustomed to being the exclusive people. In their mind, the Gentiles were the scourge of the earth. They were the hated Gentiles. In the Old Testament Jonah would not go preach to the people of Nineveh because he hated them. But lo and behold, God has included Gentiles in his New Covenant with Israel. And Paul says in verse six,

And because ye are sons, (that is, because you there in Galatia are also sons), God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.

Galatians 4:6

This is an amazing thing – that God made Israel sons under the New Covenant and also made the Gentiles sons under the same covenant. Gentiles are not included under the Mosaic Covenant, but they are included in the New Covenant.

Now the evidence of this is that God sent forth his Spirit into the hearts of the Galatians.

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.

Galatians 4:6

You should be aware that in the early church, the Holy Spirit was sent forth in visible form. It was a sign of confirmation. It was a sign of approval.

Example: He descended upon Christ in the form of a dove.

And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 3:16

Now it is hard to argue with that, isn't it? The heavens opened up, something like a dove comes down and lands on Jesus and a voice declares this is my Son! I suppose if you had been there you would stand there with your mouth open. And when you heard the voice from heaven boom out, "This is my Son," I am sure you would have been quite amazed.

This is what the Holy Spirit did in the early days of the church. He confirmed his messengers. Look at Acts 2:3.

Example: He confirmed the apostles and the other believers in the upper room.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began

to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:3

You see how in the early church, the Holy Spirit was given in visible form. On Christ He appeared as a dove. On the believers in the upper room He appeared as a tongue of fire. The visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early church. Particularly, it was necessary in order to confirm that Gentiles also were participants in the gospel of the New Covenant. The Jews never would have believed that Gentiles were included in the gospel.

Example: When God sent Peter and his Jewish travelling companions to see Cornelius, God told Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 10:44-45

Now how did the Jews know that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit?

For they heard them speak with tongues.

Acts 10:46

So you can easily see that God sent the Holy Spirit in a very visible way in the early church so as to confirm the messengers and the message of the gospel and especially to confirm that the gospel was not for Jews only. The gospel of this new age, the gospel of the New Covenant was a universal gospel. So, the gospel was visibly advertised in the days of Christ and in the days of the apostles by the coming of the Holy Spirit in visible form.

Now when Paul wrote his various epistles, it was still the early days of the church and the Holy Spirit was still manifesting Himself in visible form. Listen to the apostle Paul to the Corinthian church.

In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not . . .

I Corinthians 14:21-22

The visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles was a sign to unbelieving Jews. It was God mocking them in a way. It was God saying to the unbelieving Jews, "Look, the Gentiles are now preaching to you!"

After the Apostolic Age, it seems that the church was well established upon the solid foundation of the apostles and prophets and the visible appearances of the Holy Spirit diminished and finally ceased. The message of the apostles was fully confirmed. The unbelief of the Jews was thoroughly exposed and the participation of the Gentiles in the New Covenant was established.

Now the confirmation that the gospel had gone to the Gentiles, apart from these early visible displays, was that the Holy Spirit was shed abroad in their hearts.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts . . .

Galatians 4:6

The inward working of the Holy Spirit is that which now confirms salvation. We don't see the Holy Spirit come down as a dove out of heaven any more. We don't see tongues of fire lighting on our heads when we are saved, do we? But what we do have is a very real sense of the inward work of the Spirit.

Salvation is not just an outward act. It is not just a token confession. It is not an empty ritual as it was many times under the Old Covenant. But salvation is when God writes his laws on your inward parts.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.

Hebrews 8:10

And when God saves under the New Covenant, he does a work on your mind and on your heart. There is no such thing as being saved and not being changed. This is the very nature of salvation. It is God doing a work in your heart. It is God writing his laws on your mind and in your hearts. This is the great distinction between the Old and New Covenants. In the Old Testament God wrote his laws on stone tablets. In the New he writes on your mind and on your heart.

So, the evidence of salvation these days is not a dove falling out of heaven and it is not a tongue of fire resting on your head, but it is a changed mind and a changed heart.

God took the initiative in the process of salvation

I would like for you to note in Galatians 4:6 that the initiative of this saving act is taken by God himself. It is not the sinner that reaches out and grabs hold of God. Rather it is God who takes the initiative. God took the initiative with respect to the Jews.

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law.

Galatians 4:4

And God didn't stop there, but he also took the initiative in sending the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.

Galatians 4:6

What we understand here at our church and what the masses of religious people in the world do not understand is that salvation is of the Lord. It is God that saves. We are helpless to come to Him. But by His grace he comes to us. Not only does he come to us, but He comes effectively. He sends His Spirit into our hearts and makes effective changes. Let it be known that there is no hope for mankind unless God sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:13

So we see here in verse six that God was the author of their salvation. But also notice that,

A Christian has a very good sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.

When God sheds forth the Holy Spirit in our hearts we become the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit resides in us and He has a very important effect upon us. In this verse it says that He cries Abba Father. That is, we cry Abba Father by his influence. He causes us to have a tender sense of belonging to God the Father. We have a very real and continuing sense that He is our loving Father. And we address him in a very family kind of way. We think of Him as our “Daddy” instead of our Judge under the law.

Christians have an inner assurance of the grace of God. We stand in grace. We walk in grace. We have assurance that God treats us with grace. We live by grace. We think in terms of grace. We treat others with grace. And we have a good sense of the overwhelming grace of God in our lives. And if you find a man who has no concept of grace, no understanding of the extent of his own sins, no true feel for the vastness of the forgiveness of God in his own life, then you may have found a man who has not had the Holy Spirit shed abroad in his heart.

Did you know that the very purpose of God in saving sinners is to show the universe the glory of his grace? God is not interested in saving the righteous, but he is very interested in saving sinners. He delights to save the worst of sinners, all to the glory of His grace.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his

grace.

CONCLUSION

Christ has come and taken the Jews out from under that Old Covenant and he has fulfilled his New Covenant promise among the Jewish elect by putting his law in their minds and in their hearts and making them a part of the gospel kingdom Christ.

But God has gone beyond the exclusivity of that Old Covenant and has included the Gentiles in the New Covenant. And this is proven because he has given the Holy Spirit to them as well.