

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

### A LITTLE RETROSPECT

IT is absolutely impossible to exhaust any portion of Scripture. The more one studies it, the more one sees in it, and not only that, but the more one becomes conscious of the fact that there is much more in it than appears to view. The Word of God, like Himself, is absolutely unfathomable. One's understanding of any given portion of the Scripture depends on the thoroughness of his knowledge of that which precedes it. Let us, therefore, give a little further attention to that portion of the third chapter of this Epistle which treats of

### The Seed.

First of all, it must be borne in mind that Christ is the Seed. That is plainly stated. But Christ did not live for Himself, and He is not heir simply for Himself. He has won an inheritance, not for Himself, but for His brethren. God's purpose is to "gather together in one all things in Christ." He will finally put an end to divisions of every kind, and He does it now in those who accept Him. In Christ there are no distinctions of nationality, and no classes and ranks. No Christian thinks of any other man as English, German, French, Russian, Turk, Chinese, {160} or African, but simply as a man, and, therefore, a possible heir of God through Christ. If that other man, no matter what his race or nation, be also a Christian, then the bond becomes mutual, and, therefore, still stronger. "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." It is for this reason that it is impossible for a Christian to engage in war. He knows no distinction of nationality, but regards all men as his brothers. But the chief reason why he can not engage in warfare is that the life of Christ is his life, for he is one with Christ; and it would be as impossible for him to fight as it would be for Christ to seize a sword and wield it in self-defense; and two Christians can no more fight against each other than Christ can fight against Himself.

However, we are not now engaged in discussing war, but are merely showing the absolute unity of believers in Christ. They are one. There is, therefore, but one Seed, and that is Christ; for, however many millions of true believers there may be, they are only one in Christ. Each man has his own individuality, but it is in every case only the manifestation of some phase of the individuality of Christ. In a human body there are many members, and all members have not the same office, but differ in their individuality; yet there is absolute unity and harmony in every healthy body. With those who have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, "there is neither Greek nor

Jew, circumcision nor uncircum- {161} cision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Col. 3:11.

### The Harvest.

In Christ's explanation of the parable of the tares and the wheat, we are told that "the good seed are the children of the kingdom." Matt. 13:38. The man would not allow the tares to be pulled out of the wheat, because in the early stage it would be difficult to distinguish in every case between the wheat and the tares, and some of the wheat would be destroyed. So he said, "Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." It is in the harvest that the seed is gathered. Everybody knows that. But what the parable especially shows is that it is in the harvest that the seed is fully manifested; in short, that the seed comes at harvest time. The harvest only waits for the seed to be fully manifested and matured. But "the harvest is the end of the world." So the time when "the seed should come to whom the promise was made," is the end of the world, when the time comes for the promise of the new earth to be fulfilled. Indeed, the seed can not possibly be said to come before that time, since the end of the world will come just as soon as the last person who can be induced to accept Christ has done so; and the seed is not complete as long as there is one grain lacking. {162}

Read now, in the nineteenth verse of the third chapter, that the law was spoken because of transgression, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." What do we learn from that?—Simply this, that the law as spoken from Sinai, without the change of a single letter, is an integral part of the Gospel, and must be presented in the Gospel until the second coming of Christ, at the end of the world. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law." And what of the time when heaven and earth pass, and the new heaven and the new earth come?—Then the law will not be needed written in a book, for men to preach to sinners, showing them their sins, for it will be in the heart of every man. Heb. 8:10, 11. Done away?—Not by any means; but indelibly engraved in the heart of every individual, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

With the truth concerning the seed before us, and the parable of the wheat and the tares fresh in our minds, let us proceed in our study.

"But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bond-servant, though he is lord of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the term appointed of the father. So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world; but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, cry- {163} ing, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bond-servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

## THE GLAD TIDINGS — GALATIANS, CHAPTER FOUR.

"Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods; but now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain.

"I beseech you, brethren, be as I am, for I am as ye are. Ye did me no wrong; but ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you the first time; and that which was a temptation to you in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where then is that gratulation of yourselves? for I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So then am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously seek you in no good way; nay, they desire to shut you out, that ye may seek them. But it is good to be zealously sought in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you, yea, I could wish to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I am perplexed about you.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye {164} not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman. Howbeit the son by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the son by the freewoman is born through promise. Which things contain an allegory; for these women are two covenants; one from Mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written:—

"Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not;  
Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not;  
For more are the children of the desolate than of her which hath the husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Howbeit what saith the Scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son; for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of a freewoman." Galatians 4, R.V.

### **A Statement of Fact.**

It must be apparent to all that the chapter division makes no difference in the subject. The third chapter closes with a statement as to who are heirs, and the fourth chapter proceeds with a study of the question of heirship. The first two verses explain {165} themselves. They are a simple statement of fact. Although a child may be heir to a vast estate, he has no more to do with it until he is of age, than a servant has. If he should never come of

age, then he would never actually enter upon his inheritance. He would have lived all his life as a servant, so far as any share in the inheritance is concerned. Now for

### **The Application.**

"So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world." If we look ahead to the fifth verse, we shall see that the state here known as "children" is that before we receive "the adoption of sons." It represents the condition before we were redeemed from the curse of the law, that is, before we were converted. It does not, therefore, mean children of God, as distinguished from worldlings, but the "children" of whom the apostle speaks in Eph. 4:14, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." In short, it refers to us in our unconverted state, when we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

### **The Rudiments of the World.**

"When we were children," we were in bondage under the rudiments of the world. No one who has the slightest acquaintance with the Lord needs to be told that the rudiments of the world have nothing in common with Him, and do not proceed from Him. "For all that is in the world, {166} the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." 1 John 2:16, 17. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. It is from "this present evil world" that Christ came to deliver us. We are warned to "take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. 2:8. The bondage to the rudiments of the world is the condition of walking "according to the course of this world," "in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" being "by nature the children of wrath." Eph. 2:1-3. It is the same bondage that is described in Gal. 3:22-24, before faith came, when we were under the law, "under sin." It is the condition of men who are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. 2:12.

### **All Men Possible Heirs.**

It may be asked, If such is the condition of those here referred to as "children," how can they be spoken of as heirs? The answer is plain. It is on the principle that it is not manifest who constitute the seed, until the harvest. God has not cast off the human race; therefore, since the first man created was called "the son of God," it follows that all men are heirs in the sense that they are in their minority. {167} As already learned, "before faith came," although all were wanderers from God, we were kept under the law, guarded by a severe master, "shut up," in order that we might be led to accept the promise. What a blessed thing it is that God

counts even the ungodly, those who are in the bondage of sin, as His children,—wandering, prodigal sons, but still children. God has made all men "accepted in the Beloved." This probationary life is given us for the purpose of giving us a chance to acknowledge Him as Father, and to become sons indeed. But, unless we come back to Him, we shall die as slaves of sin.

### **"The Fullness of the Time."**

Christ came in the fullness of time. A parallel statement to this is found in Rom. 5:6: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." But the death of Christ serves for those who live now and for those who lived before He was manifested in the flesh in Judea, just as well as for the men who lived at that time. His death made no more change eighteen hundred years ago than it did four thousand years ago. It had no more effect on the men of that generation than on the men of any other generation. It is once for all, and, therefore, has an equal effect on every age. "The fullness of time" was the time foretold in prophecy, when the Messiah should be revealed; but the redemption was for all men in all ages. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was "manifest in these last times." 1 Peter 1:20. If it had been God's plan that He should have been revealed in this century, or even not until the last year {168} before the close of time, it would have made no difference with the Gospel. "He ever liveth," and He ever has lived, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." It is "through the eternal Spirit" that He offers Himself for us (Heb. 9:14), so that the sacrifice is equally present and efficacious in every age.

### **"Born of a Woman."**

God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, and, therefore, a veritable man. He lived an average lifetime on this earth in the flesh, and suffered all the ills and troubles that fall to the lot of "man that is born of woman." "The Word was made flesh." Christ always designated Himself as "the Son of man," thus forever identifying Himself with the whole human race. The bond of union can never be broken.

### **"Born under the Law."**

Being born of a woman, Christ was necessarily born under the law, for such is the condition of all mankind, and "in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Heb. 2:17. He takes everything on Himself. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our disease." Matt. 8:17, R.V. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He redeems us by coming into our place literally, and taking our load off our shoulders. "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our {169} behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5:21, R.V. In the fullest sense of the word, and to a degree that is

seldom thought of when the expression is used, He became man's substitute. That is, He permeates our being, identifying Himself so fully with us that everything that touches or affects us touches and affects Him. He is not our substitute in the sense that one man is a substitute for another, in the army, for instance, the substitute being in one place, while the one for whom he is substitute is somewhere else, engaged in some other service. No; Christ's substitution is far different. He is our substitute in that He substitutes Himself for us, and we appear no more. We drop out entirely, so that it is "not I, but Christ." Thus we cast our cares on Him, not by picking them up and with an effort throwing them on Him, but by humbling ourselves into the nothingness that we are, so that we leave the burden resting on Him alone. Thus we see already how it is that He came

*"To Redeem Them That Were under the Law."*

He does it in the most practical and real way. Whom does He redeem?—"Them that were under the law." We can not refrain from referring for a moment to the idea that some have that this expression, "to redeem them that were under the law," has a mere local application. They would have it that it means that Christ freed the Jews from the necessity of offering sacrifices, or from any further obligation to keep the commandments. Well, suppose we take it as referring only to the Jews, and especially to {170} those who lived at the time of His first advent; what then?—Simply this, that we shut ourselves off from any place in the plan of redemption. If it was only the Jews that were under the law, then it was only the Jews that Christ came to redeem. Ah, we do not like to be left out, when it comes to the matter of redemption! Then we must acknowledge that we are, or were before we believed, "under the law;" for Christ came to redeem none but those who were under the law. "Under the law," as we have already seen, means condemned by the law as transgressors. Christ did "not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But the law condemns none but those who are amenable to it, and who ought to keep it. Therefore, since Christ redeems us from the law, from its condemnation, it follows that He redeems us to a life of obedience to it.

**"That We Might Receive the Adoption of Sons."**

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:2. "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. This is an altogether different state from that described in the third verse as "children." In that state we were "a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord." Isa. 30:9. Believing on Jesus, and receiving the adoption of sons, we are described "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." 1 Peter 1:14. Christ said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My {171} heart." Ps. 40:8. Therefore, since He becomes our substitute, as described in the last paragraph but one, literally taking our place, not instead of us, but coming into us, and living our life in us and for us, it necessarily follows that the same law must be within our hearts when we receive the adoption of sons.

### **The Witness of the Spirit.**

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." 1 John 5:6. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father," or, Father, Father. Oh, what joy and peace come with the entering of the Spirit into the heart as a permanent resident; not as a guest merely, but as sole proprietor! Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we "joy in God," rejoicing even in tribulations, having hope that never disappoints, because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Rom. 5:1-5. Then we can love even as God does; we have the same love, because we have the Divine nature. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "He that believeth hath the witness in himself."

### **"No More a Servant, but a Son."**

"Thou art no more a servant, but a son." It will be seen that as there are two kinds of children, so there are two classes of servants. In the first part of this chapter we have the word "children" used to designate those who are not "of full {172} age," and have not their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb. 5:14. The promise is to them, even as it is "to all that are afar off," but it remains to be seen if they will, by accepting it, become partakers of the divine nature, and so sons of God indeed. While thus the children of wrath, men are servants of sin, not servants of God. The Son of God is a servant, but a servant in a far different sense from the servant here referred to. The character of the servant depends on the master whom he serves. In this chapter the word "servant" invariably applies, not to servants of God, who are really sons, but to the bond-servants of sin. Between such a servant and a son there is a vast difference. The slave can not possess anything; he has no control over himself, and this is his distinguishing characteristic. The free-born son, on the contrary, has dominion over every created thing, as in the beginning, because he has the victory over himself; for "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

### **"If a Son, Then an Heir."**

When the prodigal son was wandering from the father's house, he differed nothing from a servant, because he was a servant, doing the most menial drudgery. In that condition he came back to the old homestead, feeling that he deserved no better place than that of a servant. But the father saw him while he was yet a long way off, and ran and met him, and received him as a son, and, therefore, as an heir, although he had forfeited all right {173} to heirship. So we have forfeited our right to be called sons, and have squandered away the inheritance; yet God receives us in Christ as sons indeed, and gives us the same rights and privileges that Christ has. Although Christ is now in heaven at the right hand of God, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20, 21), He has nothing that He does not share with us; for "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith

He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened [made alive] us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2:4-6). Christ is one with us in our present suffering, that we may be one with Him in His present glory. He "hath exalted them of low degree." Even now "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." 1 Sam. 2:8. No king on earth has so great possessions, nor so much actual power, as the poorest peasant who knows the Lord as his Father.

### **Heathen Bondage.**

The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said, "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." 1 Cor. 12:2. Even so it was with the Galatians. To them he wrote, "Not knowing God, ye were in bondage to them which by nature are no gods." If this fact is {174} borne in mind, it will save the reader from falling into some very common errors in opinion concerning this Epistle. The Galatians had been heathen, worshiping idols, and in bondage to the most degrading superstitions. Bear in mind that this bondage is the same as that which is spoken of in the preceding chapter,—they were "shut up" under the law. It was the very same bondage in which all unconverted persons are, for in the second and third chapters of Romans we are told that "there is no difference; for all have sinned." The Jews themselves, who did not know the Lord by personal experience, were in the same bondage,—the bondage of sin. "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin." John 8:34, R.V. And "he that committeth sin is of the devil." 1 John 3:8. "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God." 1 Cor. 10:20. If a man is not a Christian, he is a heathen; there is no middle ground. If the Christian apostatizes, he immediately becomes a heathen. We ourselves once walked "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2), and we "were aforesaid foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3, R.V.). So we also were "in bondage to them which by nature are no gods." The meaner the master, the worse the bondage. What language can depict the horror of being in bondage to corruption itself? {175}

### **In Love with Bondage.**

"Now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again?" Is it not strange that men should be in love with chains? Christ has proclaimed "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isa. 61:1), saying to the prisoners, "Go forth," and to them that are in darkness, "Show yourselves" (Isa. 49:9); yet men who have heard these words, and have come forth, and have seen the light of "the Sun of Righteousness," and have tasted the sweets of liberty, actually turn round and go back into their prison, submit to be bound with their old chains, even fondling them, and labor away

at the hard treadmill of sin. Who has not had something of that experience? It is no fancy picture. It is a fact that men can come to love the most revolting things, even death itself; for Wisdom says, "All they that hate Me love death." Prov. 8:36. In the Epistle to the Galatians we have a vivid picture of human experience.

### **Observing Heathen Customs.**

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." This was an evidence of their bondage. "Ah," says some one, "they had gone back to the old Jewish Sabbath; that was the bondage against which Paul would warn us!" How strange it is that men have such an insane hatred of the Sabbath, which the Lord Himself gave to the Jews, in common with all other people on the earth, that they will seize upon every word that they think they can turn against it, {176} although in order to do so they must shut their eyes to all the words that are around it! Anybody who reads the Epistle to the Galatians, and thinks as he reads, must know that the Galatians were not Jews. They had been converted from heathenism. Therefore, previous to their conversion they had never had anything to do with any religious custom that was practiced by the Jews. They had nothing whatever in common with the Jews. Consequently, when they turned again to the "weak and beggarly elements" to which they were willing again to be in bondage, it is evident that they were not going back to any Jewish practice. They were going back to their old heathen customs. "But were not the men who were perverting them Jews?"—Yes, they were. But remember this one thing, when you seek to turn a man away from Christ to some substitute for Christ, you can not tell where he will end. You can not make him stop just where you want him to. If a converted drunkard loses faith in Christ, he will take up his drinking habits as surely as he lives, even though the Lord may have taken the appetite away from him. So when these "false brethren"—Jewish opposers of "the truth of the Gospel" as it is in Christ—succeeded in seducing the Galatians from Christ, they could not get them to stop with Jewish ceremonies. No; they inevitably drifted back to their old heathen superstitions.

### **Forbidden Practices.**

Read the tenth verse again, and then read Deut. 18:10: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through {177} the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch." Now read what the Lord says to the heathen who would shield themselves from just judgment that is about to come upon them: "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee." Isa. 47:13. Here we see that the very things to which the Galatians were returning, were forbidden by the Lord when He brought Israel out of Egypt. Now we might as well say that when God forbade these things He was warning the Israelites against keeping the Sabbath, as to say that Paul was upbraiding the Galatians for keeping it, or that he had any reference to it whatever. God forbade these things at the very time when He gave the commandment concerning Sabbath-keeping. So far back into their old ways had the

Galatians gone that Paul was afraid lest all his labor on them had been in vain. They were forsaking God and returning to "the weak and beggarly elements of the world," which no reverent person can think of as ever having had any connection with God. They were changing their glory for "that which doth not profit" (Jer. 2:11); for "the customs of the heathen are vain."

There is just as much danger for us in this respect as there ever was for any people. Whoever trusts in himself, having any confidence whatever in the flesh, is worshiping the works of his own hands instead of God, just as truly as does any one who makes and bows down to a graven image. It is so easy for a {178} man to trust to his own supposed shrewdness, to his ability to "take care of himself," and to forget that the thoughts even of the wise are vain, and that there is no power but of God. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jer. 9:23, 24.

### **The Messenger Not Personally Affronted.**

"He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." John 3:34. The apostle Paul was sent by God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and did not speak his own words. He was a messenger, bearing a message from God, and not from any man. The work was not his, nor any other man's, but God's, and he was but the humble instrument, the earthen vessel, which God had chosen as the means of carrying His glorious Gospel of grace. Therefore, Paul did not feel affronted when his message was unheeded or even rejected. "Ye have not injured me at all," he says. He did not regret the labor that he had bestowed upon the Galatians, on his own account, as though it were so much of his time wasted; but he was fearful for them, lest his labor had been in vain as far as they were concerned. The man who from the heart can say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1), can not feel personally injured if his message is not received. Whoever becomes irritated or angry when his teaching is slighted or ignored or scornfully rejected, shows either that he has forgotten that it was God's words that he was speaking, or else that he had mingled with them or substituted for them words of his own. This is what has led to all the persecution that has disgraced the professed Christian church. Men have arisen speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves, and when their sayings and customs were not heeded, they have been offended, and have visited their vengeance on the so-called heretics. No one in all the ages has ever suffered persecution for failure to obey the commandments of God, but only for neglect of human customs and traditions. It is a grand thing always to be zealous in a good thing, but let the zeal be according to sanctified knowledge. The zealous person should frequently ask himself, Whose servant am I? If he is God's servant, then he will be content with delivering the message that God has given him, leaving vengeance to God, to whom it belongs.

### **Power in Weakness.**

"Ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you the first time." From the incidental statements in this Epistle we can easily gather the history of the experience of the Galatian brethren, and of Paul's relation to it. Having been detained in Galatia by physical weakness, he preached the Gospel "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," so that the people saw Christ crucified among them, and, accepting Him, were filled with {180} the power and joy of the Holy Ghost. Their joy and blessedness in the Lord was testified to publicly, and they suffered much persecution in consequence; but this they counted as nothing. Paul, in spite of his unsightly appearance (compare 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:10), was received as God's own messenger, because of the joyful news that he brought. So highly did they appreciate the riches of grace which he had opened up to them, that they would gladly have given their own eyes to supply his deficiency. All this is referred to in order that the Galatians may see from what they have fallen, as they consider their present barrenness, and that they may know that the apostle was disinterested in his solicitude for them. He told them the truth once, and they rejoiced in it; it is not possible that he is become their enemy because he continues to tell them the same truth.

But there is still more in these personal references. We must not imagine that Paul was pleading for personal sympathy when he referred to his afflictions, and to the great inconvenience under which he had labored. Far from it. Not for a moment did he lose sight of the purpose for which he was writing, namely, to show that "the flesh profiteth nothing," but that everything of good is from the Holy Spirit of God. The Galatians had "begun in the Spirit." Paul was naturally small of stature, and weak in body, and was suffering special affliction when he first met them; yet, in spite of his almost absolute helplessness, he preached the Gospel with such mighty power that none could fail to see that there was a real, although unseen, presence with him. The {181} Gospel is not of man, but of God. It was not made known to them by the flesh, and they were not indebted to the flesh for any of the blessings that they had received. What blindness, what infatuation, then, for them to think to perfect by their own efforts that which nothing but the power of God could begin! Have we learned this lesson?

### **Where Is the Blessedness?**

Everybody who has ever had any acquaintance with the Lord, knows that in accepting Him there is joy. It is always expected that a new convert will have a beaming countenance, and a joyful testimony. So it had been with the Galatians. But now their expressions of thanksgiving had given place to bickering and strife. See Gal. 5:15. Is it not strange that people do not expect that old Christians will have as much enthusiasm as young converts? that it is taken for granted that the first joy, and the warmth of the first love, will gradually die away? So it is, but so it should not be. That which God has against His people is this, that they have left their first love. Rev. 2:4. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18. Note that this is the path of the

just, and the just are they who live by faith. When men turn from the faith, or attempt to substitute works for it, the light goes out. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11. He gives the oil of joy—the Holy Spirit—for mourning, and that is abiding. The life is manifested that we might have fullness of joy. 1 John 1:1-4. The fountain of life is never exhausted; the supply is never diminished. If, therefore, our light grows dim, and our joy gives place to a dull, monotonous grind, we may know that we have turned aside out of the way of life.

### **Desiring to Be under the Law.**

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" After what we have already had, there will be no one to come with the objection that to be under the law can not be a very deplorable condition, else the Galatians would not have desired to be under it. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov. 16:25. How many there are who love ways that everybody except themselves can see are leading them direct to death; yes, there are many who, with their eyes wide open to the consequences of their course, will persist in it, deliberately choosing "the pleasures of sin for a season," rather than righteousness and length of days. To be "under the law" of God is to be condemned by it as a sinner chained and doomed to death, yet many millions besides the Galatians have loved the condition, and still love it. Ah, if they would only hear what it says! There is no reason why they should not hear it, for it speaks in thunder tones. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

### **"What Saith the Law?"**

It saith, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." It speaks death to all who take pleasure in the beggarly elements of the world. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." To what place shall the wicked bond-servant be cast out?—"Into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Therefore, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." Mal. 4:1, 4. All who are under the law, whether they be called Jews or Gentiles, Christians or Mohammedans, are in bondage to Satan,—in the bondage of transgression and sin,—and are to be cast out. "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin. And the bond-servant abideth not in the house forever; the son abideth forever." Thank God, then, for "the adoption of sons."

### **"Two Sons."**

Those false teachers would persuade the brethren that in turning from whole-hearted faith in Christ and trusting to works which they themselves could do, they would become

children of Abraham, and so heirs of the promises. They forgot that Abraham had two sons. I myself have talked with a Jew according to the flesh, who did not know that Abraham had more than one son; and there are many Christians who seem to think that to be descended from Abraham, after the flesh, is all-sufficient to insure one a share {184} in the promised inheritance. "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Rom. 9:8. Now of the two sons of Abraham, one was born after the flesh, and the other was by promise, born of the Spirit. "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had promised." Heb. 11:11, R.V. Hagar was an Egyptian slave. The children of a slave woman are always slaves, even though their father be a freeman; and so Hagar could bring forth children only to bondage. But long before Ishmael was born, the Lord had plainly signified to Abraham, who wished that his servant Eliezer might be his heir, that it was not a bond-servant, even though born in his house, that He had promised him, but a free-born son,—a son born of a freewoman. God has no slaves in His kingdom.

**"These Are the Two Covenants."**

What are the two covenants?—The two women, Hagar and Sarah; for we read that Hagar is Mount Sinai, "which gendereth to bondage." That is, just as Hagar could not bring forth any other kind of children than slaves, so the law, even the law that God spoke from Sinai, can not beget freemen. It can do nothing but hold them in bondage. "The law worketh wrath:" "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The same is true of the covenant from Sinai, for it consisted merely of the promise of the people to keep that law, and had, {185} therefore, no more power to make them free than the law itself had,—no more power than they already had in their bondage. Nay, rather, it "gendered to bondage," since their making it was simply a promise to make themselves righteous by their own works, and man in himself is "without strength."

Consider the situation: The people were in the bondage of sin; they had no power to break their chains; but the speaking of the law made no change in their condition; it introduced no new feature. If a man is in prison for crime, you can not release him by reading the statutes to him. It was the law that put him there, and the reading of it to him only makes his captivity more painful.

"Then did not God Himself lead them into bondage?"—Not by any means; since He did not induce them to make that covenant at Sinai. Four hundred and thirty years before that time He had made a covenant with Abraham, which was sufficient for all purposes. That covenant was confirmed in Christ, and, therefore, was a covenant from above. See John 8:23. It promised righteousness as a free gift of God through faith, and it included all nations. All the miracles that God had wrought in delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage were but demonstrations of His power to deliver them and us from the bondage of sin. Yes, the deliverance from Egypt was itself a demonstration not only of God's power, but also of His desire to lead them from the bondage of sin, that bondage in which the covenant

from Sinai holds men, because Hagar, who is the covenant from Sinai, was an Egyptian. So when {186} the people came to Sinai, God simply referred them to what He had already done, and then said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine." Ex. 19:5. To what covenant did He refer?—Evidently to the one already in existence, His covenant with Abraham. If they would simply keep God's covenant, that is, God's promise,—keep the faith,—they would be a peculiar treasure unto God, for God, as the possessor of all the earth, was able to do with them all that He had promised. The fact that they in their self-sufficiency rashly took the whole responsibility upon themselves, does not prove that God led them into making that covenant, but the contrary. He was leading them out of bondage, not into it, and the apostle plainly tells us that covenant from Sinai was nothing but bondage.

Further, if the children of Israel who came out of Egypt had but walked "in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised" (Rom. 4:12), the law would never have been spoken from Sinai; "for the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13). Faith justifies, makes righteous; if the people had had Abraham's faith, they would have had the righteousness that he had; and then there would have been no occasion for the entering of the law, which was "spoken because of transgression." The law would have been in their hearts, and they would not {187} have needed to be awakened by its thunders to a sense of their condition. God never expected, and does not now expect, that any person can get righteousness by the law proclaimed from Sinai; and everything connected with Sinai shows it. Yet the law is truth, and must be kept. God delivered the people from Egypt, "that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws." Ps. 105:45. We do not get life by keeping the commandments, but God gives us life in order that we may keep them.

### **The Two Covenants Parallel.**

Note the statement which the apostle makes when speaking of the two women, Hagar and Sarah: "These are the two covenants." So then the two covenants existed in every essential particular in the days of Abraham. Even so they do to-day; for the Scripture says now as well as then, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." We see then that the two covenants are not matters of time, but of condition. Let no one flatter himself that he can not be under the old covenant, because the time for that is passed. The time for that is passed only in the sense that "the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." 1 Peter 4:3.

### **Difference Between the Two.**

The difference is just the difference between a freewoman and a slave. Hagar's children, no matter how many she might have had, would have been slaves, while those of Sarah

would necessarily be free. {188} So the covenant from Sinai holds all who adhere to it in bondage "under the law;" while the covenant from above gives freedom, not freedom from obedience to the law, but freedom from disobedience to it. The freedom is not found away from the law, but in the law. Christ redeems from the curse, which is the transgression of the law. He redeems us from the curse, that the blessing may come on us; and the blessing is obedience to the law. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Ps. 119:1. This blessedness is freedom. "I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy precepts." Ps. 119:45.

The difference between the two covenants may be put briefly thus: In the covenant from Sinai we ourselves have to do with the law alone, while in the covenant from above, we have the law in Christ. In the first instance it is death to us, since the law is sharper than any two-edged sword, and we are not able to handle it without fatal results; but in the second instance we have the law "in the hand of a Mediator." In the one case it is what we can do; in the other case it is what the Spirit of God can do. Bear in mind that there is not the slightest question in the whole Epistle to the Galatians as to whether or not the law should be kept. The only question is, How shall it be done? Is it to be our own doing, so that the reward shall not be of grace but of debt? or is it to be God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure? {189}

### **Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.**

"This Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." As there are the two covenants, so there are two cities to which they pertain. Jerusalem which now is pertains to the old covenant—to Mount Sinai. It will never be free, but will be replaced by the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, "which cometh down out of heaven." Rev. 3:12; 21:1-5. It is the city for which Abraham looked, the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. 11:10; Rev. 21:14. There are many who build great hopes—all their hope—on Jerusalem which now is. For such the veil remaineth "untaken away in the reading of the old testament." 2 Cor. 3:14. They are in reality looking to Mount Sinai and the old covenant for salvation, and it is not to be found there. "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart; and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake); but ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the {190} general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new

covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. 12:18-24.

Whoever looks to the present Jerusalem for blessings, is looking to the old covenant, to Mount Sinai, to bondage; whoever worships with his face toward the New Jerusalem, and who expects blessings only from it, is looking to the new covenant, to Mount Zion, to freedom; for "Jerusalem which is above is free." From what is it free?—Free from sin; and since it is our mother, it begets us anew, so that we also become free from sin. Free from the law?—Yes, certainly, for the law has no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus.

But do not let anybody deceive you with vain words, telling you that you may now trample God's law underfoot,—that law which He Himself proclaimed in such awful majesty from Sinai. Coming to Mount Sion,—to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling,—we become free from sin,—from transgression of the law. The basis of God's throne in Zion is His law. From the throne proceed the same "lightnings and thunderings and voices" (Rev. 4:5; 11:19) as from Sinai, because the selfsame law is there. But it is "the throne of grace," and, therefore, in spite of the thunders, we come to it boldly, assured that from God, the Judge of all, who sits upon the mercy-seat, we shall obtain mercy. Nay, more, we shall also find grace {191} to help in time of need,—grace to help us in the hour of temptation to sin,—for out of the midst of the throne, from the slain Lamb (Rev. 5:6), flows the river of water of life, bringing to us from the heart of Christ "the law of the Spirit of life." We drink of it, we bathe in it, and we find cleansing from all sin.

"Why didn't the Lord bring the people directly to Mount Zion then, where they could find the law as life, and not to Mount Sinai, where it was only death?"

That is a very natural question, and one that is easily answered. It was because of their unbelief. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, it was His purpose to bring them to Mount Zion as directly as they could go. When they had crossed the Red Sea, they sang an inspired song, of which this was a part: "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established." Ex. 15:13, 17. If they had continued singing, they would very soon have come to Zion; for the redeemed of the Lord "come with singing unto Zion," and everlasting joy is upon their heads. Isa. 35:10; 51:11. The dividing of the Red Sea was the proof of this. See verse 10. But they soon forgot the Lord, and murmured in unbelief. Therefore "the law was added because of transgressions." It was their own fault—the result of their sinful un- {192} belief—that they came to Mount Sinai instead of to Mount Zion.

Nevertheless, God did not leave Himself without witness of His faithfulness. At Mount Sinai the law was in the hand of the same Mediator, Jesus, to whom we come when we come to Zion; and from the Rock in Horeb, which is Sinai, flowed the living stream, the water of life from the heart of Christ. Ex. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4. There they had not merely the picture, but the reality, of Mount Zion. Every soul whose heart there turned to the Lord, would have

beheld His unveiled glory, even as Moses did, and, being transformed by it, would have found the ministration of righteousness, instead of the ministration of condemnation. "His mercy endureth forever;" and even upon the clouds of wrath from which proceed the thunders and lightnings of the law, shines the glorious face of the Sun of Righteousness, and forms the bow of promise.

**"The Son Abideth Ever."**

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." "The bond-servant abideth not in the house forever; the son abideth forever." John 8:35, R.V. Here is comfort for every soul. You are a sinner, or, at best, "trying to be a Christian," and you tremble with terror at these words, as you realize that you are in bondage,—that sin has a hold upon you, and you are bound by the cords of evil habits. Ah, you must learn not to be afraid when the Lord speaks, for He speaks peace, even though it be with a voice of thunder! The more majestic the {193} voice, the greater the peace that He gives. Take courage! The son of the bondwoman is the flesh and its works. "Flesh and blood can not inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." But God says, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son," and if you are willing that His will shall be done in you as it is done in heaven, He will see that the flesh and its works are cast out from you, and you will be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." That command which so frightened you is simply the voice commanding the evil spirit to depart, and to come no more into you. It speaks to you victory over every sin. Receive Christ by faith, and you have the power to become the son of God, heir of a kingdom which can not be moved, but which, with all its people, abideth forever.

**"Stand Fast, Therefore."**

Where shall we stand?—"In the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." And what freedom is that?—It is the freedom of Christ Himself, whose delight was in the law of the Lord, because it was in His heart. Ps. 40:8. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:2. We stand only by faith.

In this freedom there is no trace of bondage. It is perfect liberty. It is liberty of soul, liberty of thought, as well as liberty of action. It is not that we are simply given the ability to keep the law, but we are given the mind that finds delight in doing it. It is not that we comply with the law because we see {194} no other way of escape from punishment; that would be galling bondage. It is from such bondage that God's covenant releases us. No; the promise of God, when accepted, puts the mind of the Spirit into us, so that we find the highest pleasure in obedience to all the precepts of God's Word. The soul is as free as a bird soaring above the mountain-tops. It is the glorious liberty of the children of God, who have the full range of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of God's universe. It is the liberty of those who do not have to be watched, but who can be trusted anywhere, since their

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every step is but the movement of God's own holy law. Why be content with bondage, when such limitless freedom is yours? The prison doors are open; walk out into God's freedom.

"Out of my shameful failure and loss,  
Jesus, I come. Jesus, I come.  
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.  
Out of earth's sorrows, into Thy balm,  
Out of life's storm, and into Thy calm,  
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.

"Out of unrest and arrogant pride,  
Jesus, I come. Jesus, I come.  
Into Thy blessed will to abide,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.  
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,  
Out of despair into raptures above,  
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,  
Jesus, I come to Thee." {195}