



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians

Chapter 4

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Introduction

- In this chapter St. Paul continues and concludes his defense of the gospel of justification by faith in Christ, in contrast to seeking justification by the works of the Law.
- In verses 1-7, St. Paul explains that when Christ came, He redeemed those under the Law and made it possible for them to receive the adoption as "sons".
- In verses 8-20, he feels like a woman going through labor again as he seeks to ensure that Christ is formed in them.
- In verses 21 -31, he concludes his defense by proclaiming that those in Christ are of not of the bondwoman but of the free.



Slaves or Children (4: 1-7)

- If the heir is a child, he cannot have freedom because of he is immaturity.
- He should be under guardians and stewards.
- This makes him like the slaves.
- Before Christ, we were spiritually immature, could not look beyond the earthly realm to the spiritual realm.
- Also we could not say all things are lawful but not everything edifies (no discretion).
- So we needed to be under guardians and stewards (Law).
- We were like slaves under bondage, having no freedom.



Slaves or Children (4: 1-7)

- Elements of the world: the Law is something material, earthly.
- It may restrain evil, but it does not deliver from sin.
- The law dealt with external matters, as meat, drink, places, times, cleansings, sacrifices, etc.
- The law is like the statutes of governments dealing with purely civil matters, as commerce, inheritance, etc.



Slaves or Children (4: 1-7)

- Fullness of time: the economy of God.
- God sent forth His Son: the Son is eternal.
- Born of a woman: not from a man and woman.
- Under the law: as a Jewish, to fulfill the law on our behalf
- To redeem: He paid our debts to set us free from the curse of the law.
- Those who were under the law were under curse and needed redemption to receive adoption.



Slaves or Children (4: 1-7)

- But the gentiles were not under the curse of the law, but also they were not His people or His children. They were slaves to Satan
- by dying on the Cross, He redeemed those who were under curse of the law and set free those who were enslaved to Satan.
- By putting on Christ in baptism, we became Children.
- He gave us His Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, to call God, "Father, Abba".
- Since we are children, we are heirs (only through Christ).

Fears for the Church (4: 8-20)



- The gentiles were not under law but this does not mean that they were not slaves.
- They were slaves to false gods because of their ignorance of the true God
- We know God because He called us to His knowledge.
- As God has redeemed the Jews from the slavery of the law, He redeemed the gentiles from their slavery to false gods.
- Weak and beggarly elements: the works of the law.
- So now they want to turn from the slavery of false gods to slavery of the law.

Fears for the Church (4: 8-20)



- Days and months and seasons and years: Jewish days does not have any heavenly dimensions, they were merely earthly days.
- The heart of the father is always concerned about his children.
- Become like me: not justified by the works of the law.
- I became like you: I was a Jewish under the law, but I now I am not keeping the law (as the gentiles who are not under the law).
- This conflict between you and I is not a personal matter.

Fears for the Church (4: 8-20)



- We loved one another: I preached you although I have infirmity in my flesh.
- You did not despise me or reject me because of this thorn.
- You have received me as angel of God or as Jesus Himself.
- You considered my preaching to you as a great blessing.
- So you wanted to pluck out your eyes and give them to me (because his infirmity was in his eyes).
- So, we have no personal conflict, why now you consider me as your enemy? Is it because I tell you the truth?
- You are deceived by the false teachers.

Fears for the Church (4: 8-20)



- They are being zealously courted by false teachers
- Zeal is good only when for the right cause.
- Their zeal for the false teachers was not good because:
 - ❖ They bring them back to the falsehood.
 - ❖ They do it for personal gain (zeal for them and not for God)
 - ❖ Their deception is by excluding them from the fatherhood of St. Paul.
- They were zealous before for God when St. Paul was with them, why now in his absence they have changed?

Fears for the Church (4: 8-20)



- His sufferings in ministry like the mother's pangs of birth.
- St. Paul represents the Church, our mother, that form in us the likeness of our Father (Christ) in us.
- While doing this, she is happily enduring all these sufferings for the joy the children for Christ will be born.
- He has doubts about then, so he wants to change his tone.
- This means, I will try to see which tone that will bring you to the truth: is it the harsh tone or the kind tone?
- The father searches for the right way to discipline and lead his children.



Two Covenants (4: 21-31)

- Now St. Paul is making his last argument from the law itself because they desire to be under the law.
- Abraham has two sons: one by the freewoman Sarah, and the other by the bondwoman Hagar.
- The one by the bondwoman was born according to the law of nature (flesh) but the one by the freewoman was born by promise (since Sarah was very old and cannot have children according to the natural law).
- Hagar represents the old covenant that was taken on mount Sinai and made the Jews under the bondage of law



Two Covenants (4: 21-31)

- So Hagar represents the law, the earthly Jerusalem, and the Jews who are under bondage as Hagar was.
- Sarah, who was barren, represents the new covenant, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Christian Church, and the Christians who are free in Christ.
- St. Paul made a reference to Isaiah 54: 1
- The Christian church, was barren in the OT but now her children are more than the Jewish church who has a husband (the law).
- We became sons by the promise of God, not by the works of the law.



Two Covenants (4: 21-31)

- As Ishmael was persecuting Isaac, so until now the Jews and non Christians are persecuting the Christians.
- In Genesis 21:10, God said to Abraham “cast out the bondwoman and her son”
- This symbolizes that only the children of the promise are the heirs.
- Now we are the free children of Christ our Father and the Church, our mother, who we want to become the children of law and the earthly Jerusalem?
- Is Israel still the chosen people of God?



Conclusion

- What is the condition of a child, even though an heir?
- Did Christ redeemed only those who under the law? What about the gentiles?
- As sons of God, what do we receive? What is our condition?
- When does zeal become good and when bad?
- What do the two women represent?
- How are Christians like Isaac?