

Nothing but the Blood (Part 12)

Galatians 4:1-7

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Why is it that most unbelievers know that Christmas is about the birth of Jesus, yet so few know what Easter is about? Easter is merely associated with a bunny that brings eggs. Yet the eggs point to the true meaning of Easter, which is the new life that comes from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By rising from the dead, Jesus conquered death. Those who put their trust in Him not only are guaranteed to rise again as He did, but also are given new life within them. The power of Jesus' resurrection is the power that sanctifies us every day. Easter is about the transformation of something bad into something good. The pain and suffering of Good Friday gives way to the victory and joy of Easter. And our previous state of slavery and burden changes into a life of freedom and righteousness. Once we were cursed, but God turned it into blessing.

Paul speaks of this change in Galatians 4:1-7. Our former state is characterized in these verses as being *under* something, whether it be guardians, the basic principles of the world, or the Law. He makes a comparison to a young heir who is under the supervision of a guardian until he is of age. Before college, I was under my father's roof and therefore under his rules. But during college I was free from his rules. He recognized that I no longer had to abide by a curfew when I was out of his house. To the young, rules feel oppressive; and likewise our former state was that of oppression.

Paul first mentions the slavery under the basic principles of the world (v. 3). All of us have experienced the oppression of the world. The broken nature of the world causes us to suffer injustice, disappointment, and stress. This is a world where the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. The brokenness of creation causes tragedy and disaster. The brokenness of humanity causes disease and decay, and causes us to suffer at the hands of others. And we who were bound to the world were bound to the ways of the world, slaves to sin and death.

In vv. 4-5 we see that the Jews are additionally oppressed by the Law, which was a heavy burden (Romans 2:12, 3:19, Galatians 3:10). The Law was a weight that cursed Israel because of their disobedience. Although it gave them the privileged status of being God's people, it was still a heavy burden. This is why Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30 that He provides rest for those who are under the burden of the Law. His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

For those enslaved to the world and for those enslaved to the Law, this state was only temporary. In vv. 2 and 7 we see that the oppression only lasts until a time set by God. God heard the cries of the oppressed and decided it was time to bring relief. That relief came through Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection. We are no longer slaves, but now we are adopted as children of God. We are no longer under a guardian but we are full heirs to His kingdom. This change came about because God sent Jesus to redeem us (vv. 4-5). He purchased us with His blood, and paid the ransom for our lives. The lives of all people on earth are worth nothing compared to the life of Jesus, yet He gave it up freely because we were worth it to Him. Compelled by compassion and love, Jesus died willingly, bearing the sins of the world and putting them to death on the cross. And when He rose again, all those who are in Him share in His new life as children of God. This is how God reversed our fortunes and brought us from darkness into the light.

But though we have the hope of a new creation and a new body when Jesus returns, we still experience the oppression of the world now. That is why in v. 6 we see that God sent the Holy Spirit in the meantime. The Spirit sanctifies us and helps us be more like Jesus and less like the world, all the while reminding us of our new identity in Christ. The Spirit allows us to cry out to God “*Abba*, Father.” The word *Abba* is one that conveys the tenderness between a child and his father. This tenderness and closeness to God the Father is made possible only by the work of Jesus the Son. We were once far from God, and now we are brought near. We were once slaves, now we are sons. For those who are burdened, Paul’s call is for us to find relief in Jesus.