

From the December 4, 2009 Issue

Escape the Domination of Lesser Things

A Trinitarian, Christ-centered paraphrase of Galatians 4

(4.1) Until heirs become adults and receive their inheritance, they are as penniless and powerless as slaves. (2) Until the date set by their father, they have to do what their nannies and tutors tell them to do. (3) It's like that with the human race: While we were kids, we were dominated by powers over which we would someday rule. (4) But our Papa, on the date he set himself, gave us our inheritance by sending his Son to us. He was born of a woman, just like us. And just like us, he was born under the domination of our nannies and tutors. (5) He came to us in that place so that we could share in his freedom from it, so that the human race would emerge from childhood and claim the inheritance we have been given – a full share in Jesus' relationship with Papa.

(6) Because we ARE His sons and daughters, Papa injected into our hearts the Spirit of his Son. It is this Spirit in us who loves Papa and cries out to Him: "Papa! Father!" It is because of this Spirit that the human soul is haunted with longing for our true Father. (7) It is because of this Spirit that your heart quakes when you hear the good news. The news that you have now been embraced forever by the Father for whom you have been longing. He has adopted you as His child, the heir of His rich Life with His Son and their Spirit.

(8) Back when you did not know Papa, your life was dominated by realities that were less than divine. (9) But now you have begun to share in the mutual knowing between Papa and his Son and their Spirit. How is it possible that now you want to turn back to living under the domination of lesser things? (10) You were sharing in the Great Dance of infinite aliveness, but now you've given that up for your new religious hobby of calculating which days are holier than other days. In what universe is that considered a good trade?! (11) When I spent all that time sharing the gospel with you, was that just a wasted effort?

(12) You guys are my friends, and it's as your friend that I'm begging you: Lay down the religious games, re-join me in the journey of becoming authentic people in community. You have been true friends to me. (13) I remember when I first came to meet you guys. It was because of my physical disability that I first found myself among you, with the opportunity to tell you about Jesus. (14) It was hard for you to deal with my blindness, but you did. Instead of being grossed-out by me, you embraced me. In your openness to me, I experienced your openness to Master Jesus himself.

(15) What happened to the love you once felt toward me? There was a time when you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me, if that would have helped my condition. Where are those feelings now? (16) Are you shutting me out now, just because I'm telling you the truth? (17) Those jackals who are with you now -- you like them because they tell you pleasant lies. They tickle your ego by saying you have the potential to become "super-Christians" like they are. (18) I know it feels nice when impressive people express an interest in you, but you have to look deeper and see that their intentions are not good!

(19) You guys are like sons and daughters to me. It was an honor to be the one who spiritually "birthed" you into your new life in Jesus. And now I am again in the pain of childbirth as you fight

against the new birth He has given you. (20) I wish I could be with you right now, so I could change my tone. But my tone can't help but express how frustrated and confused I am about you!

(21) Let's try another line of thought: Okay, you who want to let Torah run your lives, why don't you go ahead and do what Torah actually says:

(22) Abraham had one son from slave woman and another son from a free woman. (23) The slave child resulted from Abraham's clumsy attempt to accomplish by his own effort what Papa had promised to do for him. The free child came from Papa himself, according to what he had promised. (24) Do you see what I'm getting at here? The slave woman is Torah, bearing slave children (25) who are crushed under the weight of demands they are unable to fulfill. (26) But OUR mother is the free woman: (27) "You with the barren womb, shout 'WOOHOO!' Burst into song and dance! For your children shall outnumber all others." (28) You, my friends, are children not of slavery but of promise. Your life is not about struggling to obey some taskmaster's demands. Your life is about receiving the beautiful life Papa has promised.

(29) But remember how the rest of the story goes. The slave woman's child abused the free woman's child. That abuse continues to this day, as the Torah-fetishists persecute those who live in the freedom of the Spirit. (30) Listen to what the Bible tells us to do in this situation: "Send them away, both the slave woman and her child. The inheritance will be received only by the free."

(31) Brothers and sisters, we are children not of slavery but of freedom!

~ John Stonecypher