This is the beginning of the end for Spectator Christianity. Suddenly, it's out of style to be a pew potato, doing little for the kingdom except sitting in a row on Sundays, looking at the back of someone's head and wondering if you team will win the afternoon game on TV.

James Rutz in *Mega Shift*

Prayer Study #460

GALATIANS CHAPTER 4

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Galatians 4 New King James Version (NKJV)

4 *Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child,*
does not differ at all from a slave, though he is
master of all, ***2*** *but is under guardians and stewards*
until the time appointed by the father. ***3*** *Even so we,*
when we were children, were in bondage under the
elements of the world. ***4*** *But when the fullness of the*
time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a
woman, born under the law, ***5*** *to redeem those who*
were under the law, that we might receive the
adoption as sons.
6 *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the*
Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba,
Father!" ***7*** *Therefore you are no longer a slave but a*
son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Almost every ancient society has some kind of *coming of age* time and public ceremony, mainly for males, when a boy goes from childhood to adult. In America the age legally is 18. A child who is 17 can be emancipated from his or her parents, but the parents are still responsible for anything the child does, even though he or she is no longer at home under the parents' roof. However, when the child is

18, the parent is no longer responsible for what the child does.

In the Greek world, a boy under the age of 18 was under his father's care. Between the ages of 18 and 20, the boy became what we would translate a *cadet.* During this period he was under the direction of the state. He became a full grown man at the age of 20 in a ceremony where his long hair was cut off and offered to the gods.

In Rome, sometimes between the ages of 14 and 17, a boy became a man. He had to take off his toga with a narrow purple band and put on a plain toga worn by adults. He gave his toys to Apollo to show that he had put away childish things, and he was taken by his friends and relatives to the forum and introduced to public life.

Barclay tells us that a Jewish boy went from childhood to adulthood on the first Sabbath after his 12th birthday. He was taken to the synagogue where his father offered up a blessing: *"Blessed are you, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy."* Then the boy prayed a prayer which said, *"O my God and God of my fathers! On this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes to you and declare with sincerity and truth, that henceforth I will keep your commandments and undertake and bear the responsibility of my actions towards you," thus moving from childhood to adulthood.*

When a boy was a child in the sight of the law, he could own property and be an heir, but he could take no legal action. He had no rights, much as in the life of a slave and everything was done for him without his input. But, when he became a man, he entered

into his full inheritance.

In these verses, Paul is telling us that, as children, the law is in control of our lives. Then, Jesus came and released them from the law, making them no longer slaves but adults who could enter in to their inheritance.

The proof that we are God's children comes from being able to call and believe that God is our Father. The word *Abba,* which is the Aramaic for *father* and sometimes translated *Papa,* in English, must have often been spoken by Jesus and was such an important sound that the Bible translators left the word of the original Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, in the text.

Paul believed that those who were still in bondage to the law were still children, but those who had come to know the grace of Christ and were able to call instinctively in the heart, by the work of the Holy Spirit, *Abba,* had grown up spiritually into adulthood. The Spirit Himself bears witness that we are the sons and daughters of God (Romans 8:16).

Fears for the Church

8 *But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those, which by nature are not gods.* ***9*** *But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?* ***10*** *You observe days and months and seasons and years.* ***11*** *I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*

12 *Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.*

13 You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. 14 And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. 15 What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?
17 They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. 18 But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, 20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

This passage reminds me of parents who say to their children when they are giving them a spanking: *"This hurts me more than it is hurting you."* Paul here is giving the Galatians a spanking, which I am sure hurt him more than it hurt the Galatians. His *spanking* is telling the truth to these people, i.e. that they have been set free but are being put under the bondage of the law by the Judaizers. Rick Joyner speaks of these kind of Christians: *"People often form exclusive clubs or sects to promote their superiority over others, causing others to seek them out. Paul asserts that this was the evil motive of those who were promoting the law as their basis of righteousness."*

In previous times, before they accepted Christ, the Galatians had served idols, which could not

speak and were powerless. They were in bondage to these idols. When they received Jesus, they were set free from these bondages, but now these Gentile believers were being encouraged to keep the Mosaic law. Paul says that this is like going back to the idolatry they came out of.

Letting yourself be bond in the law after being set free by Christ is a repeated argument of Paul in many of his epistles. In Colossians 2:16, for example, he says: *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holyday or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days."*

Paul feels that he has wasted his time with them and even doubts their commitment to Christ, even though he still believes that they really love him. Yet the observance of all these things would put them completely back under the Mosaic law. J. Vernon McGee comments on this: *"Today I hear legalists claim they are keeping the Mosaic law, yet they are keeping only the Sabbath day. My friend, all the law comes in one package, including the sabbatic year and the Year of Jubilee. James in his epistle said, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). That is, he is guilty of being a lawbreaker."*

Paul speaks in this passage of his *thorn in the flesh.* In this passage he speaks of it as a *temptation*. In other places he calls it a *trial.* J. Vernon McGee believes that the thorn in the flesh was some sort of eye trouble. He says that it made Paul very unattractive and was probably a disease very common in that land and characterized by excessive pus constantly oozing out of his eye.

William Barclay gives some other suggestions as to

what Paul's thorn in the flesh was: *"It [the thorn in the flesh] has been held to be the persecution which he suffered or the temptations of the flesh, which he is said never to have succeeded in suppressing, or his physical appearance, which the Corinthians regarded as contemptible (2nd Corinthians 10:10). The oldest tradition is that it was violent headaches. It has been suggested that Paul's eyes always troubled him because he had been dazzled so much on the Damascus road that afterwards he could see only dimly and painfully. The word translated as 'you did not turn from me with loathing' literally means 'you did not spit at me.' In the ancient world, it was the custom to spit when encountering an epileptic in order to avert the influence of the evil spirit which was believed to be resident in the sufferer; so, it has been suggested that Paul was an epileptic."*

Paul ends this passage with a very tender hearted word to the Galatians. He compares himself to a mother who labors to bring forth a child. He labored or travailed for these Galatians until they were born again. Now he wants to be with them so that he can speak more tenderly with them than he has spoken in this letter.

Two Covenants

21 *Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* ***22*** *For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.* ***23*** *But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,* ***24*** *which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the*

one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage,
*which is Hagar— **25** for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in*
Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is,
*and is in bondage with her children— **26** but the*
Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.
***27** For it is written:*
“Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband.”
***28** Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of*
*promise. **29** But, as he who was born according to the*
flesh then persecuted him who was born according to
*the Spirit, even so it is now. **30** Nevertheless what*
does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman
and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not
*be heir with the son of the freewoman.” **31** So then,*
brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but
of the free.

In Genesis 16, 17 and 21, we find the narrative of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac. God had promised Abraham and Sarah a child, even though they both were very old. Because they had to wait for the promise, Sarah decides to give Abraham her maid Hagar to have sex with. This was a common practice in those times. Hagar had a son Ishmael. Later, however, the son of promise, Isaac, was born from Sarah’s womb. Thus, Ishmael was born as the result of human effort, whereas Isaac was born because of God’s promise. There was already tension between Hagar and Sarah because

barrenness was a matter of great shame, and it is thought that Hagar subtle threw this up to Sarah before Isaac was born, and because later Sarah found Ishmael ‘mocking’ Isaac. Sarah insists that Abraham be put out and sent away.

Ishmael, a slave child, represents the old covenant of the law. His descendants are today’s Arabs. Isaac stands for the new covenant of Jesus Christ. He was born free and is under grace, not law.

Just as then, even now, the children of the law persecute the children of grace and promise. In the end, the legalists will be cast out from God and have no share in the inheritance. There is no way to salvation and eternal life in heaven except by Jesus Christ.

SOMETIMES I WONDER

Ernie Haase and Signature Sound

VERSE ONE
Staring out the window
as a storm comes blowing fast across the field
it made me think about you
and how the thunder made you shiver
and the lightning always scared you;
Does it still?
I guess that's a silly question
‘cause there are no storms in Heaven,
well, at least as far as anyone can tell.
Oh sometimes I wonder,
sometimes I wonder.

VERSE TWO
Standing at your bedside
you were so concerned with leaving us behind.
We held on to you tightly
and you told us you were worried
that we'd be okay.
Has Heaven eased your mind?
Do you know know how much we miss you?
Do you wish we were there with you?

Do you get to think about us anymore?
Oh, sometimes I wonder
Sometimes I wonder.

BRIDGE
Do you ever see the sights and think
this must be some fantastic dream
can you wrap your mind around the things you see?
Or is it more than you can comprehend
to think today will never end
and all is peace and joy eternally

VERSE THREE
When you entered Heaven
did you walk or did you break into a run?
Even though you'd never been there
did it feel like home already?
Were you welcomed by the Father and the Son?
Did you bow in humble reverence
just to stand there in their presence?
Did they take you in their arms in sweet embrace?
Oh, sometimes I wonder
Sometimes I wonder.
I wonder, sometimes I wonder, I wonder.
Ooo, sometimes I wonder.