

8. From Slaves to Heirs (4Q 2011—Galatians)

Biblical material: Gal. 3:26–4:20; Rom. 6:1–11; Heb. 2:14–18; 4:14, 15; Rom. 9:4, 5.

Quotes

- A life of reaction is a life of slavery, intellectually and spiritually. One must fight for a life of action, not reaction. *Rita Mae Brown*
- Americans are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom. *Alexis de Tocqueville*
- Emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind. *Bob Marley*
- Every emancipation has in it the seeds of a new slavery, and every truth easily becomes a lie. *I. F. Stone*
- The prudent heir takes careful inventory of his legacies and gives a faithful accounting to those whom he owes an obligation of trust. *John F. Kennedy*
- I'm the heir apparent to the heir presumptive. *Princess Margaret*

Questions

In what way are we “slaves” to God? What does God say about this? How do we become his heirs? What benefits and responsibilities do heirs have? How does our understanding of God’s character affect the answers we may give to such questions? Most of all, what’s the difference in relating as slave or heir?

Bible summary

Here in Gal. 3:26–4:20 Paul contrasts those who are still slaves to the Law, slaves to other so-called “gods,” and slaves to their own passions, with those who are joint-heirs with Christ. The objective was to become “God’s sons and daughters” (Gal. 4:5 TEV). Why would you want to go back to the kind of life you lived before you knew Jesus? he asks. So true! Why would we want to return to a life without Jesus, totally lost and abandoned? It’s so simple: “So then, you are no longer a slave but a son or daughter. And since that is what you are, God will give you all that he has for his heirs.” (Gal. 4:7 TEV).

Nor can we want to go on living in sin (Rom. 6:1-11). We are to be “dead to sin”—to refuse to allow sin to take over again, to hold onto the one who is the Lord of our lives, now and forever: “you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 6:11 TEV). Jesus came here to totally identify with us (Heb. 2:14–18), to win us back to love and trust in him as he revealed God to us. In that way we are set free from our lives lived in the fear death (2:15). We hold on tightly to our trust in God. For we have a High Priest who completely understands us, who has experienced our lives from our perspective (Heb. 4:14, 15). Despite Paul’s condemnation of some of his fellow Jews, he still says he would willingly be separated from Christ if that would save them (see Rom. 9:3-5).

Comment

I stared at Pharaoh Tutankhamun again last year. Well, the famous mask, at least, there in Cairo Museum. I stood and looked for ages. Hardly anyone else seemed too interested, and when they did look, it was just a quick glance before they moved on...

The gleaming gold and the lapis lazuli blue stuns the eye, and exerts an odd fascination—at least to me. It is hard to look away, and as you stare into the lifeless eyes of this mask it is hard not to wonder what this ruler thought and did, how he lived his life, and most of all, what he believed. An image from 3,300 years ago—yet still with the power to intrigue and provoke.

Also found in the tomb were various chariots and all the other goods expected to be needed in the other world. For they had a strong expectation of life after death—and so the Pharaoh was supplied with models of servants and boats, food and drink... Someone should have told him, “You can’t take it with you.” No one can.

That’s the reason for this story. King Tut may have been the ruler of Egypt, but was he a slave or an heir? A slave to the Egyptian gods, with all their terrible attributes. A slave to perverted beliefs. A slave to all that such paganism means. That was why Moses chose not to be a slave in Egypt, even though he could have been Pharaoh. “It was faith that made Moses, when he had grown up, refuse to be called the son of the king’s daughter. He preferred to suffer with God’s people rather than to enjoy sin for a little while. He reckoned that to suffer scorn for the Messiah was worth far more than all the treasures of Egypt, for he kept his eyes on the future reward.” Hebrews 11:24-26 TEV.

In the same way Jesus speaks to us as his disciples, and tells us he doesn’t call us slaves any longer. He calls us friends—because friends understand the truth about God. Slaves don’t care to know about their master’s business—they simply do as they are told. Theirs is a position where they are “not paid to think.” So their obedience is not true obedience in an understanding sense. They simply obey by unthinkingly doing what they are told.

But friends are not slaves. They are free to choose. They are free to think! This is what makes them able to obey at such a higher level—because they understand and agree that what needs to be done is intrinsically good and right... Someone once asked how God would respond if we replied to his generous offer to be his friends that we would prefer to be servants. God surely would not force friendship upon us, but what a sad reply to God’s offer to be his friends. And think how much you would lose by saying, “No, God. I don’t want to be your friend...”

Ellen White Comments

You have the Pattern, Christ Jesus; walk in His footsteps, and you will be qualified to fill any and every position that you may be called upon to occupy. You will be “rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” You are not to feel that you are a bondsman, but a son of God; that you are highly favored in that you have been regarded of so great value that God has made you His by paying an infinite ransom for your freedom. Jesus says, “I call you not servants; . . . but I have called you friends.” When you appreciate His wondrous love, love and gratitude will be in your heart as a wellspring of joy. {FE 303-4}

Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. {SC 10-11}