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THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS - Burwood - 1984

THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Study #3 The adoption of sons
Exhortation

Reading - Galatians 4

My very dearly beloved brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Well, b&s, when we were together last evening, we considered the wonder of that theme of Galatians chapter 3, of the marvellous unity that has been accomplished through the gospel that God has preached to us, whereby that in His Son, we have been brought together in oneness with Him. It was the writer of the gospel of John, b&s, who said 'that when Jesus died, He died not for that nation only, he said, but that He should gather together in one, all the children of God which are scattered abroad'. And the scripture foreseeing that that was God's purpose, preached that gospel to Abraham, and called him the 'father of many nations'; and that that seed that was promised to Abraham in all the promises, b&s, was to be the one kind of seed, characteristically expressed in the life of Jesus Christ our Lord. We who have been baptized into Christ have put Him on, and if we are like Him in character, then we are Abraham's children and heirs according to that promise. And the wonder of all that, b&s, is also this, it's because God has made him the father of many nations, that if we are Abraham's seed, we are God's sons! and that is, of course, the wonder of the exalted position which we now occupy, as the sons of the living God.

Brethren and sisters, the fourth chapter of Galatians is dedicated to exalting that theme in our minds. God's sons! incredible really when you think about it that we hold, unworthy though we are of it, that is our status. And so in the 4th chapter of Galatians, that theme is uppermost in Paul's mind. And as we meet together, this morning, b&s, the character of this meeting, of course, is different than our normal studies together, let's all be well aware of that! because at the conclusion of my remarks, and the chairman comes forward to direct us to the focal centre of this meeting, the responsibility for its successful conclusion will revolve upon every individual brother and sister in this hall; to absorb within themselves the power of this chapter, of Galatians chapter 4. Let's never forget therefore, b&s, the very special character of our meeting this morning, because this is the One, the Lord Jesus, through whom it has been made possible; that He is literally God's Son, but because of our relationship with Him, we also have received that adoption of being the placing of sons in God's sight; never let us forget, therefore, the One that we're going to remember this morning.

Now from verses 1 to 7 of chapter 4, the apostle contrasts the inferior position of Jews under the Law with that wonderful superior position of the saints in Christ Jesus. He takes an illustration from everyday life, that the heir as long as he is a child, he differs nothing from a servant, though he might be lord of the estate as regards the future. So here he is talking about a very great family, in which there is this child who is to be the heir of his father's estate; but whilst he's a little child, says the apostle, as the custom of those days had it, he was treated like everybody else was treated. He was treated like he was a servant, though he may become in the future, lord of all. And during the course as a child, he says in verse 2, he was under tutors and governors, and the two words put together, one means 'a house manager' and the other one 'a treasurer'. So the RSV says he was under guardians and trustees, he didn't have any rights as it were, to exercise in his own right, he was always been instructed by others and everything was put in trust in his name, and he could not claim that, b&s, until he grew to maturity. That, says the apostle Paul, was your status under the Law of Moses. The Law was their guardian and trustee and gave them no rights whatever, to that eternal sonship and inheritance that we have in Jesus Christ our Lord.

He said, 'Even so we when we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world'. That's an interesting expression, b&s, 'the elements of the world', he doesn't mean by that, of course, the world as we understand it, he's talking about the Jewish world, that cosmos, that decoration or order of things which the word means, which was ordered according to the Jewish world which was dictated to by the Law of Moses, which treated them like little children and kept them under guardianship and trusteeship until the time that they 'grew up'; that's the point the apostle is making. It's rather interesting, b&s, to realize that word, 'elements of the world' there, is only found 7 times, the particular Greek word is only found 7 times in Paul's writings, and in every case it is applied to the Jewish commonwealth and to those infantile things under the Law of Moses. As a matter of fact, the word 'stoicheion' (4747) really means 'the first principle of any learning' or 'to learn the alphabet', like you would teach a child in school to say, "a, b c", those very first rudiments of knowledge that you would teach a very young child, that's what the word means. The word is used, of course, in the book of Galatians four times where it is rendered, elements; it's used in 2 Peter 3, where it talks about the elements being burnt up with fervent heat, and it's not talking about physical elements at all, it's talking about the rudimentary principles of Jewish law; it's used in Colossians and it's used in Hebrews 5, where it's rendered 'first principles'.

And so they were like children, being treated by the Law of Moses, being spelled out in the very infantile way, the principles of the truth, which they were expected to absorb and to grow up, b&s, that they might not only go on feeding on the milk of the Word, but that they might mature to where they were able to masticate and digest that meatier stuff of the Word, whereby they would prove that they were adults and stood in relationship then, to the kingdom of God and to heirship of all that God, of course, had offered them!

Now that's what they were under the Law of Moses, but he says in verse 4, 'but when the fullness of time was come'; now there was in God's economy, b&s, an epoch of history when He would send forth His Son. The Lord Jesus Christ didn't come into the world as a chance happening, as we're all very, very well aware, nor was God capricious in His selection of that epoch of time. There was a fullness about that! and what did God wait for, b&s? what was He waiting for before He manifested His Son? It so happened, of course, that as the Lord Jesus Christ was born, so the end of the Jewish age was dawning, with the growing hordes of the Romans as they, of course, built up their supremacy in the Middle East. It all coincided in history, didn't it? when the time would come and the Jews would be dispersed and the Gentiles would be called to the hope of Israel; and that was the epoch of history that God waited for to send His Son. But further than that, Paul points out in another place, in Romans 5, 'that God waited in all His patience, that in due time, due time, Christ died for the ungodly'.

You know, b&s, as a manifestation of His love, the Father waited patiently for thousands of years, and chose the epoch of history when the iniquity of Israel had reached its absolute and upper zenith, and when they filled up the measure of their fathers, then and only then, did He offer them His Son! and that, b&s, is the complete difference between man's love and God's love; we will offer our love to people when they respond to us, and we will not offer that love until they do, but God waited until man had reached the pinnacle of his iniquity, and then He offered His Son. 'For scarcely for a righteous man would anybody die'; if we had a benevolent man or a good man, says the apostle Paul, we might, b&s, dare to die, but it would have to be a daring act, it would have to be a split second decision, a deep breath and take our life! We might dare to die for a good man, 'but God commanded His love towards us, b&s, that while we yet sinners, neither righteous nor good, Christ died for us'. It wasn't a daring act, b&s, He didn't dare to die, but God measured His death off, as far as our memory of history can go back, 6,000 years. If we take then, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to heart, He had a glory with the Father before the world was: there is a period of time beyond that, b&s, that's beyond our minds to even comprehend it, that God was thinking then, and had determined right back to time immortal, beyond human thinking, to take the life of His Son. There's nothing daring about that! and so the apostle makes that point, 'that when the fullness of time was come', when man least deserved it, God sent forth His Son'.

You know, b&s, because of the doctrinal problems that we have from time to time, whenever we get that verse read, we get the emphasis upon 'made of a woman, made under the law'. Truly emphasis should be given to that, but let us never forget this, that above, beyond, and outreaching all of those things, b&s, the greatest expression in that verse is, that God sent forth HIS SON, that's the greatness of it all, b&s, that's the greatness of it all. The One upon the table this morning, who is here represented by the bread and the wine, LIVES AND IS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER, and is listening to me as I tell you this, and listening to every heartbeat that's in this hall, and HE, b&s, was literally and truly and absolutely GOD'S SON, that's something that we've

got to get into our minds and our hearts. And as we grow up to be parents, and we have our own children, we might begin to understand what was done at the fullness of time!

Now what was done? Well, He sent forth His Son, and you'll notice the apostle Paul says, made of a woman, He doesn't say, b&s, born of a woman, later on he talks about the birth of Ishmael, and he uses the word for an ordinary birth, but he doesn't use that word here; and if we were to transliterate the literal Greek, it would say, 'God sent forth His Son who came to be of a woman'; what the apostle Paul is trying to tell us is this, that the real importance of the birth of Christ is that He is from God! It so happened that Mary was the human agency by whom He came to be; and of course, through that human agency it is also important to realize that He came in our nature. No doubt about that, it doesn't detract from that doctrinal truth, b&s, but the real issue is, that He came to be of that woman, He was the seed of the woman, Genesis 3 and verse 15. We've said this time and again, and we repeat it this morning for emphasis, seed of the woman is not teaching primarily that He would come in our nature. There's absolute proof of that, b&s, that cannot be gainsaid, and the proof is this, that the expression in Genesis 3 and 15 'seed of the woman', if that expression is teaching primarily, primarily teaching I say, that Jesus came in our nature, then we've got to accept the doctrine that flesh overcame the flesh! But it's NOT so! The seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head, and that's not a work of flesh; seed of woman, b&s, is telling us very plainly in Genesis 3 verse 15, that He would not be the seed of man. And there it is, 'sent forth His Son who came to be of a woman', that's what Genesis 3 verse 15 is telling us, and one of the most important doctrines of the Word of God, is that one, that Jesus Christ was and is God's literal Son. If that were not so, b&s, we would this day be of all men most miserable, and still in our sins. For there is the cardinal factor in the overcoming of human nature. That God Himself intervened into human affairs to rescue man from himself.

And that's what the apostle is trying to tell us here, and emphasizing that wonderful truth, that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a son, and we would call His name, Immanuel; and you'll notice the use of the title 'El' there, b&s, POWER WITH US, and that's what we need, isn't it? 'He shall save His people from their sins', and there has to be a 'power', so the apostle Paul says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believes it', and that power came through that Son, b&s, and it came from on high. And whilst He came to be of a woman that He might represent all those of the human race, the apostle Paul says, there was another special relationship that He bore of the Jewish people, in that He was born under the Law. So He came under the jurisdiction of a double curse, of mortality and of the Law of Moses. He stood in that unique position, b&s, to remove those barriers, that we might have freedom and access to God and to find the maturity of sonship, that we also might be called the 'sons of God'. You know, that's a wonderful thing, verse 5, 'to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons'. So the Jew needed a double curse removed, the curse of the Law and curse of mortality, and the Gentiles shared with the Jew the curse of mortality; so by one action, being made of a

woman and under the Law, the Lord was able to remove those barriers whereby we all could receive the adoption of sons.

Now, b&s, the word 'adoption' really doesn't fit the bill when we talk about our relationship to God. It does and it doesn't: it does in this sense, that it certainly puts us in our right place, I suppose, by reminding us that none of us are really and literally in that sense, the sons of God as He was. So I suppose if we use the word 'adoption' it can have that effect, of counterbalancing perhaps, a little bit of pride in trying to imagine that we could ever be, the equal of Jesus Christ. I don't think anybody would attempt that for a start, but it really doesn't fit the bill, b&s, in this sense, because we ARE the sons of God! You see, the word 'adoption' (huiiothesia - 5206) has those two Greek words 'huios' which means 'a son' and 'thesia' which means 'to place'; and so the idea of the word is that we have been placed as sons, really and truly as sons. It doesn't quite reach the point, does it, of the English word 'adoption'; there's a realness about that, b&s, that that word just doesn't quite convey. Brethren, says John, we are the sons of God, not like He, true! and yet, because we are 'in Him' there is a realness about that, b&s, that we need to understand and appreciate. It doesn't take a great intellect to understand it, it takes a great deal of appreciation to comprehend it, the realness of that situation in which we now find ourselves in that we have been placed as sons.

And how have we been placed as sons? because says the apostle in verse 6, 'Ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts'; so you see, he said in verse 4, 'when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son' and now He's sent forth 'the Spirit of His Son'. And the word 'sent forth' is the same in both places 'exapostello' (1821) and you get the word 'apostle' from that word, it means 'to send out from where one is'. What the apostle is trying to tell us, that if the Lord Jesus was the Son of God because He had a divine origin, we are the sons of God because we have a divine origin. He came from God, and we come from God, that's what he's trying to tell us, because if we're related to the Son of God then we are 'from God'. And so the Spirit of His Son has been sent forth from the place where it was with God into our hearts, that together we cry, 'Abba, Father'. That, of course, is two greetings, isn't it? it's the 'Abba' (1) of the Hebrew, it's the 'Pater' (3962) of the Greek. But you know, b&s, there's a wonderful overtone there, you think about this, that phrase, those two words are used by the apostle in Romans 8 and in Galatians chapter 4, but he wasn't the first one to use it. That expression of 'Abba, Father', b&s, was first heard out of agonized lips; it was said in absolute agony, 'Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'. Now you think what Paul's telling us! by the use of that expression, he's lifting that from the garden of Gethsemane, and the very expression of our Lord will tell you, b&s, what was in His mind, as He knelt before His Father and the perspiration rolled off His brow like great drops of blood, as His soul was wrung with anguish, and He said to His Father, 'if it be possible', and He knew it wasn't possible because He knew He was to be 'Abba, Father', and if He didn't die, He could never be 'Abba, Father', to anybody else but Him. And the very expression from our Lord, was a confession to His Father, as if He was saying what John said, 'Father, I know that the people are going to be saved,

and not from this nation only, but you're going to gather the children of God, who are scattered abroad, Abba, Father'. And what does Paul do with that expression, in Romans and Galatians, b&s, he puts them in the mouth of the saints, to express in praise and thankfulness and happiness, their exalted position! But never forget that exalted position whereby we can use those terms, is related to a man who had to use them in agony and anguish! Now that's the point he's making. Sometime in your leisure when you get back to Romans chapter 8, you'll see the wonderful joyous expression whereby we cry unto God, Abba, Father; let us never forget that those two words were used by our Lord, who made us sons, in a different connotation entirely; but He said it in agony, that we might say it, b&s, in ecstasy! That's Paul's point! He's trying to impress that upon us by the very use of those terms!

'Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, he said, you've grown up in Christ Jesus, you're a son. But if a son, then an heir of God through Christ'. He calls us in Romans 8 and verse 17, 'joint-heirs with Christ'. See the Jew, b&s, was never an heir of God under the Law, did you know that? And most remarkable you know, he was taught it by a Law which he imagined was primarily to teach him that he was an heir; but you look at the Law that he thought taught him that, it taught him exactly the opposite! Or refer to the Law of Jubilee, he thought that because every 50th year, the original inheritance went back to the family that originally owned it, that God was impressing him every 50th year, that he was an heir of God and inherited the land. But he forgot, b&s, what the Law said, and God gave the reason for the Law of Jubilee, and it wasn't that! God didn't say, 'you've got to get the land back every 50th year because it belongs to you'; this is what He said, 'that the Land was to return, b&s, to every original inheritor of it, because the Land shall not be sold forever because it's MINE, and you are strangers and pilgrims with Me'. They were God's tenants, they never owned a stitch of it, and the very law that they thought told them that, told them exactly the opposite; 'I'm giving you that land back because it can't be sold forever because it's not yours. And when you sold it, you sold My land! Now go back to it and learn that you're My tenant, you're a stranger and a pilgrim with Me'. That's not so in Christ Jesus, b&s, we are joint-heirs with Christ, and what the Law could not do, has been accomplished by the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now that was the message that Paul had for them in the first 7 verses. Now from verse 8 to 11, b&s, he warns them about the dangers of going back, leaving that wonderful privilege that they had, and he reminds them as we quoted to you before, how that they wanted to go back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, which, of course, in this case, were the weak and beggarly elements of the bondage of the Law. It's rather interesting, you know, that the apostle here points out to them, how foolish were they, to leave that exalted status, to go back and serve self! Ridiculous, isn't it, b&s? they were weak and beggarly things, you know, the word 'beggarly' there means 'poverty-stricken' (4444). When you get the contrast between that which is poverty-stricken and that which is rich, and you contrast it again, what is poverty and what is riches? Well, we are poverty-stricken, b&s, when we serve self because we can have little reward from

that, we're not in the position to pay much for the service of self, are we? But on the other hand, the apostle refers in Ephesians, particularly, 'to the riches of His grace'. The riches of His grace, and you've only got to stop and think, just logically, b&s, assuming we did our best in the service of God, and we come before the judgment seat of Christ; and I have a difficulty with this, I have a real difficulty with this, I don't have a difficulty comprehending academically, I just have a difficulty trying to comprehend it at all! But eternal life to me will be just so much out of proportion to any service that can be given! You imagine it, life everlasting under superlative conditions, in the presence and companionship of Jesus Christ our Lord, God's only Son, and all the worthies of old! That's out of all proportion, b&s, to any service that we can offer. There's nothing that can be done that could equal that reward! and to serve self is poverty, but the riches of His grace are unfathomable. And that's what Paul is trying to tell them, how silly they were, to go back to those things.

He says in verse 10, 'Ye observe days, and months, and times and years. He said, I am afraid of you, that I have bestowed upon you labour in vain?' You know the point that he's making about days, and months and times and years, b&s, is this, that their life was made up of a service to God which he said had a mechanical application according to a time of the year. You see the difference! under the Law of Moses for example, you take what they had to do: on the 10th day of the 7th month, God said, 'afflict your souls', you may not feel like afflicting your soul on that day! You may awake in the morning and be in a happy frame of mind, a joyous frame of mind, you may not feel like afflicting your soul, but afflict your soul you must! Five days later on the 15th day of that month, God said, 'rejoice, like you've never rejoiced in the whole of the year'. You may not feel on that morning you wake up that you want to rejoice, that may not be your frame of mind, but your attitude was regulated by a date on the calendar; you did this because on a certain day it says, 'rejoice', on a certain day it said, 'mourn', so mourn this day and rejoice that day. All the application of your life was mechanically applied by the dates on the calendar. Where's the spontaneity about that? People that act like that, b&s, is to bestow labour in vain! people who come to this memorial meeting and believe that on Sunday morning is the time to live the truth, are poverty-stricken! If our life is regulated because the bible class is on Wednesday night, the memorial meeting is Sunday morning, we go to the lecture Sunday night and that constitutes our life in the truth, which is dictated by the clock, then b&s, we have no heart! We are not regulated by days, months, times or years, but our service should be spontaneous whether it be in rejoicing to God, or whether it be in afflicting our souls, whatever that time might be, it's something that is absolutely spontaneous and is not regulated by that clock! 'I am afraid of you', he said, 'that I've bestowed labour in vain'.

Now from verses 12 to 20, b&s, he makes a personal appeal to them. A personal appeal based upon the rapport that he had with the Galatians before all this trouble blew up and before they departed from his gospel. He says in verse 12, 'Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye (were) as the Greek has it', in other words, he says, look, I haven't changed, we had a wonderful relationship; I'm still the same as you were, you've changed, it's not me! And this antipathy had grown up between Paul and

the Galatians, not because he had changed his mind but that they had; he said, 'I'm still like you were', and he reminded them, b&s, that that fervent attitude of enthusiasm and love which overflowed to the apostle, he said, 'I've still got that, what happened to yours?' and he points out that they hadn't injured(91) him at all; you know, the word there means 'you've done me no wrong', and here, b&s, it takes a bit of sorting out as to what he's getting at, but I believe the context clearly indicates what he's saying, and let me try and paraphrase for you what he's saying to them. He says, you didn't do me any wrong in relation to the infirmity of my flesh. Now you see, what is he referring to? Well, he points out to them that through the infirmity of the flesh, he preached the gospel unto them at the first. Now when you put the record together of the apostle's life, he came to Asia Minor and Pamphylia and the plains of Pamphylia there, at the sea port there where he landed, before he went to the Galatian ecclesias, Paul tells us by putting his writings together, that Paul contracted a form of disease, quite a debilitating disease, b&s, that clearly humiliated him. Because of which, he had to go to the highlands of Antioch and the region of Galatia to seek the higher air, where he might have a more healthy atmosphere; and it virtually was by infirmity that he was forced into that area.

Now what was that infirmity? it is very difficult to say, but this we know, that whatever it was, it was a very, very humiliating thing for the apostle. And one writer, Sir William Ramsey, who had done quite a bit of research on this matter, using the Greek text here of Paul's own writings and searching in the annals of profane history, has come up with the idea that it was perhaps a malarial fever, the symptoms of which, b&s, was that Paul would be seized from time to time, with a kind of fit like an epileptic fit, where he would be thrown on the ground and this malarial fever would shake him. Now whether that's the case or not, and I believe, that's perhaps the best explanation of it, one thing is for certain, that when you search the apostle's writings, it was a terrible embarrassment to him. And he besought the Lord three times that it depart from him, and the answer came back, 'My grace is sufficient for thee'; and he called that disease, b&s, the messenger of Satan. Why did he call it that? because the Satan in question, was identified in 2 Corinthians 11, as the leader of the Judaistic party, and you read through the 10th and 11th chapters of 2 Corinthians, he's talking about an individual! and evidently, this individual puffed up with his own importance and pride and esteem of his own self, used that affliction to humiliate the apostle. The messenger of Satan! and you can imagine the apostle Paul trying to argue with his brethren and sisters about the dangers of Judaism, and the failure for them to see that! And then in the midst of his talk, he'd be thrown down with this disease before them, and become humiliated so the 'Satan' would say, 'his bodily presence is contemptible'. 'His bodily presence, OH, contemptible!' and you could imagine, b&s, how that would eat into the apostle Paul, not because he was proud, but because he knew so much depended upon getting that message over; and he'd pray to God and he's say to God, 'God, can't you see that this is dragging down the message; if only I could maintain my health before these people, he wouldn't be able to say that!. And God's answer, 'I know Paul, My grace is sufficient for you'. God's true people, b&s, would not be affected by such things, and Paul had to be quieted down. He said to the Galatians, you didn't do me any wrong; they must have

accepted that disease, b&s, and they saw through this 'pragmatic' and they didn't hold it against the apostle; that's what he's referring to here!

He says in verse 14, 'And my temptation which was in my flesh', actually and literally in the Greek it reads, 'and your trial which was in my flesh'; so they had a trial which was in his flesh, and they overcame that trial, b&s; they accepted Paul for what he was and was sympathetic towards his weakness and his sickness. They didn't hold that against him, and their trial and his flesh, he says, (listen to this!) 'ye despised not nor rejected', where have you hear those words before? Those two words, b&s, 'despised and rejected' are straight out of the context of Isaiah 53, 'And although there was no form of beauty nor comeliness that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected of men!' and Paul's little allusion to Isaiah 53, in exactly that context, that there was no form of beauty and so they despised and rejected him, and he set himself before the Galatians as the ambassador of Jesus Christ; having no form or beauty before them with this debilitating and humiliating disease; but you didn't despise and reject me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus'. So he brings to their attention the fact that they had overcome those problems, not only to accept Paul as Paul, but to accept him as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, despite his weakness, and that was a wonderful achievement with the Galatians; where is it all gone? says the apostle.

'Where is the blessedness that ye spake of? where is the offer of your eyes if I needed them?' The most precious element of our body, they were to give the apostle, where's it all gone, he says? Verse 17, he says, 'They (the Judaizers) zealously affect you, but not well: yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them'. Now the word 'affect you' and 'affect them' literally means, I suppose, to use a colloquial expression, b&s, 'to gush over somebody', to gush over someone, to affect them in that sense, to praise them, to flatter them (2206) and here were these Judaizers coming along and putting an arm around the brethren and sisters, and gushing all over them. What for? that they might receive the same in kind! why, he says, they even exclude you; they would bring down the stringent application of the Law, they would convince the brethren and sisters of their weakness before God, and make them feel like miserable sinners that they were, and bring them down to the dust of the earth, and set themselves up as paragons of righteousness. What for? that they might get a response from the Corinthians, looking up in pride and admiration at this towering figure of self respect! That's what they were doing, b&s. And Paul says, 'you can't see it; gushing all over you to get a like response from you. Treating you with scorn, bringing you down low that they might get you so low, that you'd look upon them as being so great, 'you suffer fools gladly'. And that was his words, b&s, to the Galatians, but that wasn't his motive!

'My little children, he said in verse 19, 'of whom I travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you'. A man, b&s, prepared to suffer to project somebody else's image and not his own. The individuals in the ecclesias who do that, b&s, are so rare that they're invisible. A brother or a sister who can rise to that status in the truth, can rest assured, that they will be in God's kingdom and there's no doubt about that at all! Anybody who's prepared to

suffer for the truth's sake, to project the image of Christ into the hearts of his brethren and sisters, has reached the pinnacle of his hope. That's what the truth is all about, b&s, because that's what Jesus Christ did, He travailed in birth on that cross to project into the hearts of His people, not His own image, but the image of His Father. And here is one travailing in birth before the Galatian ecclesia, that Christ might be the one formed in them, and not him. When we serve our ecclesia with that spirit, b&s, a selfless spirit, agonizing in the service of the truth, dragging our tired bodies around night after night, day after day, in service of the ecclesia, that Christ might be formed in other people, we are in God's kingdom! We've reached the pinnacle of our hope, there's nothing more that people can do for that, than to serve God in that way, that's the highest form of service, b&s.

Oh, he says, 'I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice', you see, he wanted to change his voice, why did he want to change his voice? Well, there's no commendation in this epistle, b&s, rather the contrary, he called them 'fools'; he said they were 'bewitched', those are hard words! He said, I'd love to change my voice, but he says at the end of that verse, 'for now I stand in doubt of you'. The margin says, 'I am perplexed for you', and to use a more exacting expression, he says, 'I am at my wits' end, I don't know what to do!' Here he is like a father of that family, and he's using a family expression of travailing in birth, and he's likening himself to the father of that household, and he's saying to his children, 'Look, children, I've beaten you with rods, I've called you and told exactly what I think of you, immature, babes, fools, bewitched. Departing from them saying, I'd like to talk differently to my family, but I'm at my wits' end, I don't know what to do next!' And that was Paul's attitude towards them, b&s, and no doubt, on many, many occasions, our heavenly Father looks down from heaven upon the ecclesias of today, and no doubt, He could use that expression in relation to us; He desires that we might be His children, His Son travailed in birth, b&s, that God might be formed in our lives, but He must look down upon the ecclesias sometimes and say, 'I'd like to speak to you kindly, I'd love to give you encouragement, but I'm at my wits' end, at some of the childish things that are said and none in ecclesial life'. And sometimes you sit down and listen to some of the most childish dribble, you wonder, b&s, whether instead of taking bread and wine, we should get milk bottles to feed our brethren and sisters with, they're so immature in the things of God. We are ourselves immature, we need to wake up and grow up in the things of God, unless God would say of us, I'm at my wits' end with you! and that was Paul's expression here in the 4th chapter of Galatians.

Of course, being at his wits' end, he comes in verse 21 to the end of the chapter, to try and impress them that if they want to be under the Law, listen to what it's saying: 'Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman'. And he goes on to explain what he calls an allegory in verse 24; you would recognize in that word, the Greek word 'agora' allegory, and 'agora' was the marketplace (58), and the word 'allegory' in Greek literally means 'to speak in the market' (238), and of course, the

word is based on the practice they had in the days of the apostle Paul in the Greek marketplaces which were scattered throughout the world. You know, the parable of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the children in the marketplace, 'they piped unto you but you haven't danced, they have mourned unto you but you haven't mourned', and the children used to go there to play their little games, and the little games always had a significance, and they'd play out their little charades with its significances. So here is an allegory, a story that's told in the Old Testament that has more to it than just a mere story itself, the story of Ishmael and Isaac.

There were two boys and two women: the apostle talks about the Law, and of course, this is in Genesis, and of course, the Law comprehended, b&s, far more than just the Law of Moses. The Law was from Genesis to Malachi and back there in the Law it was written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bond maid and the other by a free woman. And we're all familiar with those two boys, Ishmael and Isaac: we know about the birth of Ishmael, b&s, and you know it's remarkable, that when Ishmael was sent out with Hagar into the desert for the first time, and she wandered in that desert, it's remarkable because it says, 'Abraham was grieved for his son' (that is Ishmael) but when the angel of Yahweh appeared unto Hagar and he spoke of that boy on several occasions, he never called that boy Abraham's son, not once did he call him Abraham's son, he called him 'the lad'. If you read through the story in Genesis you'll find that not once in that record, does the angel of Yahweh call him Abraham's son, he called him 'the lad'. Because he wasn't in that sense, Abraham's son, he was the child of the bond woman. And so Paul says this was an allegory; so Hagar had a son, who was gendered to bondage, and he in the allegory was he who represented Jews under the Law of Moses and under bondage of the Law. How apt, b&s, was it? that his mother should be an Egyptian? of course, that nationality spoke of the bondage that they held the children of Israel under, so there was the allegory, and he was born after the flesh. Doubly so, b&s, not only because he was born in the normal course of procreation, but he was a child of human schemes and the human schemes had for their motive, that they would help God to fulfil His promise. That God had got a little bit lax, (they wouldn't say that in so many words, but that's what is implied) and the time had gone on and things were getting dangerously close to a point where the promise couldn't be fulfilled, God needed a little bit of assistance. And if ever there was a story, an allegory of Judaizers, there it is! they believe God needs assistance to save them! There's the Law - you do it and I'll save you! and they thought they'd help God along in His work of saving us, b&s. That's what Sarah thought when she offered Hagar to Abraham, not realizing, of course, the tremendous agony that would be the result of that action!

But that is so typical of the Judaizers, and he was born by the will of the flesh, he was a child of the flesh. But Isaac was not so! b&s, as Paul points out. He says, 'Isaac was not so, Isaac was of the free woman and he was by promise; ah, dear, it's remarkable, and I'd love to take you back to that record but we haven't got the time to do that, b&s, but just briefly you listen to this! Abraham is aging and the time of the promise, of course, has not yet come. Sarah's aging and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of

women; she can no longer have children. This child is not going to be born of the flesh, and as time drew on, b&s, the spotlight of divine intervention shifted from Abraham to the woman. And when you think about it as Genesis 19 and 20 came along, and Abraham was told in Genesis 18 that Sarah would have a son, Abraham would think to himself, 'Sarah!' now the spotlight of divine activity is on that woman, because bounding around the earth, there was a boy that had come out of Abraham's body, but there's nobody on the earth from Sarah. Then later on, when they'd come to the door of Abraham's tent, and Sarah's behind her husband in that tent, and the announcement is made, b&s, and this is the announcement, listen to this! 'At the set time, says Yahweh, will I come and Sarah will have a son'; listen to that, b&s, at the set time, will I come, and Sarah will have a son.

What is God telling them? that the focus of attention is on that woman, and the focus of the action is on God. And so the time of the promise drew nigh, and this is what the record says, 'And Yahweh visited Sarah and Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken to Abraham'. It was all theory with the man, it was all action with the woman. And Paul picking that up in Romans 9 and verse 9 says, 'this is the word of promise, I will come and Sarah will have a son'; God sent forth His Son who came to be of a woman. Such was the allegory, b&s, not that Isaac wasn't the son of Abraham, but the attention and the emphasis and the focus was all on that woman, and the divine activity with her; He visited her, and He did unto her as He had spoken to Abraham. So there is your allegory, and Isaac truly was the son of promise!

The apostle says, 'it answers to the two statuses of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem that now is, is under bondage to the Law of Moses, he says, in verse 25; for this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children'. How can he relate Sinai with Jerusalem? because the Law given at Sinai, b&s, contained in its own context, the law that says that God would establish that Law in a central place in the Land which happened to be Jerusalem. So the Law of Sinai which gendereth children to bondage, was not operative in Jerusalem; but he says, 'Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all', and those children of God that are born in Zion, b&s, Psalm 87, born in Zion, the Highest Himself shall establish them, says Psalm 87 as it expresses that wonderful truth of our spiritual children, the Highest Himself shall establish them! And where do you find that word? when Gabriel came to Mary and he said, 'that which would be born of her would be called the Son of God; and he says, the power of the Highest would overshadow her, and there, b&s, one word lifted out of Psalm 87, God's power from on high would overshadow her, Jerusalem which is above is free; related to that which is above and the power of the Highest overshadowed that woman, and from her came forth, He who is God's Son, born of the free woman as Isaac was!

And in order that he might impress that he quotes Isaiah 54 verse 27, 'Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband'. You analyze what Isaiah 54

is saying, b&s, I'll tell you what it's not saying: it's not telling us that a barren woman who never bore ultimately bore; it's not telling us that a barren woman who never had travail ultimately had travail; it's saying that a woman who never bore children, who never, ever went through the pain of childbirth had children. It wasn't as if this time a barren woman has a child in the normal course of events, there is no birth, there is no pain, BUT THERE ARE CHILDREN. Where on earth did they come from? They're the children of God! and the children of the free woman.

And so he says in verse 28, 'Now we, brethren as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now'. When did Ishmael persecute Isaac, b&s? the record is very plain, it says, 'when he was weaned', and you see, when he showed the first signs of maturity, he became the subject of persecution by children of the flesh. And Paul's just been talking back there, about two lots of children, one under the Law who were immature, and those in Christ, who are mature; and those of us who have been weaned in the sense that we've come off the first principles as it were, prior to our baptism and have now been baptized into the fullness of understanding, we, b&s, are the children of the promise. And when they did that in the days of the Galatians, they become persecuted by those immature children who never came to that fullness of understanding. And that's what happened, when Isaac was weaned, Ishmael mocked him, and it's the same now said the apostle.

'Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman'. And when you go back to the record, they are the words of Sarah, b&s, but Paul calls them scripture, and if we didn't have Paul's comment, we may even be tempted to conclude that Sarah was extremely harsh; there was an article, b&s, that appeared in a Christadelphian magazine not so long ago, in which a sister wrote an article about the hardness of Sarah, an article which was unscriptural from whoa to go! Totally unscriptural! in which Hagar was presented as a spiritually minded sister, and Sarah as a hard-headed Jewish woman who didn't appreciate the principles of God. 'But what saith the scripture' is Paul's word, and the scripture are those so-called hard words of Sarah. B&S, she was right! she'd made the original mistake; it was her that had given Hagar to Abraham for a wife, but now she realized, b&s, the purpose of God according to election, 'in Isaac shall thy seed be called', she was right! So the bondwoman and her son were cast out.

'So brethren, said the apostle, 'you have your choice', 'we're not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free', and he leaves us brethren and sisters, with the implications, of course, that if we want to be saved by our own works, then we are immature; if we are immature then we're going to become a slave to our own opinions; and if we become children of the bondwoman, b&s, we will be cast out. But on the other hand, if we believe that in our lives, God will come, and He will do for us, what we cannot do for ourselves; that He has visited and redeemed His people, if we believe that, b&s, and are motivated by another power higher than ourselves, born from above,

then we are free, and if we are free, then are we the sons of that free woman, and when He comes whose right it is, who is the Son of God, to take unto Himself His own people, we shall inherit our Father's estate, b&s, and we'll be joint-heirs with Christ and we'll own the world!

That's the great choice that's set before us! As we therefore, participate this morning, in the bread and the wine, of the emblems of God's Son, as we masticate that, b&s, may I suggest that as a basis of our meditations this morning, we think about Him as GOD'S SON, really and truly God's Son, more, more real than the children that we might nurse on our laps. And as we consider His relationship to His Father, let us ever remember, b&s, that whilst our relationship with Him, never permits us to call God my Father,(we can't do that!) I can't and you can't, but in an individual sense, He can! but nonetheless, b&s, we have that privilege to call God OUR Father, that as collectively together, we are the sons and daughters of the living God, and we stand, b&s, on the very threshold of the day in which we shall inherit our Father's estate!