

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

The Gospel in Galatians
Lesson 8. From Slaves to Heirs

In Sunday's lesson the quarterly sums up Galatians 3:25-26: "In the same way that a master's son was under a pedagogue [tutor] only as long as he was a minor, Paul is saying that those who come to faith in Christ are no longer minors; their relationship with the law is changed because they are now *adult* 'sons' of God."

In ancient times, wealthy aristocrats were able to hire people to care for their children, thereby avoiding some of the more tedious aspects of child rearing. The pedagogue might have been a slave in the household, but during his minority the child was expected to obey his father's slave without question.

The pedagogue was expected to teach and mold the child into an educated, mature adult who had learned the rules of a very rigid and complicated society. If pleased with the results, the father would officially name the son as his heir.

In Galatians 3:19-25 Paul explains that the inheritance comes to us in Christ because God promised it, not that we gain the inheritance by keeping the law. Paul asks the question, "Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions. ... The Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in (the *King James Version* uses the better translation, "of") Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

Jesus alluded to this concept when He told Nicodemus that receiving faith, the faith of Jesus, requires us to accept our position in Christ as the second Adam. No amount of law-keeping could ever accomplish the rebirth the human race was given at the incarnation of Christ. The first Adam received his DNA from God and those codes provided the combinations that make up every human being born since. When he and his DNA counterpart, Eve, decided to rebel against God their very nature was changed, bent toward self-centeredness.

Whether this change was accomplished at the DNA level, we aren't told, but it somehow changed humanity at a level so fundamental that the self-centered nature was the only nature Adam had to pass on to his progeny. The solution to the sin problem needed to reach that fundamental issue, otherwise humans were kept in custody under a law they had no power to keep. Then there was the issue of paying the penalty for sin which is

permanent death. Obviously, divine intervention was the only thing that would solve these problems.

Brilliant in its simplicity, the loving selfless *agape* of our God would be united with the first Adam's nature (the altered one that needed redeeming). Then, humanity could be joined with Christ as "sons," and the sinless life He lived, the second death He died, and His triumphant resurrection could be imputed and imparted to those who believe through the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, there is a conflict in the present day church about whether Christ could have been incarnated in the "likeness of sinful flesh" and still be without sin. "It is interesting to note that the official declaration of 1872 on the human nature of Christ remained unchanged until 1931. At that time it was changed to express with different words the same basic conviction. 'While retaining His divine nature, He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, and lived on the earth as a man.'" [1] It wasn't until 1950 that our church changed this fundamental belief to what it is now.

"As our study will verify, the work of redemption can be explained only with the proper understanding of the divine-human person of Jesus Christ. To be mistaken about Christology is to be mistaken about the work of salvation as accomplished in human beings, by Christ, through the process of justification and sanctification." [2]

The issues debated at the General Conference Session in Minneapolis in 1888 did not involve the nature of Christ. Ellen White settled in her Christology as early as 1874 when she wrote, "The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer taking the place of fallen Adam." [3]

E. J. Waggoner did not attempt to modify or challenge Ellen White's position on the nature of Christ. "Waggoner's great achievement was not only to reintroduce the principle of justification by faith in the Adventist Church but also to apply Christology to the work of salvation. For Luther, justification by faith was purely a legal transaction. The Formula of Concord confirms this point of view: 'All of our righteousness is outside of us; it dwells entirely in Jesus Christ.' For Waggoner, on the other hand, justification includes the action of Christ in man to make him righteous (Rom. 5:19, KJV) through the power which God grants to him who believes in Christ and receives Him in his heart (John 1:12, KJV). [4]

It is essential to understand the process of overcoming, because Jesus has promised to all seven of the churches that overcomers will be granted the right to sit with Him on His throne. That is Christ's inheritance, and ours as well in Him.

The first few chapters of A. T. Jones' book *The Consecrated Way* confirms that Ellen White and Jones and Waggoner, the 1888 "messengers," were in complete agreement on the issue.

“Before the end comes, and at the time of the coming of Christ, there must be a people on earth, not necessarily large in proportion to the number of inhabitants of earth, but large enough to be known in all the earth, in whom ‘all the fullness of God’ will be manifest even as it was in Jesus of Nazareth. God will demonstrate to the world that what He did with Jesus of Nazareth He can do with anyone who will yield to Him.” [5]

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] J. R. Zurcher, *Touched With Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ*, Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., p. 48 (1999).

“See Fundamental Belief No. 3, *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1931). This same declaration was adopted by the Fall Council of 1941 and included in the *Church Manual* (1942), where it remained unchanged through various editions up to 1980.”

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[3] Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, “Redemption—No. 1,” Feb. 24, 1874.

[4] Zurcher, p. 73.

[5] E. J. Waggoner, *The Everlasting Covenant*, International Tract Society, London, p. 366; as quoted in Zurcher, p. 73.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/EhStl5Uecr0>

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