

Freedom from Bondage

Key Verse: “Now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”
—Galatians 4:9

Selected Scripture:
Galatians 4:8-20

WE ARE REMINDED IN our Key Verse of two important things. We have come to know God, and he likewise knows us. It is astonishing that God knows us. He is our Father now, we having been blessed by adoption into his family. Peter knew the importance of this fact, and said, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession; . . . you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

(I Pet. 2:9,10, *New American Standard Bible*) To this Paul added, “You are no longer a slave, but a son, and . . . an heir through God.” (Gal. 4:7, *NASB*) Being God’s children we enjoy great freedom, but that liberty requires that we leave behind our slavery to sin, self, and worldliness.

We recall the Israelites, who suffered terribly under bondage in Egypt. “Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery 2 God provided their release, yet, when adversity arose, Israel lamented for their days as slaves. When trapped between Pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea, they wished for the perceived security of Egypt. (Exod. 14:8-12)

Later, when weary of manna, they derided Moses: “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.” (Num. 11:5, *English Standard Version*) Although they were no longer slaves, they still had a slave mentality. We are in danger also of slipping into that mindset.

As noted in our Key Verse, the Galatian brethren were returning to “weak and beggarly elements.” Paul defines these qualities in the epistle of Colossians: “If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ . . . in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.” (Col. 2:20-23, *NASB*) This means that avoiding handling, tasting, and touching things as the Law commanded has no real value in overcoming carnality.

Ironically, some may find comfort in slavery, while finding the challenges of liberty to be intimidating. God wants us to exercise spiritual judgment in our behavior. Only by doing this will we develop into mature Christians. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Be not like a horse or a mule, . . . which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.” (Ps. 32:8,9 *ESV*) We love the Lord for his instruction and care. It is this understanding which keeps us near to him, not a bit and bridle.

A wise Christian once observed, “The Lord wishes us to learn, not as children, certain fixed rules, but as philosophers the fixed principles which can be applied.” We are not looking for a list of rules to obey, but an understanding of the mind of God to guide our daily lives. May we, by God’s grace, have the strength and courage to properly embrace our freedom from bondage. ■