

No Turning Back.
Galatians 4:1-11.
Sunday morning, July 4, 2010.

Thus far we have seen the importance of what we have called “the crossing of the continental divide” in the book of Acts. By that we mean the transformation from serving the Lord with the types and figures of the coming Messiah as the Covenant community did in OT times, to now serving Him through Christ alone who is in, and with, His people, and who is the fulfillment of those types and figures.

There is a personal application to this “crossing of the continental divide.” Take away the Spirit of sonship and the presence of Christ out of our hearts, and our religion is instantly reduced to outward forms; to legalistic approaches, and to carnal efforts, none of which can change the nature of our hearts. There must come for us as well a time of crossing the continental divide; a time where we leave the latter things alone, and we take Jesus alone as our sufficiency.

In this sense conversion was the same thing for Jew and Gentile. Both had to leave the outward, carnal and legalistic forms of religion behind, and turn to Jesus alone for their sufficiency. “Whatever things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ... and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Phil. 3:7,8.

Two pictures in the NT, painted with words, help us to internalize this truth, and to make it an abiding reality in our own lives.

I. The emancipation of a boy.

The cultures of those days did not recognize the age group of teenagers. All people were seen as children or adults, and there came a day in which a child “crossed the continental divide” of his life, and became an adult. Today’s Jewish Bar Mitzvah and Bat Mitzvah are the surviving remnants of these ancient customs.

Galatians 4:1-11 applies this custom to the spiritual realm.

- A. There was a time when we were kept by tutors and guardians which are called “elements, or elementary things” of the world. These were the OT statutes and ordinances which anticipated the coming of Christ.
- B. Then comes the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, and with Him He brings the day of emancipation. The tutors and guardians are sent home, and the Spirit of sonship is poured into the heart of this son by which he cries Abba, Father!
- C. He has gone from being a virtual slave to receiving a seat as an adult at the Father’s table. With that he has become a fellow heir and owner of the Father’s estate, which is the created order of this world.
- D. With this day of emancipation there came important changes. The boy put away childish things 1 Cor. 13:11, and he took upon himself the responsibilities of adult life, taking care of his father’s business, and preparing for the future of his own life.
- E. Following the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the gospel writers skip over the Lord’s remaining childhood, and the next glimpse we are given of the Lord’s life

comes as the Lord has turned twelve years old, has been emancipated, and as a man goes up with His parents to the three great annual festivals in Jerusalem. The Lord lingers behind as His parents return to Nazareth. They return after three days to Jerusalem where they find Him in the temple, reasoning with the Jewish leaders. Upon them expressing their worry over Him, He says to them: “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Luke 2:49.

Being about His Father’s business stands over against two things here:

1. It stands over against being about his earthly father’s business, as a carpenter in Nazareth, to which the Lord and His earthly parents were returning. In the course of this world, as an emancipated boy, Joseph’s carpentry business had become his son, Jesus’, business.

Here the Lord directs His earthly parents’ attention to the primacy of the call and claim Jesus’ heavenly Father has on His life in behalf of His business.

2. Secondly these words stand in contrast with the childish things, which, as a man, the Lord had put away. As an emancipated boy, life no longer was about serving and servicing His own desires. It was now about the father’s business.

Application:

By Christ’s coming into the world, and by your calling as a Christian, you have been emancipated, and you are given a seat as a son at the Father’s table. Practically speaking this is a “continental divide” issue in your life.

1. Looking back, you are putting away childish things. Life is no longer about serving and servicing your own desires, which is what children do, and are allowed to do.
2. Looking ahead, life is now all about being about the Father’s business, which has become our business since we have become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Life is now all about representing God’s interests in the lives of others.

Open their eyes to God’s truth and help bearing their burdens.

II. The emancipation of a girl. 2 Cor. 11:1-3.

Similarly to boys, there came a day in the life of a girl when she put away childish things and became a woman. She was not given a seat as an adult at her father’s table, rather her future and inheritance lay with the man she would marry.

As such her entering into life as an adult involved preparation for marriage and betrothal. Arranged on the groom’s side by a trusted friend or agent (best man), and on the bride’s side by her parents, this was a legally binding state in which the couple for about one year would prepare for marriage.

The groom’s father’s business and inheritance would become her business and inheritance by virtue of marriage, and during the betrothal period she would prepare to be the best helper she could be to her husband in managing that inheritance.

- A. The Lord Jesus Christ has inherited His Father’s business.
- B. We are seen as betrothed to Him. The wedding will be at the second coming.
- C. The danger cited in 2 Cor. 11:3 is that our minds should be corrupted from the singleness of purpose that is in Christ; being a helper suitable to Him.
- D. In the first illustration Christ is our Older Brother, in the second our betrothed husband. In either case we must own the “continental divide” that has come in our lives. This we do by purposefully taking our seat at His table.