

Galatians 4:19-31 – Cast Out the Bondwoman!
Community Group Galatians Lesson 9

I. Review Galatians 1-4

- A. 1:1-10 – God sent me to correct you from distorting the gospel by adding to it.
- B. 1:11-24 – My gospel came from Christ Himself and was authenticated by the apostles.
- C. 2:1-10 – Fourteen years later, my gospel was verified again by Jerusalem apostles.
- D. 2:11-21 – Even Peter and Barnabas for a short time fell from the gospel by adding a type of works-righteousness and had to be reminded that we are saved by faith alone.
- E. 3:1-14 – The gospel justifies everyone by faith in the promise, just like Abraham was.
- F. 3:15-29 – The law tutored us to faith in Christ and we share Abraham’s inheritance.
- G. 4:1-18 – You are His child and heir, and no longer under regulations of external control.

II. Have You Failed to Hear the Law and its Demands? 4:19-21

- A. *My children, I am in labor with you again until Christ is formed in you.* 4:19
Like when he led them to Christ, Paul feels like a mother in labor reasoning, praying and wrestling with them to stop being ensnared by the false teaching of law-keeping until Christ is fully formed in them (i.e., they are mature). Only use of “my children” in NT. His interest in correcting their error in their thinking about the true gospel is not only because it is correct. He corrects them because it has direct consequences on them becoming mature in Christ. If they think salvation is accomplished by a combination of faith and what they do, their so-called maturity will not be the product of faith.
- B. *I would prefer to be with you and for my tone to change with you.* 4:20
He had come in admonishment, though he would rather come alongside them to encourage them. He preferred to be present with them because he cared for them. The longing to be with them is also likely a reference to the point he made a moment ago about it being good to desire to be with those whom you teach (vv.17-18) – unless your desire for doing so is to cut them off from the truth. His desire for his tone to change is that he loves them and wishes to encourage. But since he must admonish, it precludes him from being able to do so.
- C. *As it is, I am perplexed: Have you not heard the law you want to be under?* 4:21
Paul can still not understand why they want to put themselves under the law. Did they not understand what it obligated them to? He does not give them details here, but his brief description of elements of it (observing days, months, seasons and years) was just the beginning. He is thinking of the hopelessness of being justified or put in good standing with God based on performance.

III. Abraham’s sons were a picture of slavery and freedom – why select slavery? 4:22-27

- A. *Abraham’s two sons represent two ways of living – by flesh and by promise.* 4:22-23
One (Ishmael) was born of a slave-woman (Hagar). One (Isaac) was born of a free woman (Sarah). The one born of a slave-woman is “according to the flesh,” reflecting “**that which comes naturally**” and reflects **imprisonment**. The one born of the free woman is “through the promise,” reflecting “**that which comes spiritually or by promise**” and reflects **freedom**. That contrast picks up more significance in chapter 5.

- B. *These two women, in an allegorical sense, represented two covenants. One (Hagar) represents Mt. Sinai (the place of the law), earthly Jerusalem, and a life under slavery.* 4:24-25

He does not mean, in calling these women an allegory, that they were not literal people. He means their lives carried a double meaning that can be interpreted by revelation. He says Hagar and her offspring are meant to represent the law and slavery to the law and earthly Jerusalem. His meaning is that all who live under a law (e.g., the Law of the Jews or the expectations and requirements of pagan religions) live under imprisonment. He is preparing the reader to see that this includes Christians who submit themselves back under the law, resulting in a life under bondage instead of under freedom.

4:26	Free Woman – Sarah	4:23	Bond Woman – Hagar
4:28	Isaac	4:23	Ishmael
4:26	Heavenly Jerusalem	4:25	Earthly Jerusalem
4:28	Children of Promise	4:24	Mt. Sinai
4:26	Free	4:24	Enslaved
4:29	Persecuted	4:29	Persecuting
4:29	According to the Spirit	4:23	According to the Flesh
	Faith-led Christian		Judaizer

- C. *The son of the free woman was, in an allegorical sense, representative of the future (heavenly) Jerusalem, and her son is free, a child of promise.* 4:26-27

Sarah and her offspring are meant to represent the promise and freedom from the law. They are meant to represent those who live by the promise and inherit the blessing. This is meant to reflect Christians who live by the promise and not by the law. Isaac is a “type” for the life of those who trust the promise. As such, he inherits the blessings promised to the father of faith, Abraham.

Let’s look for a minute at **Hebrews 11:8-16**. We see there how Abraham went out by faith, “looking for a city whose builder was God” (v. 10). But like other believers, he died “without receiving on earth the promises, but having seen them and welcomed them from a distance” because as an alien, he awaited a country of his own, a heavenly one (vv. 14-16, cf. 12:22). Similarly, Paul is enjoining the Galatians to live by faith in the anticipation of a future blessing which comes as the result of promise.

IV. Since you are a child of God by faith in the promise, you have more in common with Isaac, the child of the free woman. 4:28-31

- A. *You, brethren, are children of the promise* 4:28
 This theme has occurred in 3:7, 3:9, 3:14, 3:22, 3:26, 3:29, 4:1, 4:5-7. He wants to drive home that as children of faith, children of promise, they are heirs together with Abraham. Knowing and resting in their identity as fully accepted children of God keeps them from thinking they need to do something to establish their position.
- B. *Children of the flesh persecuted children of the promise then and now* 4:29
 Here Paul reminds us that Ishmael mocked Isaac (Genesis 21:9) and uses that as a “type” of those ‘imprisoned ones’ who mock children of promise. He is thinking of the Judaizers who are trying to convince the Galatians that Paul and others like him are not really worth following, because he, unlike them, is not living to please men (1:10).
- C. *God’s counsel to children of the promise: “Cast out the children of the bondwoman” as they will not co-inherit with children of the promise.* 4:30

Those who live by faith are to reject those who would put them back under the law. Cast them out – that is, invite them to leave the church in Galatia, leaving them back to the promises of God and His Spirit and the portions of His word they have access to.

- D. *Brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but children of the promise.* 4:31
He reiterates v. 28 but adds himself, to encourage them as to who they really are already, so they are less likely to continue trying to add to their status by adding works that gain approval by man but instead live out of what is already true. Hopefully that gives them courage to “send out” those who would bring them back under the law.

V. Discussion

- A. Discuss the idea of Paul being in labor until Christ is formed in them (v. 19). What does that mean? In what way has it been true when you have led/discipled someone else?
B. What elements of the contrast between Sarah and Hagar stand out most to you? Why?
C. In your own words, what is Paul’s message for the second half of chapter 4?

VI. Homework

- A. Read Chapters 4-6 twice
B. Memorize 4:31