

**THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS:
KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED BY THE APOSTLE PAUL
(Emphasis: How to Change to Be More Christ-like and Christ-centered)
Equipping Hour at Saving Grace Bible Church, Osprey, FL
(Lesson 5: 6/3/2018)**

INTRODUCTION

- We are continuing our journey through the Apostle Paul's Letter to the churches of Galatia -- in the cities of Derbe, Lystra, Pisidian Antioch (not Syria) and Iconium -- which are the churches Paul and Barnabas planted during their first missionary trip documented in Acts 13-14. Today we discuss Galatians 4.

PURPOSE OF OUR STUDY

To equip you to understand and address the key issues raised by the Apostle Paul to the Galatian churches. Why? So you may live more Christ-like and evidence Christ-centeredness flowing from your life and heart. In doing so, you may be better equipped to be able to teach others and present every person complete in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).

REVIEW: HIGHLIGHTS FROM GALATIANS 3 (LESSON 4):

Last week, we covered the majority of Galatians 3 by discussing how:

I. Paul Pointed to the Experience of the Galatian Believer's Faith (3:1-5)

Paul reminded them of their own life experience in the recent past by asking them questions: "Who has bewitched you? How were you saved: by faith or by the works of the Law?" Having begun your Christian life in dependence on the Spirit, are you now attaining spiritual maturity purely by means of self effort?"

II. Paul Proposed that Faith is the Blessing of Abraham (3:6-9)

Paul refuted the Judaizers since Abraham was the founder of their faith. Abraham clearly was justified (declared righteous) - righteousness imputed on his account -- how? Because in a moment of time when God enabled him to believe -- he trusted God which occurred and was evident before he was circumcised. Thus, Abraham was justified by faith, not works; the true children of Abraham are justified in the same way.

III. Paul Provided Evidence that the Law Condemns Sinners (3:10-14)

The Judaizers taught that the Law was a means of justification. Paul reminded them that the Law has a curse attached to it. Thus, Paul shows that the Law is a means of condemnation, and that it is the Lord Jesus who rescues us from its condemnation through the blood of His Cross.

IV. Paul Proclaimed the Promise of the New Covenant (3:15-18)

God made provision for justification to be given on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and also the gift of the Spirit to both Jew and Gentile, doing this before the Mosaic Law was given. The Law therefore cannot make void that which was done by God prior to the giving of the Law.

V. Paul Pronounced the Purpose of the Law (3:19-22)

Paul began this section with a very logical question that both the Galatian believers and Judaizers would likely have asked as the letter was read. If the Law was never given as a means whereby a sinner might be saved, why was it given in the first place, and for what purpose? Paul states directly that the Law was given because of transgressions -- the act of a person stepping beyond a fixed limit into forbidden territory.

VI. Paul Proved Justification through Faith in Christ (3:23-29)

The law did not teach a living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, especially by its sacrifices, it pointed to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. And thus it was, as the word properly signifies, a servant, to lead to Christ, as children are led to school by servants who have the care of them

so that they might be more fully taught by Him the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in Christ. And the vastly greater advantage of the gospel state is shown, under which we enjoy a clearer discovery of Divine grace and mercy than the Jews of old.

Sincere Christians enjoy great privileges under the gospel; and are no longer accounted servants, but sons; not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints as the Jews under the Law were. Having put their faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and relying on Him alone for justification and salvation, they become the sons of God. But no outward forms or profession can secure these blessings; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he. The putting on of Christ according to the gospel, consists not in outward imitation, but in a new birth, an entire change. He who makes believers to be heirs, will provide for them.

BACKGROUND: Galatians 4

Two key truths are emphasized in this chapter:

(A) vss. 1-18, Paul appeals to the Galatian believers in an attempt to convince them that they only need the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation and sanctification.

(B) vss. 19-31, Paul uses the Law to prove that believers are not under the requirements of the Law.

TODAY'S OUTLINE: Galatians 4

- I. Paul Explains Their Adoption (via Regeneration) into God's Family (4:1-7)
- II. Paul Challenges Their Regression from Grace to the Law (4:8-11)
- III. Paul Desires Their Affection in the Lord Jesus Christ (4:12-18)
- IV. Paul Presents Biblical Support for Christian Liberty (4:19-31)
- V. Takeaways for Your Personal and Practical Application

Attachment: A BRIEF COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TRUTHS IN ROMANS 4 AND GALATIANS 3

I. Paul Explains Their Adoption (via Regeneration) into God's Family (4:17)

In v. 1, Paul includes a comparison and contrast between a slave and a minor (or underage) son. So long as he is a minor, he observes, the child is no different from a slave – even though he is heir to everything. So, what is Paul's point?

Well, in v.2, an heir, as a minor, is under the same care of guardians and managers or stewards, and this state of affairs will continue until the time that his father set for releasing him from this requirement or bondage.

So, in v. 3, Paul emphasizes that prior to our coming to salvation in Christ, we also were enslaved to the elemental things of the world. The elemental things of the world seems to refer to those elementary life skills understood by a child – the basic principles such as basic arithmetic, the letters of the alphabet, and simple writing rules.

In the early church it was understood that these measurable relationships existed and were recognized between the parent (who wielded authority) and the child (who submitted to it). In it all, however, it is important to note that the time will come when the child will be set free from the restrictions imposed on him and no more live like slaves. Maturity comes in a proper way when one has endured the conditions of minority successfully; not when he has rebelled against them.

v.4: What time? The time set by the father (v. 2) for the son to emerge from the state of minority and come into his own. That specific time for God's people was when God the Father sent for Christ, incarnate – God in human flesh. Born of a woman and born under Jewish Law and its requirements, Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 4:15-16, I Peter 1:18-19; 2:22; I John 3:5) both in meeting its demands and by receiving its punishment in the place of guilty sinners (II Corinthians 5:21).

v. 5-7: He came to redeem those who were under the Law so that we might be adopted as sons. As sons, God treats believers fully as such (though adopted) through the Spirit poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5). The proof that we are sons comes from the instinctive cry of the heart. In man's deepest need he cries, "Father!" to God. Paul uses the double phrase, "Abba! Father!" Abba is the Aramaic word for Father (possibly Daddy).

II. Paul Challenges Their Regression from Grace to the Law (4:8-11)

In vs. 8-11, to help them see the foolishness of their ways, Paul first reminds the Galatian believers of their former condition of ignorance when they were enslaved by pagan idolatry (v. 8). Second, he draws their attention again to the knowledge of God which they now enjoy in their new relationship with God (v. 9). Third, he asks them why they are returning to slavery by observing the Law (vv. 9-10). Finally, he expresses his deep concern for them (v. 11). When You Did Not Know God (4:8)

Immediately after expressing the amazing truth that Galatian believers are no longer slaves but children of God (vv. 6-7), Paul contrasts what they are now by God's grace with what they were before they believed the gospel: Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods (v. 8). Those who by nature are not gods were the objects that pagan Gentiles worshiped as gods. They might have been stone or wooden idols made by craftsmen. Or they have been the mythical beings, such as Zeus or Aphrodite, that the idols represented. Or they might have been demonic spirits that enslaved those who worshiped these idols and mythical beings. But whether the gods of the Gentiles were carved idols, mythical figures or demons, Paul rejects their divine status; see Psalm 115:1-11).

The Galatian believers could also delight in knowing God and being known by Him due to a love relationship. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "The man who loves God is known by God" (1 Cor 8:3). In essence Paul is asking the Galatian believers why do you desire to turn to a system of slavery? (4:9-10)

It must have come as a shock to the Galatian Christians to read these words. After all, they had no intention of returning to their former way of life in paganism. On the contrary, they were attempting to make progress in their new spiritual life by learning and observing the Mosaic Law. Paul's words all over again raise the alarming possibility that turning to the observance of the Mosaic Law after conversion to Christ is actually comparable to taking up a pre-Christian position of pagan worship. Paul treats the change of direction in the Galatian churches as an extremely serious matter. He is deeply troubled and wonders if all his efforts in planting these churches will prove to be in vain.

III. Paul Desires Their Affection in the Lord Jesus Christ (4:12-18)

The apostle desires that they would be of one mind with him respecting the Law of Moses, as well as united with him in love. In reproofing others, we should take care to convince them that our reproofs are from sincere regard to the honor of God and their welfare. The apostle reminds the Galatians of the difficulty under which he labored when he first came among them. But he notices that he was a welcome messenger to them. Yet how very uncertain are the favor and respect of men! Let us labor to be accepted of God. Paul essentially says you all once thought yourselves joyful in receiving the gospel; have you now reason to think otherwise? Like Paul, we must not forsake speaking the truth, for fear of offending others. The false teachers who drew the Galatians from the truth of the gospel pretended affection, but they were not sincere and upright. An excellent rule is given. It is good to be zealous always in a good thing; not for a time only, or now and then, but always.

IV. Paul Presents Biblical Support for Christian Liberty (4:19-31)

By calling them little children, he both hints to them that he was their spiritual father, and had begotten them to Christ; and that they were as yet weak in the faith, not grown men, but as yet little children: and also hints to them, the tender affection he had towards them, which was the same as of a mother to her little children: though they did not own and honor him as their spiritual father, yet he loved them as his own.

vss. 21-31: Paul continues this general subject climaxing the whole in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, This is not to say that the story of Sarah and Hagar was not historical in Genesis, but only that the Apostle Paul uses the fact in an accommodated or allegorical sense for illustration.

The design illustrates the effect of being under bondage of the Jewish Law as compared with the liberty of the Gospel. Hagar and her son were treated with severity, cast out and persecuted, and became a fit representation of the majority of Jerusalem as it was in the time of Paul. Sarah and Isaac enjoyed freedom and sonship, and became correspondingly a fit representation of the New Jerusalem or the true kingdom of God. The heavenly Jerusalem, the true church from above, represented by Sarah, is in a state of freedom, and is the mother of all believers, who are born of the Holy Spirit. They were by regeneration and true faith, made a part of the true seed of Abraham, according to the promise made to him.

Which would these Galatian Christians choose: to remain under the freedom of the Gospel, or voluntarily put themselves into the bondage and under the yoke of Judaism? "The allegory is addressed to justified but immature believers, who, under the influence of legalistic teachers, "desire to be under the Law," and has therefore no application to a sinner seeking justification. It raises and answers for the fifth time in this epistle, the question: Is the believer under the Law?"

TAKE AWAYS FROM TODAY'S LESSON

Today we glean some takeaways to help us live more Christ-like and Christ-centered lives. In other words, here are some practical truths for you to apply as a result of this lesson:|

1. Prepare to give your testimony of God's grace and mercy in your life so you may practice I Corinthians 13:5 and apply I Peter 3:15.
2. Maintain an attitude of gratefulness to the Lord that you are no longer a slave under bondage to the Law and its requirements such a circumcision (males) and festival days, burdensome animal sacrifices, etc., but rather you are an adopted child of God who is free from such bondage and an heirs through God's grace and mercy.
3. Remember that when another is caught in a trespass, restore the individual in a spirit of gentleness, per Galatians 6:1-5.
4. As you disciple others in the faith, be mindful to teach them to be rooted, built up, and established in their faith in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:6-10) so they may apply the truth of God's Word (II Timothy 3:14-17). This is because many false teachers are promoting deception instead of the true gospel.