

Today we continue with our series in the Book of Galatians. Galatians is a call for freedom from the dependence on the Law for salvation. **As you read Galatians, look for two central themes:**

- The Law was insufficient to take away our sins and bring us salvation.,
- It is only through faith in Jesus that we can be saved and reconciled with God.

<https://virtualbiblestudy.com/lessons/galatians/2/>

The Letter to the Churches in Galatia is a passionate and heartfelt response of Paul to the young believers that he and Barnabas had witnessed to and led into a saving faith in Christ. Paul & Barnabas, more than likely, had baptized them or at least witnessed their baptism, helped them set up their churches and set up elders/pastors to lead the churches. Sadly, as we have discovered a group of people legalists, called the ‘Judaizers’ or ‘party of circumcision’, took it upon themselves to ‘*correct*’ the new Christians of Galatia and lead them to be what they would call ‘*true religious believers*’. This sadly mistaken group was very persuasive and successfully confused them over what Paul had taught them and ‘bewitched’ (tricked) them into thinking that that need the Law of Moses and the religious practices of Judaism in order to be complete and true Christians (a Jesus+Moses belief).

When Paul discovered that he had been undercut by these false teachers he was heartbroken & angry and immediately began a passionate plea to address the problem as an Anguished Father, to confront them with the Real Truth as a Freedom Fighter, and then to rebuke

and hold them accountable as a JAG Officer, Attorney of Truth & Grace.

Today in Chapter 4 (actually beginning in the last few verses of Chapter 3:23-29) we see Paul exhibit another side of his personality and passionate plan – we see him take the role of a Family Counselor & Passionate Pastor.

Paul begins to move from a more confrontational approach to a more supportive and family friendly focus. It is almost like he is calling a Family Conference to remind everyone of their place and role in the Family of God, as children/sons of God through Christ. His desire and prayer are for them to come to their senses and quit being foolishly ‘bewitched’ like a child being fooled by a magician, and to realize that they are ‘sons & daughters’ of God and choose to enjoy a loving relationship with God not with a religion.

You can sense Pauls’ passion and concern for these young believers to learn to experience God properly. Let’s break challenging chapter down and apply it to us today in the form of a prayer...

### **The Four Part Prayer**

- 1. Lord, Lead Us to Know & Love You as Father**
- 2. Lord, Show Us How to Walk in Your Grace**
- 3. Lord, Help Us to Accept & Trust Your Truth**
- 4. Lord, Give Us a Loving Passion for Your Purpose & Will**

(These 4 were adapted from Christ Centered Exposition of Galatians by D. Platt)

## **1. Lord, Lead Us to Know & Love You as Father**

***Galatians 3:23-29 & 4:1-7...<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed.<sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our guardian to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.<sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.<sup>26</sup> For you are all sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>27</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.<sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.<sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.***

***4:1-7...<sup>1</sup> Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything,<sup>2</sup> but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.<sup>3</sup> So we too, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world.<sup>4</sup> But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,<sup>5</sup> so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters.<sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba! Father!"<sup>7</sup> Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.***

The basic point is that the Galatians (and us today) need to be reminded that God is our Father, a Father who loves us and no longer sees us as slaves or immature children but as beloved sons & daughters. We have moved from **slavery to sonship!**

The Judaizers/Party of Circumcision/Legalists, were stuck in the Old Testament concept of the law as our taskmasters, guardians, tutors and slave master. They were trying to instill that same mindset in these immature Galatian believers. But Paul, sits them down at the start of this Family Conference and reminds them that God has set them free from their slavery and has adopted them as sons & daughters who are inheritors of the blessing of God through Christ.

“As long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all: Think of a wealthy ancient household, with a young boy who is destined to inherit all that his father has. When the boy is just a child, he actually has less day-to-day freedom and authority than a high-ranking slave in the household. Yet, he is destined to inherit everything, and the slave isn't. In fact, the heir is under the strict care of guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so: Now comes the comparison to our own spiritual condition. We are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26), and we are heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). The law was our guardian (Galatians 3:24-25), to watch over us when we were still “children.” The law's effect on our corrupt nature was to bring us into bondage under the elements of the world”.

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/galatians/galatians-4.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/galatians/galatians-4.cfm)

The Legalists were making that relationship with God about rules, regulations and works where we are ‘**Held Captive by God’s Law**’.

Paul reminds them that it is really a relationship of love, grace and faith, that will then lead them to live in a righteous and godly manner. **Rather than being** imprisoned and held *captive by God’s law* we are now “**Captivated by God’s Love**” (Platt. 80)

*Paul continues his Family Conference and our prayer is -*

## **2. Lord, Show Us How to Walk in Your Grace**

**Galatians 4:8-11 & 21-31...** <sup>8</sup> *However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are not gods. <sup>9</sup> But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak & worthless elementary principles, to which you want to be enslaved all over again? <sup>10</sup> You meticulously observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup> I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain. <sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the Law? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. <sup>23</sup> But the son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. <sup>24</sup> This is speaking allegorically, for these women are two covenants: one coming from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. <sup>27</sup> For it is written* (Isaiah 54:1)

***“REJOICE, INFERTILE ONE, YOU WHO DO NOT GIVE BIRTH; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE ONE ARE MORE NUMEROUS THAN THOSE OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.”***

<sup>28</sup> *And you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> But as at that time the son who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the Spirit, so it is even now. <sup>30</sup> But what does the Scripture say?* (Gen. 21:10,12)

***“DRIVE OUT THE SLAVE WOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE SLAVE WOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.”***

<sup>31</sup> *So then, brothers and sisters, we are not children of a slave woman, but of the free woman.*

Paul starts by reminding them that they were once slaves to false gods and religious practices. He then says don’t you remember that when you came to know the True God that you no longer were held captive by the false gods and their religious slavery and rituals. Then he lovingly, yet firmly scolds them for taking a step back into that old immature ‘childish’ principle by adopting the Jewish Law rituals and traditions. I am dropping down to verse 21-31 to follow the complete flow of thought (we will get back to the skipped portion later).

Paul gives them a Family History Lesson about Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael & Isaac. (vs 21-31). This section is in reality an allegory and typology where Paul compares the original ‘family problem’ with the current ‘family problem’ among the Galatians.

You may remember the story of Abraham and God's promise to provide a family heritage that would bless all the nations of the world. God promised a son would be born that would be the line of blessing. Abraham failed to completely trust God and His timing and decided to take matters into his own hands and put forth human effort to replace God's providential plan. He had a wife named Sarah, who had been barren and now was very old and past child-bearing years (or so he humanly thought). So, Sarah & he concocted a human effort plan to accomplish the family promise. Sarah gave Abraham her servant slave girl Hagar to Abraham to produce the 'promised seed'. This was an act of the 'flesh' and not 'faith'. A child was born, Ishmael and thus Abraham thought the promised 'Family Heritage' was done. But he was wrong. Later, God in His perfect timing allowed Sarah to miraculously conceive a child in her old age (90) and they named him Isaac. This was God's true child of promise and of faith. Sadly, Abraham's failure to follow God's plan and to do his own thing brought great strife and problems. (These problems and conflicts are still seen today in the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Arab nations.)

Paul then uses this story as an allegory to portray what the Galatians were doing when they sought to follow human effort and not trust in God's plan. Look at this chart from blueletterbible.com

<b><i>The "Ishmaels" – Legalism/Flesh</i></b>	<b><i>The "Isaacs" - True Christianity/Faith</i></b>
Slavery and bondage	Freedom
Ishmael: born according to the flesh	Isaac: born by God's promised miracle
Coming from the earthly Jerusalem	Coming from the heavenly Jerusalem

<b><i>The "Ishmaels" – Legalism/Flesh</i></b>	<b><i>The "Isaacs" - True Christianity/Faith</i></b>
Many children	Many more children
Persecutors	Persecuted
Inheriting nothing	Inheriting everything
Relationship based on law-keeping	Relationship based on trusting God

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/galatians/galatians-4.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/galatians/galatians-4.cfm)

Paul is trying to show them that they are acting like the children of the 'servant/slave' mother Hagar when they follow the legalism and human traditions, when they really should be acting like children of the true mother Sarah, which represents God's grace and mercy and will. Paul wants them to live as free sons of grace & promise and not slave children of the law.

The question for us today is, are you living in the freedom of grace or are you still trying to earn your way to God's favor by your efforts of religious practice? Let's jump back up to verses 12-16 for our next prayer lesson.

### **3. Lord, Help Us to Accept and Trust Your Truth**

***Galatians 4:12-16...<sup>12</sup> I beg of you, brothers and sisters, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong;<sup>13</sup> but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;<sup>14</sup> and you did not despise that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition, nor express contempt, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.<sup>15</sup> Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I testify about you that, if possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.<sup>16</sup> So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?***



It appears the Galatians at first were on target by living in grace and freedom and were loving and trusting of God. They showed that by accepting Paul's message of salvation and loving him as a beloved family member. They accepted the truth of God's Word and message and were living faithfully. But, sadly when the real 'enemies of grace and truth' came and spread their polluting legalistic doctrines they abandoned Paul and his teachings of truth. They turned their backs on Paul and his rebuke to them for their failure in their faith.

More can be said about this but the question for us is are we willing to accept and trust God's truth about us even when it shows our errors and failings? We must be willing to accept God's Word of truth and make the changes necessary to align with His will.

Our time is slipping away let's move to the last prayer point in this Family Conference...

#### **4. Lord, Give Us a Loving Passion for Your Purpose & Will**

**Galatians 4:17-20... <sup>17</sup> They eagerly seek you, not in a commendable way, but they want to shut you out so that you will seek them. <sup>18</sup> But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable way, and not only when I am present with you. <sup>19</sup> My children, with whom I am again in labor until CHRIST IS FORMED IN YOU— 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone of voice, for I am at a loss about you!**

Sadly, the Galatians were eager and passionate, but not about the right things. You can be sincere and passionate about something and still be wrong. Passion alone is not the litmus test for action.

Paul shares with the Galatian family and us today, as the family of God, what we are to be eager and passionate about. Verse 19 is the answer...<sup>19</sup> ***My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.***

What we need to be passionate about is Christ and His purpose, will and mind being formed in us. God's plan and desire for us as His beloved Sons & Daughters of Grace is to be like His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

**I want to close with my prayer for us today:**

- Lord, Give Us a Passion to be Conformed to the Image of Christ.... and
- Lord, Give Us a Passion to see Others Transformed for the Glory of Christ

And we can help that happen when we become **Powerful Witnesses of Gods' Good News Story, Motivated by Love and Empowered by the Holy Spirit.**

#### **The following references were utilized in preparation of this message:**

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