

## Galatians ch 4 vs. 21-31

The title of this morning's message; whose son are you? Paul has been showing in ch 3 and 4 the sharp contrast between law and legalism vs grace through faith and how it is in reality that we gain God's favor and a righteous standing before Him. Does it come by doing things just so, by acting a certain way, or dressing a certain way, respecting certain days and observing the meticulous details of the law? Or do we receive that righteous standing before God not through works of righteousness that we have done (because there's no righteous work that we can do in and of ourselves) but rather by the righteous work that Jesus Christ has done in that even though He knew no sin He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him? If we'll simply believe in Him for the work that He has done receiving Him into our hearts thereby acknowledging that our best efforts before God are but filthy rags, God imputes perfection to our account, the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself who was in all ways tempted as we are and yet without sin.

As many of you know that's the way that the Galatian believers started out, grace through faith, receiving the promises of God freely becoming heirs to the eternal inheritance of the riches of the kingdom by adoption as sons through Christ Jesus. Just as many of us start out in our walk with Jesus Christ, but they were quickly being swayed by these legalistic Judaizers and deceived into thinking that maturity in the faith came through obedience to the law even though that very concept of faith mixed with law stand in direct opposition to each other.

Unfortunately this same thing happens to many "believers" today, they fall into the deception of righteousness or even maturity through works as though having begun in the Spirit they're going to be made perfect or they're going to perfect the work of the Spirit in the efforts of the flesh. and In our last gathering we read where Paul was all but pleading with them to repent, to consider in the light of the truth of the word of God what was taking place in their lives. They were observing days and months and seasons and yrs, and yet we read in Colossians that all of the Sabbath days and feasts and Sabbatical yrs were all just a temporal foreshadowing of the reality of what we have perpetually in Christ. Col 2:16-17 *"let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."*

Paul said I'm afraid for you lest I have labored for you in vain. Delivering that faithful wound that a true friend would do, sharing the truth in love in hopes that they would come to their senses and turn again to Christ alone to raise them up in godliness rather than falling from grace by embracing the law. Notice vs 16 of ch 4 (read) have you ever been confronted with those people that make it so hard for you to tell them the truth because of the way that they respond? and It's as if you become their enemy simply because you love them enough to tell them the truth, and that's what Paul's addressing here. (Vs 17)

Again be careful concerning those people who seek your exclusive allegiance, it's their way or the highway, Acts 20 warns us concerning those men who will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. and These type of guys never want you to be around other godly individuals who might influence you in the truth, they seek to exclude you so that they can convince you of their ideals and get you on their side, in other words as Paul says here it's for no good, so that you might be zealous for them.

Now he goes on to tell them that zeal is good and even necessary, but it's imperative that that zeal be funneled in the right direction, towards those things that are good.

Vs18-19

You say hey, it's not natural for a person to experience labor pains for a child after it's already born and out there toddling around. That's Paul's point the direction that their headed isn't natural, their not growing more and more mature, they're actually growing more and more immature through embracing legalism instead of growing in grace. They're not progressing, they're regressing, instead of flourishing in the Spirit, they're floundering in the flesh.

Vs20

I know this is coming off harsh and I'd like to be there to reason with you softly and gently but I can't take any chances not being there to talk with you face to face. and This morning we'll see Paul's conclusion of his theological defense of justification by faith as he returns once more to the patriarch Ab. The man that these Judaizers and really the Jewish people as a whole had put so much stock into and they believed that by being of the physical descent of Ab automatically guaranteed them their place in the kingdom, and we may develop that a little farther as we go. But Paul in this particular text isn't near as concerned about who their father is as he is who their mother is.

Vs21

Now there's no way that I can know the vocal inflections intended in this statement, whether Paul was coming across in a bit of a ironic or sarcastic fashion, or whether he had a sincere desire to seek to unveil the eyes of the Judaizers. But I just have this feeling that he's being a bit sarcastic here or maybe even desiring to expose their ignorance in what they claim to have such a grip on. and When you consider the brutal affront that he issues in ch 5 which we'll see in a couple of weeks, I would venture to say that I'm on pretty safe ground in my evaluation here. Because he's just been pleading with those to whom he desires to see regeneration and restoration back to Christ, expressing the desire to be there and speak tenderly to them.

Now it's as if he changes that tone momentarily in order to deal specifically with the direct offenders. You see he's pleaded with the believers, he's reasoned with the believers and now it's as if he turns and says now, but as for you! You who desire to be under the law, that is anyone who desires to be held to the standard of law and legalism to seek to gain God's approval, don't you hear the law? It would seem to be a rhetorical question, the answer obviously implied being no, they don't hear the law. That is, they don't understand the fullness of what it (the law) requires in order to be made right with God. Because whoever understands the true standard of the law, has no desire to be under that standard and welcomes openly the grace of God. Remember that's the whole point behind the law, to drive us into the arms of our Savior Jesus Christ and to show us our need for grace through faith. and So to desire to be held under the law or legalism is to openly display your own ignorance of the law and what it is that God makes or thinks of our fleshly attempts to be righteous before Him. and What is it that the law says to us, if we could sum up the message of the law and what it demands of us, what would that be? Well we don't have to think to hard because the bible does that for us.

In Lev 19:2 right in the middle of God's articulating the law to the people through Moses God says to them, "*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*" Peter repeats this principal in his 1<sup>st</sup> epistle. So what is the summary of the law, what is it that God demands of anyone who desires to be counted as righteous before God by means of the law? Absolute holiness even as God is holy, not holiness on a prorated standard as compared to Jeffery Dahmer or Charles Manson as if God grades holiness on a curve. Like you're going to stand in line beside some serial killer in the day of judgment and God's going to look at you and say well compared to this fella you're pretty good so come on in.

We somehow think that that's the way it'll be, but Charles Manson is not the standard by which God expects our holiness to shine, it's be holy for *I the Lord your God am holy*. Whose standard of holiness or sacredness are we to be held up against, God Himself. and Not if we are able to do that one day in our lives which we can't even meet that standard for 1 second in our lives because there was sin present in you from the moment you were conceived.

That's what the bible says so you automatically lose, you're finished; you'll never be holy as God is holy on this side of eternity in and of your own efforts. But even if you could meet that standard by some stretch of the imagination for a minute or two even that wouldn't cut it because you would have to live in that state of holiness perpetually from the moment you were born and if you ever messed up even in thought or motive you would be hell bound. Jesus went on to summarize it just a little bit further on the sermon on the Mt. When He was explaining how you've heard it said this, but I say unto you this and was explaining how the law was never meant to govern the outward actions so much as it was the inward attitudes of the heart.

When you begin to look at the law in that light as we've done several times you realize that none of us have maintained true obedience to even 1 of the 10 commandments not to mention the rest of the law. We're all mass murdering, coveting adulterers right off the top, and then right after Jesus explained the intent of the law He said, *"therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."* What's the standard that the law calls for, perfection, not as man sees it according to the outward actions, but as God intended it to be in the heart because surely man looks to the outward as the bible says, but God searches the heart. We've all got that wicked and sinful heart, so what's the standard, perfection as compared to who, our heavenly Father.

What does the law say, what is its summarization holiness and perfection (and we could go on to develop the aspect of Love that the law demands but for times sake we won't) but the standard of all 3 is God our heavenly Father, and so knowing these things who wants to be under the law? Who can be holy as God is holy, who can be perfect as God is perfect, and who can love so unconditionally as God loves?

That's why Paul can say with such confidence, listen you who want to be under the law, you obviously don't hear the law, because the law doesn't say try harder, it says **be holy**, the law doesn't say be improving more and more everyday, it says **be perfect**, the law doesn't say be tolerant of people or nicer to people, it says **be as loving as God**. That's why the law is so condemning, because we can't do those things, to try to relate to God on those terms would do nothing but leaving you guilt ridden, striving, and alienated from God due to constant failure to uphold the standard.

Yet many Christians lead their whole lives striving through life, or sitting in silent despair, saying nothing and doing nothing because their whole perspective on relating to God is legalism and law. and Then they can't understand why they have this sense of failure and defeat all the time, that's what Galatians was written for, now he takes them on.

Vs22

So Paul is beginning to develop something with them here; the contrast of sons by flesh or by promise, now he's already illustrated the fact that God dealt with Ab on the basis of promise back in vs 15-18 in ch 3. Now he's going to develop that further by taking them right back to the scriptures and showing them how this correlated or was worked out even in Ab's own life, and what that means for us. To show us how the law differs so greatly from the grace of God in Jesus Christ, he says that Ab had 2 sons and of course he's in regards to Ishmael and Isaac. Now Ishmael was born by a bondwoman, Hagar who was Ab's and Sarah's handmaiden, Isaac was born by Sarah, the free woman not bound in servitude. Now in vs 23 he begins to narrow the scope even farther as his point begins to surface.

Vs23

He who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, what does that mean? It speaks of human ingenuity and human capability. In other words there was nothing supernatural about the birth of Ishmael, it had nothing to do with God. It was just Ab and Sarah's attempt to help God out in His promise, and let me tell you something friends that will always breed problems (no pun intended). The middle east is feeling the aftershocks and the ramifications of that choice even to this day thousands of yrs later, the Arabs being the descendants of Ishmael vs the Jews being descendants of Isaac.

But we find this account in Gen 16:1-4 *"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived."* Nothing supernatural about that, human ingenuity, and human capability, Sarai got this idea from the culture around her, it was an acceptable act in that culture that if you couldn't bear children, that you could raise one up through your handmaid. Again not God ordained or accepted or even really acknowledged in the divine scope of things, but man ordained and accepted.

You see time was passing, 10yrs had gone by and we're not getting any younger here Ab, she was around 76 he was around 86, but surely we can identify with that kind of pressure. We know God has spoken to our hearts, some time goes by and we see nothing happen and so we feel like we need to help God out a little bit, and what's always the end result; problems trying to do in the efforts of the flesh a work of the Spirit and sometimes the end result of that can be yrs of heartache and regret. But that's Ishmael's story, born according to flesh.

But he who was born of the free woman was born through promise who of course was Isaac. Isaac appeared or was brought into fruition only through God's capability and God's reliability. There was no other way possible for Isaac to be brought into this world, God had to show Himself able and faithful. and That's exactly what He did; Isaac was born out of divine capability and reliability. Gen 21:1-2 *"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age."*

We find that Abraham was 100yrs old at this time and Sarah was 90, the bible tells us that her womb was as dead and so God miraculously brought forth life out of death as a result of His promise. and That's what God is in the business of doing, bringing forth life out of death Eph 2:1 *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."* and He did that for you and me as a result of the Promise, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* and That my friends is a promise, but I'm ahead of myself, Ishmael was born of the flesh, Isaac was born through promise. One came about through the efforts of man, the other only by the miraculous power of God.

Vs24-26

Paul says these things are symbolic or your bible might say an allegory, now that's not to say that this wasn't a literal event because it most definitely was. Nor is it giving us the authority to look for hidden meanings in each account or every detail of scripture. We need to be careful to remember that Paul isn't speaking these things; this is the Holy Spirit giving direct revelation to Paul as to the spiritual truth's contained with in this literal event. So this is more than just an illustration that Paul is making, this is spiritual truth that's embodied in history, which I find very interesting

Leon Morris put it like this, it's *"a shadow from the eternal world cast upon the sands of time."* and Paul tells us that these 2 women stand to illustrate 2 covenants, the old and the new, law and grace, the law as seen in Hagar and Grace as seen through Sarah. For surely we would all agree that a child born to a woman of 90 yrs of age knowing the deadness of the womb would be a result of nothing less than the grace of God.

Paul shows how it's impossible that these 2 covenants can coincide with one another, it's law or grace and you have to make a choice and we're going to see what the bible says to do, but it's up to you to be obedient or not.

But Paul says here that the law gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar. What does that mean, in that culture the position of the mother, not the father determined the status of the child. If you were a free woman, your children were born free, however if you were a slave it didn't matter if the child's dad was free or not the child was born a slave, so Hagar gave birth to bondage. and He now correlates that concept to what happened at Mt Sinai with the law when he tells us (read 1<sup>st</sup> 1/2 of 25) and Paul may be making a play on words here because there's an Arabic word very similar to Hagar (Hajar) which means stone corresponding to the Mosaic tablets. But however you choose to take this expression it's clear that ultimately Paul is associating Hagar with slavery and he's saying that what happened at Sinai (where the law was given) leads to slavery not freedom. and He says that that corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, that is the one that was present when he was writing that was for the most part still upholding the legal system. and By submitting to the law you're accepting slavery instead of the freedom that's found in Christ, that's what Paul is saying here.

Vs26

The New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem our home land, the true land of the free Heb 12:18-24 *"you (that being you followers of Jesus the NT church) have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant"*

You have been registered in heaven through Jesus Christ being a citizen of the New Jerusalem

Vs27

The Holy Spirit here through Paul applying Isaiah 54:1 to this fact that God would do a much greater work through the covenant of His promise through Jesus Christ than that of the old covenant of law given to the Jews.

## Vs28

Being born as a result of the work of the Spirit of God even as Isaac was, Jew or Gentile if you are a believer in Jesus Christ then you are a child of promise and as a result you're free even as Isaac was not in bondage as was Ishmael. Do you see how Paul isn't making the big deal out of Ab being their father, because Ab had 2 sons, the question is whose your mother, of which lineage are you. Whose son are you, those who seek to uphold legalism are of the lineage of Hagar, Jew or Gentile, because these are spiritual truth's he's seeking to communicate. However if you've received salvation by grace through faith in Christ then you're a child of Promise and of the Spiritual lineage of Sarah and a beneficiary of the heavenly estate. You see the Jews put all their stock in Ab but you recall J.B. said don't think that you can count on being the physical descendants of Ab, God can raise up children of Ab from these rocks. and Paul tells us that the ethnic thing has nothing to do with it anyway, those who are of faith are children on Ab, what comes down to is who your mother is spiritually speaking, are you of the lineage of Hagar or Sarah. and The test is simple, do you abide in the grace of God or do you seek to earn Gods favor and approval through works performance, one is the work of the Spirit, the other a manifestation of the flesh.

## Vs29

There's a couple of parallel truth's that can be developed here that I feel that I wouldn't be doing the text justice to just fly through it so we'll try (Lord willing) to take a little bit of an in depth look at this vs next week.

## Vs30

When it comes to law vs grace it's kind of like the old spaghetti westerns, there ain't room for the both of us in this here town. One of them has to go and the bible tells us that when the new covenant was brought to fruition, the old covenant was to be done away with. The covenant of grace through faith being far superior to that of the law, John 1:17 *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."* and We'll comment (Lord willing) a little more on this vs as well next week.

## Vs31

So Paul concludes his theological defense of justification by faith, not law and as we've sighted so many times before Gal 2:21 *"I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."* Justification before God comes only in the person of His Son Jesus Christ