

## Galatians ch 4 vs 8-20

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the relationship between law and grace, and what it comes down to is legalism or liberty in Christ, Judaism or Jesus, slavery or sonship. and That's been the primary emphasis of ch 4 and will continue to be as we finish out ch 4 over our next couple of studies. How the law brings us into slavery, but through Jesus Christ we become the sons of God and joint heirs with Him of the kingdom, again not through works, but by faith through the Promise of God.

Paul has been explaining the purpose of the law and how it was to watch out over us, keeping us in check until we've received Jesus Christ revealing to us the sin in our life and pointing out to us our need for a Savior. But, "*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*" and It's not that Paul is arguing the validity of the law, it has it's place, but it's place is in the lives not of the believer but the non-believer. and We see this explained to us in 1 Tim 1:8-10 where Paul writes, "*we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.*"

You see the law is given to place mankind in check and to reveal to us the sin in our lives and make us all guilty before God so that we might turn to Jesus Christ and Once that's happened, we're set free from the penalty of the law, we come *out from under* the law because we are identified now in Christ who has paid our sin debt having fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law on our behalf. Redeeming those of us who were under the law (which is every person who has ever lived) that we might no longer be slaves of the law, but rather sons of God by means of adoption as we place our faith in the only begotten Son of God, (notice vs 7 of ch 4).

Who has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law in our stead and paid the penalty of the law for our sin, Jesus said that He didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Why, because we couldn't we were all spiritually bankrupt before God and unable to pay the fine that the law required of us. and So God "*demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

Jesus fulfilled the law, and how did He do that, (we've sort of touched on it) but #1 He fulfilled it by His life, as the perfect example of living out the holy demands of the law. What would a human life look like if it could actually obey or live up to the law? We don't have to guess, all we have to do is look at the life of Jesus Christ Jesus never violated the law of God, in John 8:29 Jesus said, *"The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."*

Now He regularly violated the traditions of the elders concerning the law and so they were always accusing Him of breaking the law, but He never broke the law. He vehemently disregarded tradition and the teaching as doctrine the commandments of men, placing them on an equal par with the law of God. and So He was constantly casting down the traditions of men, but perfectly upholding the standards of the law of God. Then 2<sup>ndly</sup> He fulfilled the law not only through His life, but also through His death as the perfect payment of it's penalty, the law would say the soul that sins shall surely die, the wages of sin is death. and Jesus paid that wage, redeeming mankind (all who would put their trust in Him) from its curse (read vs 13 ch 3). So in His life He fulfilled the law of God as the perfect example of it, and by His death He fulfilled it as the perfect payment of its penalty.

Then finally, and this is exciting He fulfills it by His living in us as the perfect resource for Christian living. You see Christ is the end of the law to everyone who believes, but not the end of holy living before God, God still desires us to live holy and righteous lives set apart and consecrated over to Him. and So Christ fulfills that standard in us as He lives in us by the power of His Holy Spirit, Him now doing in me what I could never do for myself, and it's by His grace being willing to live in us. Listen to this Rom 8:3-4 *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."*

The law is fulfilled in us as we walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. So this principal that the Holy Spirit can take the life of Christ and make it our portion freeing us from the law of sin and death that wants to drag us down in defeat every we time we walk according to the flesh. Which is what we do when we succumb to righteousness by means of works, so when we revert back to legalism, we're actually regressing in our walk with God and undoing the work of the cross. In essence repulsing or repelling sonship and embracing slavery and that's what Paul is seeking to explain to us as we continue on this morning.

Vs8-9

So when you were in the world, before you knew the Lord, you served those things that weren't gods at all, now with them he's speaking of idolatry, but for us whatever it is that's the master passion of your life, that's the god you serve. If it's Jesus Christ what an awesome thing, if it's anything else it's weak and beggarly at best. But prior to coming to know Jesus Christ we all had various things that appealed to us that drove us on and we served that (whatever it may've been) with a fervency. You wanted to be the best musician or the wealthiest man you knew or you were a slave to the golf course or the fishing scene or whatever. You served those things, which by nature are not gods, some people coming out of cults or witchcraft, things of that nature would go through all of these gyrations and chants trying to bring about some type of favor from the gods that they served. In bondage to rituals, (vs 9)

Now in the church we have people that dress in these flamboyant robes, and they swing these incense burners and go through all these various rituals claiming that it brings about the blessing of God upon their lives or their church or the people in their church. Returning to legalistic practices, desiring again to be in bondage. Now to narrow the scope back down to the direct context of the law that this is in regards to Paul says here (read 1<sup>st</sup> ½ of vs 9)

I Like how the Holy Spirit quickens Paul and he kind of rephrases his thoughts there, because the emphasis isn't so much on knowing God. In the respect of you can come to church all your life, get involved in ministry and do all kinds of things in the name of God or Christianity, but if you haven't received Jesus Christ into your heart and cultivated that personal intimate relationship with God then it's all a wash. Matt 7:22-23 "*Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*" Interesting how even though they've been doing all sorts of neat things they're considered as those who practice lawlessness, why, because Christ isn't fulfilling the law in them, He doesn't reside in their hearts, He doesn't *know them*. So the question to be considered isn't so much do you know God, but does He know you?

Leon Morris says this "The important thing in conversion is never what the new convert does, but what God does in that person. It is true that the convert comes to know God, but more exactly and more importantly the person has become *known by God*." But Paul says here that once you've become known by God and experienced the end of the law, which is liberty and righteousness in Christ, no longer slaves but sons by adoption. How is it that you could desire to be enslaved again to those weak and beggarly elements of the law? How could you get ensnared by relating to God on the basis of works of the law, which can only bring you under the curse and distance you from Him? When He relates to you freely and intimately as you simply abide in Christ.

This word “elements” is the same word we discussed in vs 3 speaking of the elementary principals, the ABC’s. They’re regressing from the power and richness of God’s grace in Christ to the weak and beggarly, elementary principals of the law. Heb 7:18-19 *“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”* In regard to Jesus Christ and This is the contrast that Paul is trying to illustrate, how they had everything in Christ, how they had been *“blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”*

But now they’re forsaking all of that for the sharp contrast of weak and beggarly elements, this is the Holy Spirit’s through Paul assessment of the law as compared to Christ. Weak and beggarly, the Judaizers were teaching that the law was a step in maturity as a Christian, Paul says no way, that’s deception it’s weak. How is that, because it can *define* sin, it can *declare* sin, or *reveal* sin, *show* a man when he is sinning and *convict* him of that sin. But the problem comes in, in that after the law has done all of those things, it can’t forgive him for his sins, nor can it strengthen him to conquer or have victory over future sin, it’s inherently weak.

In short, it might be easier to understand like this, the law can only diagnose the disease, but it can never provide a cure, thereby it leaves you hopeless and lost. But that’s all it was designed to do, which takes us back to the whole point of the law, to expose our wretched condition. Not to God because He already knows the shape we’re in. but to us so that we might realize our need for Jesus Christ that’s the whole point of the law. So they were giving up the power of the Gospel for the weakness of the law, the wealth of the Gospel for the poverty of the law, they’re abandoning liberty for bondage and power for weakness.

Now he speaks of some of the specific areas of the law that they’ve fallen prey to.

Vs10

Speaking of Sabbath days and various feasts, sabbatical years and things of that nature, all of which were simply a foreshadowing of Christ anyway. 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.”* and As we studied all the feasts and days of rest and sacrifices there in Leviticus and part of Exodus we pointed out and took note of how it all was pointing to and fulfilled in Christ. He was the fulfillment of the law and because of Him it’s not required of us, He does the whole thing, even in us by the power of the Holy Spirit as we mentioned earlier. and So by returning to the law you fall from grace and again seek to undo the work of the cross, that’s why Paul says here.

## Vs11

In other words, what was the point in preaching salvation by grace if you were going to respond by living your lives in bondage to the elements of the world anyway? They would be doing that even if he never said a word, he may as well kept quiet and not wasted his breath.

## Vs12

This kind of echo's the statement he made in 1 Cor 11:1 when he said, "*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*" and Every time I read something like this it makes me stop and think for just a minute. What would the world be like or what could we expect to see if everyone imitated you? If you were the model by which we all fashioned our own lives, what a convicting and challenging statement, and may God help us to come to that place where like Paul the apostle we could say hey just look at me as I look to Christ. Follow my lead and do the things I do, lead the life I live and you'll be ok. How heart provoking is that? (Repeat vs12)

Paul says become like you, even as I became like you, and this could mean a couple of things. Paul could be saying I became as a gentile, in other words with out law, free in Christ, you as gentiles weren't under the law in the same respect as Jews were. and I've entered into that freedom through Christ, so he's saying hey I'm living like a gentile don't you try to live like a Jew. Become as I am, live as you've been called, in the grace of God. Or he could be in reference to appealing to them on a level they could relate to in order to reveal to them the truth of the gospel as Paul often did, leave Gal for just a sec and turn to 1<sup>st</sup> Cor ch 9 vs 19-23.

## Vs21

Now this vs is very important, Paul wasn't saying "and to those who smoke dope, I stood in the circle and took a big old drag so that they might think I was cool and I used that as a window or an inlet or springboard to share Christ." He was never using his freedom as a cloak for vice; he's simply stating that if it wasn't sin he'd do whatever to share Christ. If you were a Jew and were under the law, he would speak of Christ over a kosher meal, if you weren't he'd go out on Saturday with you for pork chops if that's the only time he could speak with you. He'd meet you on your level as long as it didn't involve personal compromise of the gospel. Because you can never share an effective message from the position of compromise, when you seek to do that you get thrown into the stereotype of hypocrisy. He's simply stating that he understood the grace of God and he'd share Christ whether the setting was kosher or not. (Finish to vs23)

So this could be what he was in reference to when he said I became as you were, or maybe a combination of both apply either way, his emphasis is on them returning to their former state just as he is now, abiding in Christ through the means of Grace. and He says you have not injured me, that's to say it's not me that you're hurting by turning to these things, it's not because I'm offended that I'm pleading with you. Your injury is to your selves and even more importantly to the heart of God.

#### Vs13-15

Apparently it would seem as though Paul hadn't originally planned on swinging through that region but was more or less forced to because of some physical infirmity that he was suffering through. and So he sought to reside there while recovering, that's why he said I preached to you because of my physical infirmity. That's how I wound up where you were; now what exactly that physical infirmity was it's impossible to know. Some say that they think he had contracted malaria, others because of the reference to the eyes think that maybe he had fallen prey to an eye infection that was fairly prevalent in that region at that time which cause a constant swelling and draining of a pus like substance from the eyes. But we can't know for sure, and he says that that didn't cause them to reject him, because of how atrocious he was to look at, but rather they received him.

I see in this the grace in the sovereignty of God, in getting the Gospel to Galatia. You never know what it is that God's working through even the down times in your life, some people who are confined to sickbeds for their whole lives have the most powerful intercessory prayer lives bringing forth so much fruit that only eternity will tell us how much they were used of God. Some things we don't understand why they're allowed to happen, but we can never underestimate the sovereign will of God and the things He will accomplish in and through it.

#### Vs16

Boy can I relate to this as I'm sure many of you can, some people make it so hard for you to tell them the truth because of the way they react, and so they make themselves very unapproachable. Because they are disturbed and offended by the truth, but when it comes to the ministry, of which we're all apart of we have to open and yielded to godly direction. If we've been doing something for some way for years and yet we are exposed to the fact that it's really not biblical, we can't become all prideful and say well this is the way we've always done it, my grandparents and parents before me did it this way to. But if someone shares with you a more excellent way, a way that accords with the truth of the gospel we've got to be willing to repent and do whatever it takes to maintain intimacy with God. Because we may not have known better before but now we do, and the bible says that *"to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* But sometimes (and it could be in regards to anything) you feel as though you make people your enemies by telling them the truth, even if it's in a loving and delicate way.

Vs17-18

Paul is saying these guys have packaged up the presentation of their product real nice and it looks real tempting, but it's for no good. It's "the kisses of an enemy" the bible tells us that *faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful*. These guys want their exclusive allegiance, but beware of those people who demand exclusive allegiance; *you have to do it our way*. and They seek to exclude you from the body of Christ, Paul is saying here that they are being deceived, he's brought the faithful wound, but these guys are misleading them.

It's not that it's wrong to be zealous, zeal is a great thing, as long as it's funneled in the right direction. If you're zealous in regards to knowing and studying the word of God and growing in grace, abiding in Christ and cultivating intimacy with God. That's an awesome thing, but to be deceived into zealously courting legalism, thinking that it's advancing you in righteousness and favor with God is a tragedy. Because in reality you're progressively regressing the more and more you get entangled.

I don't believe so much that it's necessarily the experience of salvation that you lose, someone asked me once if people that regress into legalism, thereby taking away from the cross, in essence belittling the work of the cross, lose their own salvation. and I'm not certain that we could take it to that extreme because the promise of God still applies, works don't make void the promise, and if they've believed on Jesus Christ having received Him into their hearts, they're saved. But they've slipped in their understanding of grace, that doesn't mean that God's grace isn't there for them, it just means that they don't understand it. So it's not so much that they lose the experience of salvation (at least according to my present understanding as it regards to this specific example) but they definitely lose the enjoyment of their salvation seeking to find their fulfillment and satisfaction in their works. Which only appeals to the flesh and it can become a real bummer because one day you're on cloud 9 having lived up to the standards that you've set for yourself, but then the next day you don't hit that mark and now you feel all condemned and unworthy.

But the secret is that you were never worthy in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, that's why Jesus gave His life for you and for me, so is the experience of salvation lost in such a case? I don't think so; I've known some people in certain denominations that are all hung up on certain codes and things that they feel they have to live by. Be it something as simple as baptism, or the way you dress or not wearing make-up or whatever, but they love the Lord and I'm certain that I'll see them on the other side. But sometimes those codes seem to suck the life right out of them and it drains them both spiritually, emotionally and sometimes even physically.

## Vs19

Now when Paul calls them *his* little children, what he means by that is that he was the means through which Jesus Christ made Himself real to them, they were born again through his ministry. But the ironic thing about this vs is that birth pangs are over after the child has been birthed or born, it's not natural that they should be experienced all over again when your child is out there toddling around. Even so it's not the natural progression that they are making that they would regress to such an extent to bring about birth pangs again. This isn't the natural process of growth, you're not moving forward, you're moving backward. and Notice that it's Christ that he desires to be formed in them, he's not calling them after himself or wanting to make little Paulites out of them. He's pointing them on to Jesus Christ wanting to see them come into the fullness of the image of Jesus, he's not asking them to accept him, he wants them to accept Jesus and in doing so abounding in His grace, not law.

## Vs20

Now we don't know what this means exactly because when something is in writing we don't hear the vocal inflections. We automatically assume for the most part, that he wants to turn up the heat another degree and really put them in their place. But after studying this I'm not certain that that's the case. I think that maybe he'd rather change his tone from the hard-core straight forward manner that he feels impressed to use now to a softer more compassionate tone. But he feels compelled to write in this manner because he's not sure what's going on, in other words look I'm coming across harsh and I know it. I'd like to be there to see you face to face so that we could tenderly discuss these things, but I'm forced to shoot brutally straight because I have my doubts as to where you're at. and Not being there to discern it face to face, I'm taking no chances. and Then Paul goes on, which we'll see Lord willing in our next gathering, to confront with those who are troubling the Galatians with this doctrine of legalism. In order to show them what the scriptures say about how to deal with law and legalism which is efforts in the flesh.