

# Galatians 4 - Law vs Grace; The Blessings of Sonship; Allegory of Sarah & Hagar

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## Galatians 4

(2) Doctrine illustrated (4:1-31)

Paul will now provide three illustrations of the doctrine he outlined in chapter 3.

(A) Domestic: Guardian (4:1-11)

(a) Law: preparation for sonship (4:1-3)

1 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,

1 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,

1 Now what I am saying is this: As long as an heir is a child, he is no better off than a slave, even though he owns everything.

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

- A child who was under the tutelage of a *paidagōgos* was essentially treated no different than a household slave

— To illustrate the spiritual immaturity of those who lived under the Mosaic Law, Paul reminds the Galatian believers of certain characteristics of an heir as a minor child

2 but he is under **guardians and managers until** the date set by the father.

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

2 Instead, he is placed under the care of guardians and servant managers until the time set by the father.

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

- "...guardians and managers" - a reference to the *paidagōgos* that Paul talked about in 3:24-25 (although he used different Greek words here)

— A *paidagōgos* was a teacher or supervisor of young boys, hired by their parents, to preside over the child's learning and maturity. They could be a strict disciplinarian, often resorting to scolding and whipping, just like a disobedient slave.

— They also controlled the child's inheritance, which is why Paul references that a child/heir does not differ from a slave before the reach the age of maturity (v1). When the child was under the care of the *paidagōgos*, he was treated no different than a slave.

- "...until" - the relationship between the child and the *paidagōgos* was never intended to be permanent; the relationship changed once the child became mature

3 So we too, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

3 It was the same way with us. While we were children, we were slaves to the basic principles of the world.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

- Paul is building an analogy between the *paidagōgos* and the Mosaic Law...

- The Law "shut us up" under sin (Cf 3:22-23); it revealed to us the reality of our sin nature because the more I understand the Law of God, the more I tend to want to break the Law, demonstrating that there is something wrong with me, and thus see my need for redemption.

- The Law gives us an incentive to trust Christ, yet it had no power to forgive our sins. The Law makes me aware that I'm a sinner, but it doesn't do anything to fix the problem.

- Thus, Paul says that in our relationship to the Law, we were "held in bondage"...constantly reminded of our sin nature, but never given a solution to the problem.

- The *Toga Virilis* ceremony (Cf. 3:25) represents the time when we trusted in Christ, and consequently the righteousness of Christ, that I cannot obtain by performance under the Law, was now available to me in the Person of Jesus Christ. The righteousness that I could not achieve on my own was now given to me.

- Paul is explaining that this relationship that we had with the Law (the *paidagōgos*) has now prepared us for sonship

(b) Christ: source of sonship (4:4-5)

(i) God sent forth His Son (4:4)

4 But when **thefullness of the time** came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

4 But when the appropriate time had come, God sent his Son, born by a woman, born under the Law,

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

- God sent His Son to offer us sonship...

- "...the fullness of the time" - *chronos*, chronology; Jesus showed up according to a divine timetable

- And He sent His Son when geo-political conditions were right (Greek language; Roman occupation & infrastructure)

(ii) In order to (4:5):

(a) Redeem those under the Law

(b) Adoption

5 so that He might **redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons and daughters.**

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

5 in order to redeem those who were under the Law, and thus to adopt them as his children.

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

- The purpose of God sending His Son at the exact right time...

- "...redeem those who were under the Law" - to *permanently* redeem us (as opposed to the sacrificial system, which simply kicked the can of sin down the road)

— He redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Cf. 3:13-14)

- "...that we might receive the adoption as sons *and daughters*" - we are no longer treated as a slave in the household, but have moved into the realm of sonship

Rom 8:17: and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

(c) Spirit: confirmation of sonship (4:6)

6 Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, **"Abba! Father!"**

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

6 Now because you are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts to cry out, "Abba! Father!"

**6** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

- If I'm a son, what sign or proof do I have of this change?

— The moment I trusted in Christ, my entire identity changed...I instantaneously became a son, with full inheritance rights from the Father

— I used to be a slave, held in bondage under the Law, but in an instant, at the point of faith in Christ, I am promoted to a son

— The sign/proof that I have of this change, of this promotion, is the indwelling Spirit of God in me.

- The moment a person trusts in Christ, by faith, is the moment the Spirit of God comes to live inside of you and changes you from the inside out. The Law could only change our behavior, it couldn't change our heart. But through Spirit indwelling, God takes His Law and writes it in our hearts so that we have an inner compulsion to please God.

— We are no longer looking at the 10 Commandments as something to obey, they are written in our hearts, which gives us an inner compulsion to keep them and please God  
- "...Abba! Father!" - the Spirit of God living inside of us gives us the ability to cry out to Him; it's a connection of intimacy with God the Father  
— The Holy Spirit living inside of us connects us with God the Father in intimacy, in the same way that Jesus Christ is connected to the Father

(d) Our new position: consummation of sonship (4:7)

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

7 So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if you are a child, then you are also an heir because of what God did.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- Once we have this new position in our relationship with Christ, our sonship with God the Father is realized

- Because of the fact of sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, executed at the exact right time in history, and through the power of the Holy Spirit who is resident inside of us, we have been transformed from a slave to a son

— And because we are sons, we are also heirs to the Father's estate

— Do I consider my sonship and the fact that I'm an heir to the Father's estate when I pray?

Do I consider the fact that God allows me to call Him "Daddy"? Do I understand the intimate relationship that I can have with the Father, made possible solely through the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ?

*When a sinner trusts Christ and is saved, as far as their condition is concerned, he is a "spiritual babe" who needs to grow (1 Peter 2:2-3); but as far as his position is concerned, he is an adult son who can draw on the Father's wealth and who can exercise all the wonderful privileges of sonship. [Wiersbe]*

(e) Hold fast: obligation of sonship (4:8-11)

(i) Before conversion (4:8)

**8** However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are not gods.

**8** However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

**8** However, in the past, when you did not know God, you were slaves to things that are not really gods at all.

**8** Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

- We now get the responsibilities we have with our new position; the more privileges one receives, the more responsibility one is given

- Our responsibility is to "hold fast" to the privilege of sonship; don't allow anyone to talk you out of who you are

- Before we came to Christ, we did not know God and we were slaves to the Law; that same Law sat in judgment of my actions and my attitudes, perpetually condemning me and never actually helping me with my sin problem

- Essentially, we were slaves to that which was not God. The Law was created by God, but it was not God, so we were a slave to something that was not God.

(ii) After conversion (4:9)

9 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 and worthless elementary principles, to which you want to be enslaved all over again?

9 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 and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

9 But now that you know God, or rather have been known by God, how can you turn back again to those powerless and bankrupt basic principles? Why do you want to become their slaves all over again?

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or are rather known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

- After I come to faith in Christ, I know God and I am known by God. This is speaking of a personal relationship with God.

- This is what the phrase "Abba! Father!" (Cf. v6) is communicating. This is what sonship is communicating. I have a personal relationship with God Himself, I have the Holy Spirit indwelling me, I am no longer a slave but a son, and as a son, I'm also an heir.

- Before I came to Christ, I had none of these things (v8), but after I came to Christ, after my *Toga Virilis* ceremony (Cf. 3:25; 4:3), I have all of these blessings

- The Galatians had been deceived that they had to move back under the Law in order to have a relationship with Christ. Paul says that when you do that, you're turning back to something weak, something worthless, something elemental, something that will put you back under slavery/bondage.

- The power that the Galatians had in the Christian life came through faith alone in Christ alone, not through obedience to the Law

- Paul calls the Law "weak," "worthless," and "elementary"...it's not that the Law was bad, it was actually a very good thing because it came from God. The Law of God has a purpose and a role, which was to reveal to us our sin nature and drive us to reach out to the grace of God through the provision of Jesus Christ.

— So while the Law played a role, it had a good purpose, the Law of God becomes a curse if it is taken beyond the reason God gave it. If you start looking at the Law as a ticket to heaven through obedience, you've fallen under the curse of the Law.

— The Law of God had a purpose, yet it could never forgive sins permanently; the best it offered was a temporary covering of sin. The Law of God revealed our problem, yet it never solved the problem for us.

Titus 3:5: He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

#### (iii) Law described (4:10)

10 You meticulously observe days and months and seasons and years.

10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

10 You are observing days, months, seasons, and years.

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

- The Law governed every aspect of a person's life, right down to their calendar (Cf. Lev 23). Under the influence of the Judaizers, the Galatians had begun to observe the Mosaic calendar.

— They observed these special times, thinking that they would thereby gain additional merit before God. But Paul had already made it clear that works could not be added to faith as grounds for either justification or sanctification (Cf. Col. 2:16-17).

— Paul does not object to these observances, for he kept them himself as a Jew (Cf. 1 Cor 16:8; Acts 20:16). However, he did so voluntarily, not to satisfy divine requirements. His objection was of Gentiles taking them as a means of salvation.

#### (iv) Paul's fear (4:11)

11 I fear for you, that **perhaps I have labored over you in vain.**

11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

11 I am afraid for you! I don't want my work for you to have been wasted!

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

- Paul suffered to get the gospel to these Galatians, and now he's worried that he might have gone through too much trouble on their behalf because of their stupid turn from what he taught to the doctrine of the Judaizers/Pharisees

— One example is in Acts 14:19-20, where Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city, thought to be dead. While other disciples were standing around him, he got up, entered the city again, and the next day left for Derbe.

— So as Paul looks at these Galatian believers and how they were moving back into the pharisaical system, he looks at them while thinking how much trial and tragedy he endured to get the gospel to them, only for them to forsake it so quickly

— Now that they were sons and heirs in Christ, with the Holy Spirit inside of them, no longer elemental but now sophisticated, they are returning right back to the same system they were delivered from

- "...perhaps I have labored over you in vain" - why was Paul so hard on himself? At least he preached the gospel to them and they were saved. They are going to heaven, they are sons and heirs of Christ, whether they believe it or not, and they will be ushered into heaven when they die.

— The reason why Paul was so hard on himself is because to Paul, sanctification was just as important as justification

— We have a mindset today in the church that if we can just get the gospel to people, get them saved, we have done our job. But Paul is writing to people who received the gospel, they were saved and going to heaven, yet they are getting cut short in the realm of their sanctification, so Paul says he's worried that he completely wasted his time and effort on them.

— We need to think about salvation the way Paul thought of salvation. Justification by faith alone, as wonderful as it is, is just the beginning. Once a person is justified, God moves them right into the sanctification phase of their salvation, where He wants us to live godly lives through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

— Paul says that if a believer is not going to grow up in Christ, make progress in the second tense of their salvation, then he has wasted his time, even though his readers were headed for heaven. Paul looked at sanctification as just as precious a commodity as justification.

1 John 2:19: They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be evident that they all are not of us.

*The Galatians were dropping out of the school of grace and enrolling in the kindergarten of Law.* [Wiersbe]

#### (B) Personal (4:12-20)

In Paul's second illustration, he reflects on his relationship with these Galatians while he was with them (background: Acts 13-14). His point is that while he was with them, the



Galatians loved him and would have done anything for him. But now, when I'm countering the Judaizer's doctrine of sanctification by works of the Law, now I'm your enemy. How did I go from being loved by you while I was there, to being an enemy now?

(a) Paul's appeal (4:12a)

(b) Paul's remembrance (4:12b-16)

**12** 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**;

**12** I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong;

**12** I beg you, brothers, to become like me, since I became like you. You did not do anything wrong to me.

**12** Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.

- "...brothers *and sisters*" - "brethren"; Paul is not talking to unbelievers here, but to brothers and sisters in Christ

- "...become as I *am*" - why does Paul tell the Galatians to become like him? Because no one knows the transition from legalism to the grace of God than Paul (Cf. Phil 3:4-6).

— Before Paul came to Christ, he was a professional at keeping the Law. He performed under the power of the flesh to please God like no one in his generation had ever done. And he was very proud of himself for doing so.

— But then there came a transition in his life (Cf. Phil 3:7-9). After Paul was saved, he began to live by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law. He became aware that no level of righteousness performed in the flesh was pleasing to God, but instead he needed the righteousness from God, which only comes through faith in Christ.

— Phil 3:9: and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith,

— This explains why Paul is so passionate about refuting legalism...for much of his life, he was trapped in the throws of legalism, attempting to please God by keeping the Law. And as he sees these newly converted Galatians heading for the same dark path that he was once on himself, he can't help but to cry out to them, to keep them from making the same mistake that he once made.

— Paul begs them to become like him, someone who woke up and rejected legalism and instead embraced the grace of God

- "...I also *have become* as you *are*" - there were a couple doctrinal issues that Paul would never budge an inch on:

— Paul would vehemently contest any doctrine that mixed the Mosaic Law or faith in Christ with anything else. If someone mixed faith with something else in order to join the church,

Paul would contest that. If someone mixed faith with something else in order to grow as a Christian, Paul would contest that. Paul stood by the doctrine of faith alone in Christ alone without compromise.

— But on other (lesser) issues that might irritate or offend someone, Paul would submit. He submitted because he wanted the opportunity to preach the gospel to people unabated (Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22).

— If someone Paul was ministering to had a hang up with one portion in the Law, Paul would submit himself to that thing in order to have the opportunity to preach the gospel. He wouldn't do it to get saved, nor would he do it in order to grow in his faith in Christ, he would do it avoid an unnecessary offense.

— Paul is saying here that while he was with them, he emptied himself of every possible offense that may have irritated or offended the Galatians, in order to preach the gospel to them unabated. He submitted himself to every one of their legal "hangups" so that he could have their full attention when he presented the gospel to them.

- "...You have done me no wrong" - Paul now sparks their remembrance of what it was like while he was with them on his first missionary journey

- In v12b-14b,15b Paul recounts what the Galatians had done for him while he was with them:

- While Paul was with them, they didn't not try to stop him or thwart his ministry in any way (v12b)
- The Galatians did not despise Paul despite his illness (v13-14)
- The Galatians were willing to sacrifice for Paul (v15b)

1 Cor 9:20-21:

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, *I became* as *one* under the Law, though not being under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law;

21 to those who are without the Law, *I became* as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law.

13 but you know that it was because of a **bodily illness** that I preached the gospel to you the **firsttime**;

13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

13 You know that it was because I was ill that I brought you the gospel the first time.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

- Paul sought to touch their hearts by reminding them of those earlier days when he came to Antioch in Pisidia, and to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe—all these were Galatian cities.
- He came not with pomp and ceremony, nor to profess authority over them, but lowly, preaching Christ crucified (Cf. 2 Cor 12:9)
- Whatever his infirmity, the Galatians did not treat Paul with contempt or scorn as a weak messenger, but rather received him as one would receive an angel or even Christ Jesus Himself
- "...bodily illness" - the "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10)? Many scholars believe so.
- If the prosperity gospel/positive confession movement is right, Paul must not have known how to access his privileges as a child of God, or he didn't have enough faith, or maybe he had unconfessed sin in his life.
- "...first time" - a reference to Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
- Paul is simply recounting how the Galatians initially reacted to Paul the first time he preached the gospel to them

14 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*.

14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*.

14 Even though my condition put you to the test, you did not despise or reject me. On the contrary, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, or as if I were the Messiah Jesus.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

- Paul now describes how the Galatians treated him in spite of his bodily illness

- Paul had this bodily limitation, yet the Galatians did not hold that against him and instead loved him

- "...received me as an angel of God" - in fact, the Galatians didn't just receive Paul, they got a little carried away and began at one point to worship him (Cf. Acts 14:8-15)

15 **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.

15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

15 What, then, happened to your positive attitude? For I testify that if it had been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

- Paul describes the Galatians' attitude toward him while he was there, stating that if they could, they would pluck out their own eyes and given them to Paul
- "Where then is that sense of blessing you had?" - it was at most one year between Paul's first missionary journey through Galatia and his writing of this epistle. Paul is shocked at how quickly these Galatians retreated from the love they had for him, to Paul being their enemy (v16).
- "...torn out your eyes " - this verse has led many to believe that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was related to his eyesight. Others says that this reference to plucking out their eyes is just hyperbole (Jesus used the same hyperbole in Matt 5:29).

16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

16 So have I now become your enemy for telling you the truth?

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

- Paul calls out their foolishness by pointing out their very different views of Paul, within a relatively short timeframe

— When Paul was with them, they showed him nothing but love, they overlooked his disgusting illness, and they would've done anything for him. But just a year later, Paul became their enemy.

— And what was the reason for this rapid change of mind on the part of the Galatians? What exactly was Paul's crime against the Galatians? Telling them the truth.

— Paul's crime is that he loved them so much that he didn't want to see them backslide into legalism. Paul had been down the path of legalism and knew exactly what it was like, and he didn't want to see these Galatians follow that same path because nothing good would come out of it.

(c) Paul's warning (4:17-18)

17 **They eagerly seek you**, not in a commendable way, but they want to shut you out so that you will seek them.

17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

17 These people who have been instructing you are devoted to you, but not in a good way. They want you to avoid me so that you will be devoted to them.

**17** They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

- "They" - the Judaizers/Pharisees who had infiltrated the churches of Galatia and were teaching the principles of legalism, in an attempt to get Christians back under the idea of performance and the Mosaic Law in order to grow in Christ

- "...eagerly seek you" - the Galatians were being courted by these Judaizers
- Their motives were not commendable in any sense, out of any genuine concern for the Galatian believers, but rather their motives were self-serving, desiring to use these believers to add to their own following and purposes
- Paul is helping us understand how to decipher a true shepherd and a false shepherd:
  - A true shepherd always sacrifices for his flock. A true shepherd will always put his own needs on hold for the sake of the flock. A true shepherd desires to sacrifice for his flock (Cf. Matt 9:36; Luke 15:4-5).
  - A false shepherd always wants to use the people of God to promote himself or his interests. They don't sacrifice their interests for the flock, they use and manipulate the flock to further their own purposes (Cf. Matt 23:15; Acts 20:30; 2 Peter 2:3). The most stinging indictment of false shepherds in Scripture is in Ezek 34:1-10.

18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable way, and not only when I am present with you.

18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

18 (Now it is always good to be devoted to a good cause, even when I am not with you.)

18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

- Paul approved of other ministers who came to the Galatians with sincere motives. He was not jealous or territorial with them at all, but welcomed them, so long as their motives were sincere and they preached the truth.

— Paul endorsed the ministry of Apollos (1 Cor 3:6)

#### (d) Paul's desire (4:19-20)

19 **My children**, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

19 My children, I am suffering birth pains for you again until the Messiah is formed in you.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

- "My children" - an indication that Paul is writing to a saved audience; he wouldn't call unbelievers his "[spiritual] children"

- Paul saw himself as a woman in labor, in great pain, completely focused on their sanctification, until the time when Christ would be formed in them. The Galatians did not have a justification issue (they were already saved), they had a sanctification issue (they were not growing in Christ).

— Paul says I gave birth to you once, now I'm going to have to go through the whole birthing process again, not because they somehow lost their salvation, but because their

growth in Christ had been sidetracked and hoodwinked due to legalism.

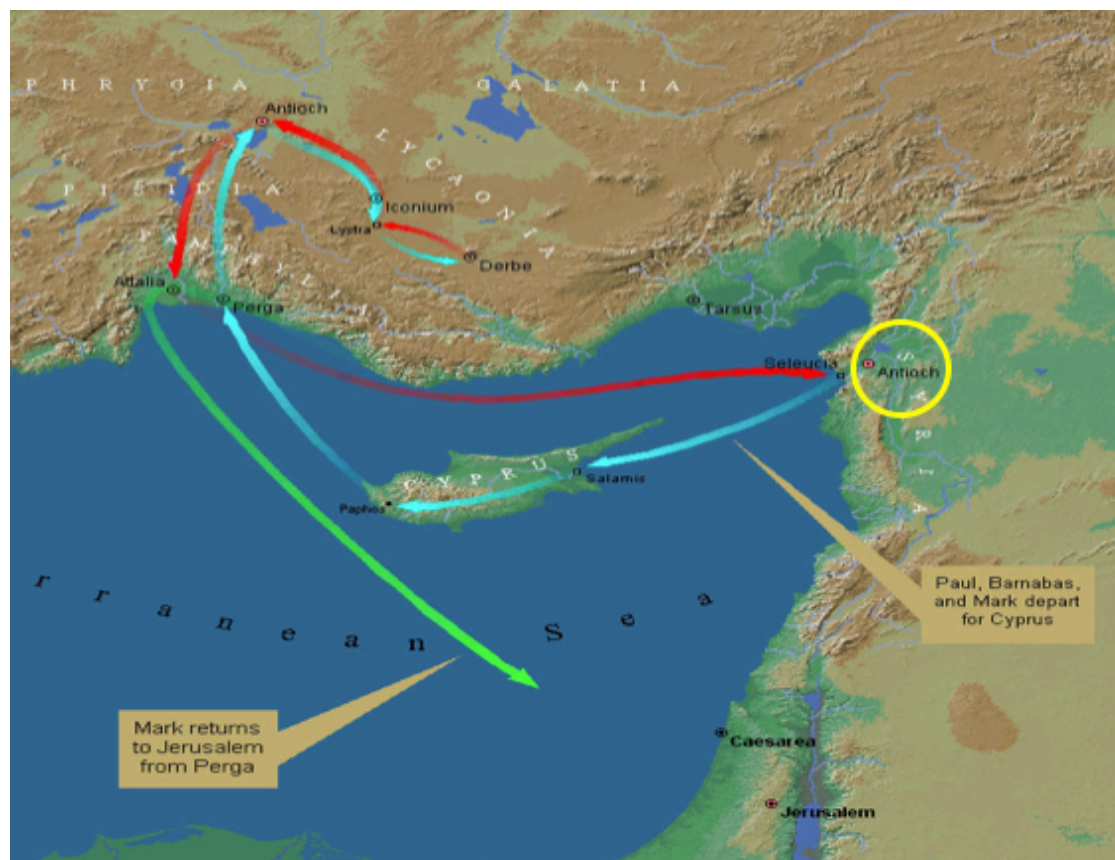
— Interesting that Paul describes their lack of growth as Christ not being in them. This doesn't denote unbelievers because they are clearly believers ("again" in labor, meaning a second time) and he calls them "children." So they are clearly saved, but not making progress in second tense salvation (sanctification) due to legalism.

— The Galatians were trying to grow in their faith through legalism and self-effort, and they were failing. So Paul is metaphorically going into labor again, not to get them saved, but to counter the legalism that

- During Paul's first missionary journey, he made his way through Galatia to Derbe, then turned around and re-traced his path back through all of the cities and regions that he initially came through

— The reason Paul did this is because he wanted to revisit and strengthen the new believers and new churches he had planted, so they would be rooted and grounded in the gospel

— To Paul, the sanctification of the Galatians was just as important as their justification (Cf. v11)



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!

20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

20 Indeed, I wish I were with you right now so that I could change the tone of my voice, because I am completely baffled by you!

20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.

- Writing from Syrian Antioch, Paul expresses his wish that he was present with the Galatians so he could talk to and reason with them face to face

— He desired to change his tone of voice to them. Paul wanted the Galatians to renounce these false shepherds, the Judaizers and their teaching (legalism), and he wanted them to understand that they would grow in Christ in the exact same way as they came to Christ in the first place: by faith alone in Christ alone.

(C) Biblical (4:21-31)

(a) Introductory question (4:21)

**21** Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the Law?

**21** Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

**21** Tell me, those of you who want to live under the Law: Are you really listening to what the Law says?

**21** Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

- Since the Galatians were so eager to place themselves back under the Law, Paul gives them an example from the Law

— He will use as an example, the story of Hagar and Sarah, and the birth of their children (Ishmael, Gen 16; Isaac, Gen 21)

(b) History (4:22-23)

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman.

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman.

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

- Paul will now recount the births of his first two children: Ishmael (by the slave woman, Gen 16) and Isaac (by the free woman, Gen 21)

- Abraham initially thought that his descendants would come through Eleazer, his servant, since both he and Sarah were well past child-bearing age
- God counters Abraham's assumption (Gen 15:3-5) by telling him that his descendants would come from his own body
- Later, Sarah and Abraham thought they would help God out by Abraham procreating with Hagar, who was of child bearing age (Gen 16). From this union, Ishmael was born, thus he is called a child of works because he was born out of the effort of man.
- But in Gen 21, after God promised that Abraham's descendants would come through Sarah, Isaac was born. Isaac was born through a free woman, not a slave woman.

23 But the son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

23 Now the slave woman's son was conceived through human means, while the free woman's son was conceived through divine promise.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

- Everything about the birth of Ishmael was natural, not supernatural. He was born out of man's effort to develop a system whereby God's promises could become a reality

- Isaac is the child of promise because Abraham and Sarah waited upon the Lord and trusted in Him to fulfill His promise. Everything about the birth of Isaac was supernatural, not natural.

#### (c) Allegory (4:24-26)

24 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.

24 This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

24 This is being said as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. The one woman, Hagar, is from Mount Sinai, and her children are born into slavery.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

- "...speaking allegorically" - allegorical interpretation of the Bible is a dangerous practice

— Allegory takes the language of the text, which is literal, and uses that language to bring in a "higher spiritual meaning." In other words, the language of the biblical text is a "vehicle" in order to bring in a higher spiritual meaning and interpretation of a passage.



— One of the greatest Jewish allegorists was Philo, a Jewish man who lived shortly before the time of Christ. When Philo looked at Gen 2:10-14, which describes the river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden and divided into four rivers: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris and the Euphrates.

— When Philo read this passage, he said that these weren't four regular rivers, but their "higher spiritual meaning" was that they were the four parts of the human soul. He completely rejected the fact that the passage is describing the geography of the Garden of Eden and surrounding area, and applied a "higher spiritual meaning" to the passage (which he came up with in his own sanctified imagination).

— This, in essence, is what Paul is doing in this passage when he says that he is "speaking allegorically."

### **Some Points on Allegorization**

- The normal rule for believers is that they are not to allegorize the Bible
  - Then why is Paul allegorizing this passage and I can't? Because Paul was an apostle, inspired to write every word he wrote by the Holy Spirit. You and I are not apostles, and our words are not inspired.
  - Paul is engaging in an allegorical practice because the Holy Spirit is inspiring him to do so at this point in time and in this situation.
- The biblical text will tell us when allegorization is permissible
  - When the Bible wants us to interpret something allegorically, it will tell/warn us to do so (Cf. Gal 4:24; Rev 11:8)
- Paul's allegorization did not de-historicize the text he was allegorizing
  - A quick review of church history shows that from the time of Origen and Augustine (3rd-4th centuries) until the Protestant Reformation (1500s), allegorical interpretation was common.
  - The Protestant Reformation essentially rescued the church from allegorical interpretation (except for in the area of eschatology)
- Paul used the Judaizers tactics against them
  - The Judaizers were allegorizing Scripture to make their argument about the need for believers to go back under the Mosaic Law in order to grow in Christ, so Paul says turnabout is fair play.
  - He allegorizes a story from Genesis between Sarah and Hagar, and uses it to argue against the teachings/legalism of the Judaizers

### **Dangers of Allegorization**

1. Scripture is not being interpreted

- When I allegorize Scripture, I'm bringing to the text an interpretation that is not coming from the text. I'm dreaming up a conclusion that is not there.
- 2. No way to test the conclusions of the allegorist
  - The best thing about being an allegorist is that you cannot lose your job and your conclusions cannot be questioned because you're the only one who knows what the allegory means.
  - We have no way to test whether what the allegorist says is right or wrong. Philo says the four rivers really represent the four parts of the soul, then another allegorist comes along and says that isn't correct. How do we know whose interpretation is right?
- 3. Authority transfers from the text to the interpreter
  - If I do not submit my mind to what the Bible says, but instead come up with some fanciful interpretation instead, I'm bringing my own ideas to the Bible instead of getting my ideas from the Bible.
- 4. Eisegesis rather than exegesis
  - Eisegesis comes from the Greek word *eis*, meaning "into." It describes reading into the text something that is not there. We draw something out of the text that isn't there naturally.
  - Exegesis comes from the Greek word *ek*, meaning "out of." Our goal when we read the Bible is to take something "out of" what we read, not put something "into" what we read.

25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children.

25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to present-day Jerusalem, because she is in slavery along with her children.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But the **Jerusalem above** is free; she **is** our mother.

26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

26 But the heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman, and she is our spiritual mother.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

- "...Jerusalem above" - Sarah, on the other hand, corresponded to the New Jerusalem (above), the mother of all the children of grace

- This heavenly city, which one day will come to earth (Rev 21:2) is now the “city of the living God” (Heb 12:22), the home of departed believers of all ages
- Paul uses the rabbinical idea that the heavenly Jerusalem corresponds to the one here to illustrate his point without endorsing their ideas (Cf. Rev 21:2)
- “Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20)
- Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb 11:10)
- “...is” [2x] - present tense, meaning that the New Jerusalem exists now, it just cannot come to earth because of sin

Hagar is the bond woman	Sarah is the free woman
Ishmael was born naturally	Isaac was born supernaturally
The old covenant	The new covenant
The earthly Jerusalem	The heavenly Jerusalem
Judaism	Christianity

(d) Application (4:27-30)

Having delivered the allegory, Paul will now make four points of application for the Galatians from it. He will tell his audience what knowledge and understanding they should now gain from his allegory:

(i) Grace ushers in blessing (4:27)

27 For it is written: “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.”

27 For it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate Than of the one who has a husband.”

27 For it is written, “Rejoice, you childless woman, who cannot give birth to any children! Break into song and shout, you who feel no pains of childbirth! For the children of the deserted woman are more numerous than the children of the woman who has a husband.”

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

- Quoted from Is 54:1...

— This verse is basically saying that the nation of Israel had a "husband" (*Yahweh*) before her captivity (in Babylon). During her captivity, she (Israel) was barren, she had no life, no activity, no productivity, spiritually speaking. But Isaiah is saying that although she (Israel) experienced that barrenness during the captivity, she will have many, many children in the future.

— The verse is essentially saying that even though in the past, during the captivity, Israel was barren, just wait (until the messianic kingdom) when there will be a multitude of kids running around

- Application #1: the lineage of grace (Sarah > Isaac) has the greater blessing than the Hagar > Ishmael line

— Sarah was barren, so Hagar begat Ishmael first. You would think that since Hagar begat Ishmael first, the Hagar > Ishmael line would be the line of blessing. Sarah had not conceived yet.

— But Paul says that is not true...eventually, Sarah begat Isaac and Paul is saying that Sarah had an even greater progeny than Hagar, even though Hagar gave birth first

— Paul is saying that in the long run, the path of grace may seem like a losing proposition to you, it may seem that the fruit is not there (that's what Sarah experienced when Hagar had given birth while she remained barren), but in the long run (into the messianic kingdom), the greater line of blessing is the line of grace, not the line of works.

— Paul's point is that those who partake of the gospel of grace, represented by Sarah > Isaac, will experience far greater blessings than those who partake of the Judaizer's gospel of works, as represented by Hagar > Ishmael

- In Gen 22:2, when God is instructing Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah to sacrifice him, God calls Isaac "your only son." But what about Ishmael? He was Abraham's son just as much as Isaac was?

— What this is that God does not recognize the things we attempt to do in the power of the flesh. We can do many things in the power of the flesh, churches and ministries are built in the power of the flesh, but when God considers those things at the end of the day, He only recognizes and blesses those things that were brought into existence and operated according to His grace and His power.

— God did not even recognize the existence of Ishmael from a spiritual standpoint

(ii) Continue on in the supernatural (4:28)

28 And you, brothers *and sisters*, like Isaac, are children of promise.

28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

28 So you, brothers, are children of the promise, like Isaac.

**28** Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

- Application #2: continue on in the supernatural
- The Galatian believers were like Isaac because they had experienced a supernatural birth by faith
- Paul now wants them to think about how they came to Christ: completely on a path marked by faith and grace, thus you are in the Sarah > Isaac line, not the Hagar > Ishmael line
- Paul now urges these Galatians to continue on in their sanctification through the same supernatural (grace/faith) means by which they were birthed. Don't come to Christ by faith/grace, then return to works of the Law in the sanctification phase of your salvation. Instead, continue on in sanctification by faith/grace because that's how you were spiritually birthed.
- It doesn't make any sense to be birthed/justified supernaturally, but then to work out your salvation naturally through works. They need to live consistently with their new identity.

(iii) Understand why you are being persecuted (4:29)

29 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.

29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

29 But just as then the son who was conceived according to the flesh persecuted the son who was conceived according to the Spirit, so it is now.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

- Application #3: understand why you are being persecuted, because the legalists will always persecute those who walk by faith. The legalists will always persecute those who walk by faith. Religion always persecutes grace. Unbelief always persecutes belief.

— Paul uses the example of Ishmael persecuting Isaac after Isaac was weened (Gen 21:8-9). At the weening celebration, the child of works mocked the child of faith.

— Why did Ishmael mock Isaac? Because Ishmael was older and in his mind, he was the inheritor of the estate, not Isaac.

— Paul points out that the same thing is happening to the Galatians...they were being courted by the Judaizers, but the moment they stand their ground and hold to the principles of faith alone and grace alone, these Judaizers will turn on you. And Paul demonstrates this reality as an ancient belief, all the way back to Isaac and Ishmael.

— Even before that, back to Gen 4 and the time of Cain and Abel. Cain murdered his brother because Abel came to God by faith and his sacrifice was accepted, but Cain came

to God by work and his sacrifice was rejected. Cain wasn't happy with that, so he murdered his brother.

— This is why the Pharisees murdered Jesus Christ. During His time on earth, Jesus got along with every single group of people except for the Pharisees, the legalists. It is the religious leadership all through the Gospels who are trying to collaborate with each other to put the Son of God to death.

(iv) Excommunicate the Judaizers (4:30)

30 But what does the Scripture say? "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."

30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."

30 But what does the Scripture say? "Drive out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman must never share the inheritance with the son of the free woman."

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

- Application #4: the Galatians should excommunicate the Judaizers from the church

- When Sarah saw what Ishmael was doing to her son Issac, she talked to Abraham and had Hagar and Ishmael expelled, so that Isaac alone could receive the inheritance (Gen 21:10-12)

— So just as Hagar and Ishmael were expelled so that Isaac alone could receive the inheritance, the Galatians were to expel the Judaizers because the Law will not bring an inheritance. The Law would not take these Galatians to where they wanted to be. The Law of God could not give them righteousness, it only pointed out that they needed righteousness to be given to them.

— Thus, the Law of God cannot take a believer into the realm of grace, it cannot take them into the realm of growth, it cannot take them into the realm of maturity. The Law of God had no inheritance for them, so they needed to follow what Sarah did with Hagar and Ishmael and cast away legalism from among you.

— If these Galatians wanted to be blessed in their walk with Christ, they needed to completely forsake and get rid of legalism. They had to completely wipe their minds of the idea that I need to do X and I cannot do Y in order to be pleasing to God.

— They didn't come to Christ that way. Therefore, their growth as Christians was going to be on that same path. They needed to get themselves in a frame of mind whereby they are saying to themselves that they would become what God wants them to become in this life when I believe His promises, trust in His resources, and walk by faith.

— If the Galatians do this, they will become all that God wants them to become and they will receive their inheritance. But religion, legalism, flesh, works, performance are all not going to get the job done, they are not going to take you where you think they are going to take you, and you will not receive your inheritance. Therefore, completely cutoff legalism and religiosity from you.

## **Legalism**

Legalism is both a belief (philosophy) and a practice. As a belief, legalism is the conviction that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by keeping rules. Often the rules in view are those imposed by man, not those required by God. However, misapplying biblical laws is also a form of legalism. Of course, the only thing that makes us acceptable to God is our trust in Christ's good works. He satisfied God's demands for us. We are saved by good works, but it is Christ's good works, not ours.

Legalism is a major problem among Christians today. We must keep in mind that legalism does not mean the setting of spiritual standards, it means worshipping these standards and thinking we are spiritual because we obey them. It also means judging other believers on the basis of these standards.

Some run from rules, claiming it is legalism. It is not. Legalism is not the law. There has always been law in the world. Since Moses, there has always been law in the Bible. Even in the NT, we have law. As believers, we operate under the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). The commands of the NT provide this code for us. And this law is good and beneficial for us, since it comes from God. So, legalism is not the presence of law or moral code.

Legalism is an attitude. Legalism exists when you conform to a rule or code with the motivation of exalting yourself. You may pretend it helps sanctify you. For instance, you could claim a vegan diet accelerates your personal spiritual growth. On the outside, that may seem plausible. But because your motivation is wrong and you have exalted yourself, you actually stunt spiritual growth.

### **(e) Conclusion (4:31)**

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

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

31 So then, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

- These new Galatian believers were children of the Sarah > Isaac line, not children of the Hagar > Ishmael line

— They were children who were brought into existence by a supernatural move of the Holy Spirit, which we call justification. They trusted in Christ, then sometime supernatural

happened to them that they could not work for or earn. It was who they were, so Paul is telling them to act like their identity.

— To do that, they needed to repudiate the bondage of the Law and instead live in the glorious freedom of God, offered only by the Holy Spirit

Paul's defense of salvation by faith alone in Gal 3-4 points out the incompatibility of faith and works as methods for obtaining justification and sanctification. Paul contrasted faith and works as methods of obtaining God's favor. Elsewhere, he stressed the importance of good works, and gave many commands, positive and negative, to guide Christian behavior (i.e. Eph 2:8-10). In those passages, works express the Christian's attitude to God for His grace. They do not make us more acceptable to God, or make God love us more than He would if we did not do them.