

Galatians 4 – Pt 2

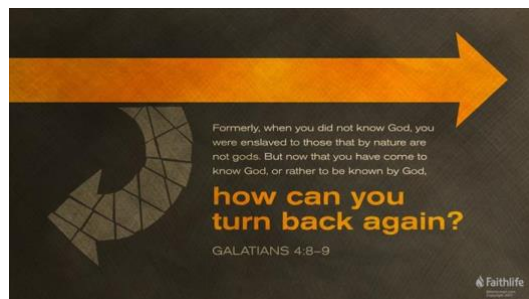
Paul's Fears for the Church

Paul's Concern for the Galatians

⁸ *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.*

⁹ *But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. (Galatians 4:8-11, NIV).*

Remember the simple message of Galatians – Jesus + Nothing = Everything. Paul's message is that Jesus is enough. As he wrote the Galatian church a letter, I think he was somewhere between heartburn and heartbreak.



V.8 - 11 – Remember that Paul was speaking to a group that were formerly idol worshipping pagans. In idol worship they did all kinds of things to try to appease their god. That is not freedom; that is slavery. We are all familiar with the kinds of sacrifices that pagan cultures have tried to make to an “angry god.” I remember visiting Mexico and seeing where the Aztec Indians had cut hearts out of living victims and thrown

young virgins into drowning pits to try to somehow assuage the anger of their gods. That is what idol worship brings. It brings slavery. They had found freedom in Jesus through the gospel, and Paul was intent on reminding them that our God is not a God unto whom we have to be enslaved or unto whom we must do all sorts of rituals to obtain His grace and mercy.

Also, Paul makes a beautiful statement in the verses that we just read that is worth thinking on. He tells the Galatians that not only do they KNOW God, but even more importantly they were KNOWN BY God. We, as believers, are also known and loved by God. The beautiful reminder here is that each of us who has come to Jesus as our Savior are known and loved by Him. And if we know Him and love Him, and He loves us, how is it that we keep running after the things of the world. Paul describes what they were doing: observing days, months, seasons, and years. Let me add that celebrating and observing days of celebration are okay. The Galatians, however, were being told by the Judaizers that they had to keep all the feast days and days of observation to please God. The law that God had given them NEVER included all the man-made add-ons that they had added. Over the centuries, the religious leaders had added rules upon

rules to the Law that God had given them. Remember how Jesus had commented on how they had piled nonsense upon nonsense to obeying the true law that God had given them.

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ⁸ “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.” (Matthew 15:7-9, NIV).



SLAVERY

How it works

How it looks

How it ends

We still see this kind of thing today. You know it is hard enough just to follow Jesus in love. It is hard enough just to remember to converse with Him in prayer and to be faithful in reading His Word. I am going to say something now, and I do not mean to offend any group in any way, but we can see all sorts of things added to the simple gospel. Man adds practices and doctrines that are not in the Bible. There are denominations that add things like purgatory, holy water, saying the rosary, requiring

celibacy, speaking in German, and not owning an automobile to supposedly being a faithful Christ-follower. These things are not in the Bible. They came from men and they are traditions that God doesn't require. In days gone by, many Baptists added their own cultural "rules" to following Christ. Things such as abstaining from alcohol, not dancing, not playing cards, not going to movies were "add-ons" to being a "real Christian." We get into all kinds of weird legalistic messes when we add ANYTHING to the gospel of Christ and Him crucified.

What's so bad about these things? They enslave us. And Paul says, "I fear I have wasted my efforts with you!" Paul is saying that if we add requirement upon requirement then the gospel which he had brought to these precious people would go to waste. Let's read on.

¹² I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? (Galatians 4:12-16, NIV).



He's saying, "Brothers I beg you. I plead with you." He reminds them that he had gotten sick and stopped where they were and preached to them. He reminds them that they treated him like an angel and had loved him greatly. I think it is interesting that he says "if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me." It seems to tell us that Paul had some terrible illness

related to his eyes. He is asking them what happened to that belief, love, and concern that they had for Paul. He adds, "What has happened to your hearts?" You know, some of us have let

our hearts grow cold. It's not hard for this to happen. Following the Lord is like tending any relationship. A relationship flourishes if you keep tending it. I try every day to say a kind word to Sandy when I first wake up and see her. I call her my girlfriend, or tell her that I love her. That is the tending that I'm talking about. When you first get up in the morning, do you whisper a little prayer or I love you to God? Paul was observing that the Galatians no longer had that joy like they first had when he found them and shared Jesus with them. Let's continue with the text.

¹⁷ Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. ¹⁸ It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. ¹⁹ My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you! (Galatians 4:17-20, NIV).

Paul says that those who have come along have just wanted to destroy the relationship the Galatians had with Paul. He draws the analogy that he has "birthed" them and gone through the pains of childbirth with them. You know, this reminds me of my own ministry. I've preached the gospel and found some who quickly and joyfully come to Christ, and within months or a few short years, they give up on it and just lose all of their zeal. Folks, the joy you felt when you first knew the relief of salvation was real, and the zeal was real. We have the tendency to grow cold in our relationship with Jesus when we stop praying, reading our Bible, and thinking on the wonderful grace that He's given us.

Paul was perplexed because he just couldn't imagine giving up the sweet relationship they had come to have in Jesus. We must be careful because if we're not, we end up serving all kinds of things except Jesus Himself. Some even worship religion. Religion is when we do things to try to impress God. Our motivation to "do things" for God should be out of love for Him and never out of fear of Him. Our motivation should be to obey and never to impress Him. If we're trying to impress God, then we're putting our faith in our own efforts. Our own efforts don't mean "diddlyquat" to God. Receive His grace and obey Him out of love.

Paul reminds them over and over that we're not under the law; rather, we are under grace. We tend to drift again and again to a performance-based theology. Our life in Christ doesn't work that way.



I sometimes think about my relationship with my own earthly father. There was always a tension between trying to do things to please him and just knowing I was loved by him. I remember being a little boy and sometimes I would get into trouble while dad was off at work. I knew that he would be angry with me and I tried to figure out how to diminish the blow that was coming. In fear, I would then cut the yard, clean the sidewalks, edge the yard, and do anything I could to appease him and please him. My dad wasn't a tyrant at all, but this is part of what I did to try to have a good

relationship with him. As much as I loved my dad and he loved me, that is not a good picture of what it is like to have a relationship with God. Our heavenly father loves us by His grace. We do not need to serve Him out of some great fear, but rather out of love for Him and out of the appreciation for what He has done for each of us. I have friends today who fear that they've done something wrong and that God will punish them somehow. They have a grace-based theology intellectually, but they have a works-based theology emotionally. That means when bad things happen to them, they think God is punishing them for something they've done.

The beautiful thing about our relationship with the Lord is that it is not performance based. It is based on grace. It is unlike anything we experience as humans. In verses 21-31 he writes to the Galatians about Abraham and his children.

Paul then tells the story of Abraham and Sarah. Most of you are familiar with the story. God had promised Abraham that he would inherit the land for his descendants, but he had no natural children of his own. So, Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise of God, but they became impatient. From what I can tell, they probably waited between 30-40 years. They finally got tired of waiting, so they hatched a scheme of their own to try to help God in fulfilling His promise to Abraham. They ended up having one of Sarah's handmaids, Hagar, go in unto Abraham in order to get her pregnant to produce an heir. So, what was the problem with all of this? Well, there were all kinds of problems with all of this, but the worst problem was that they were doubting the promises of God and were taking the fulfillment of those promises into their own hands. Sarah planned to raise the child as her own. This was when Abraham was about 86 years old. When he was probably around 100 years old, God came to him again and spoke to him assuring Him that God intended to fulfill His promise. You can find this in Genesis chapter 17. God told him he WOULD have a son and his name was to be Isaac. By reviewing this story, Paul was trying to distinguish between a being a son of a promise and being a son of one's own doing or works.

²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. (Galatians 4:21-23, NIV).

Paul was speaking metaphorically. He states that there is a Jerusalem below that is in slavery, and there is a Jerusalem above that is free. He is saying that Sarah and Hagar are a picture. Sarah was free and Hagar was a slave. Isaac was of God, and Ishmael was a work of the flesh. Isaac was born as the result of a promise, and Ishmael was born by the workings of man.

Paul uses the next few verses to flesh out this whole idea that WE are born of a promise and not of the flesh. The promise we are born of is that *belief* is what accounts us righteousness in God's eyes. Ishmael came through efforts of the flesh. Isaac represents those who are born supernaturally as a result of a promise. You and I, when we come to faith in Christ, are born again supernaturally through the result of that Abrahamic covenant, through the promises of God.

Jesus talked in the book of John about being born of the Spirit.

Flesh Gives Birth To
Flesh, But The Spirit
Gives Birth To Spirit.

John 3-6

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⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.

⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:5-8, NIV).

And so here we are again. The truth remains the same. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You cannot do enough good deeds to save yourself from yourself or to save yourself from eternal separation from God. As Paul says in the beginning of this chapter.

⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:4-7, NIV).

Are you ready to have an "Abba-Father," a "daddy" who loves you in heaven. Come today to Him. He is waiting. Only believe! It is all that will get you there.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.