

Slave or Free - Galatians 3 (Part 2)

Introduction:

At this point in our study, the apostle Paul has expressed his disappointment at the abandonment of some saints among the churches in Galatia. He has defined his role and message. He has not backed down for a moment - to pull someone back to obeying the Law of Moses is to pull one back to slavery when they had been liberated by Christ. To nullify the grace of God is to make Jesus' death pointless. The Spirit has introduced life and power, not works of the Law. The Law promises a curse, which Jesus took on, while God's promise results in adoption through faith.

Paul continues his argumentation...

Vs. 1-11 Elementary Principles

- Reiterating the point in ch.3:24-26.
- They were slaves to the elementary principles.
 - **Meaning of elementary:**
 - **1) Basic components of something, elements**
 - a) Of substances underlying the natural world, the basic elements from which everything in the world is made and of which it is composed (earth, air, fire, water).
 - b) Of basic components of celestial constellations, heavenly bodies.
 - c) Of things that constitute the foundation of learning, fundamental principles.
 - **2) Transcendent powers that are in control over events in this world, elements, elemental spirits.**
- Jesus was sent into this world, born of a woman (Jewish), and under the Law. He fulfilled the Law and accomplished what man did not (Romans 8:1-4).
- Now that Christ has arrived, His Spirit has been sent into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Thus, we are no longer slaves but a son and an heir through God. See also Romans 8:12-17.
- Vs. 8-11 speaks to his Gentile audience, those who "did not know God."
- They were known for their idol worship. However, when considering passages such as 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 10:20; we see they were demons.
- It looks as though Gentile Christians were pulled into practicing Jewish days, which is not different than being pulled back to their old ways in that they're both elementary principles.

Vs. 12-20 What Happened?

- Paul did not come to them as a Jew under the Law. He came and acted as a Gentile (he became all things to all people).
- We don't know his bodily ailment (perhaps the same issue mentioned in 2 Cor. 12:7). Some have speculated it was poor eyesight (vs.15; 611), but it's all speculation. The point is that they received him with this affliction and accepted him. This could have been off-putting or burdensome to the group, but they accepted him as an angel, even Jesus.

- So, when did his coming and preaching of the gospel turn from a blessing to a curse? When did they go from doing whatever was needed for Paul to Paul becoming their enemy? (Perhaps this began when he started his second missionary journey and returned their way?) When did truth go from a blessing to a curse?
- The Judaizers were trying to court them and gain their favor. That's not a problem, except that their motives were wrong. They were attempting to alienate the Gentile Christians from Paul. Paul was "made much of" for a good reason (sharing the gospel) when he was present.
- Like a woman experiencing labor pains, Paul was experiencing pain so that Christ would be formed in them! He wants to be present and change his tone. He didn't know what to do with the brethren!

Vs. 21-31 Hagar & Sarah

- Paul turns his attention to the Law once more to illustrate the danger they're in by using Hagar and Sarah allegorically.
 - See Genesis 15:1-6; 16:1-16; 17:15-21; 21:1-21. Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born and 100 when Isaac was born. Abraham made a great feast when Isaac was weaned, but Ishmael was caught laughing (mocking) Isaac. She told Abraham to "cast out this slave woman with her son."
- Vs. 22: Ishmael was the child of the slave woman, Hagar. Isaac was born of the free woman, Sarah.
- Vs. 23: Ishmael's birth came about typically. Sarah offered Hagar to Abraham to have a child because she was barren. However, Sarah did end up having Isaac, the son of promise, with the miraculous help of God.
- Vs. 24-27: They represent two covenants:
 - Hagar represents Mount Sinai, where the Law was given. Her son's descendants also ended up being Arabian nomads. Her children are ENSLAVED because the Law imprisons everyone who doesn't keep the Law. She corresponds to the current physical Jerusalem, which represents the physical Jewish Christians who are forcing the Old Law.
 - Sarah represents the Jerusalem above (heavenly Jerusalem - the church and body of Christ). She is their mother and FREE.
 - Paul quotes from Isaiah 54. Paul uses this after the great Messianic passage to remind them of the hope given long ago. Though those of Jerusalem were cast off from their husband (God) and without children (captivity), there would be a time when her husband would call her, and her children would be plentiful. Isaiah 51:1-2 also spoke of Abraham their father, and Sarah who bore them, so this principle that Paul uses is not unique to the book itself. Just as Sarah was once barren but was blessed with children, so Israel would have children - the children of promise made long ago. She is the Jerusalem above.
- Vs. 28-31: Paul states they are children of promise! Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac when he was young, so are the Jewish Christians persecuting the Gentile Christians with their teachings. Just as Sarah told Abraham to cast out the slave woman with her son, so should these teachers be cast out and realized as those who have no inheritance with the sons of the free woman. They were free children . . . don't let the false teachers enslave you!