

**“DO I
REALLY UNDERSTAND
THE GOSPEL?”**

from the book
of

Galatians

A few things to note before launching in:

- ◆ The comments in italics below the scriptures are an attempt to capture the meaning of each scripture and provide a running commentary in more contemporary terms.
- ◆ There are summaries on most pages to bring out the message of the book as clearly and concisely as possible.
- ◆ The scriptures are all taken from the Revised English Bible translation, to add a slightly different flavour.

Right from the start, Galatians is about the Gospel:

Galatians 1:3 - “GRACE to you and peace FROM GOD THE FATHER and OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, who (4) gave himself for our sins, to rescue us out of the present wicked age AS OUR GOD and FATHER WILLED”

✓ *Galatians opens with a clear description of the Gospel. It's all about OUR PROBLEM & GOD's SOLUTION. Here WE are, caught in the grip of whatever world we find ourselves in, overwhelmed by its wickedness, hopelessly engulfed by its sin & unable to break ourselves loose. But the Gospel tells us God the Father planned a rescue mission through his Son, WHO WILLINGLY GAVE HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS to make that rescue mission possible. That was the simple Gospel message, but -*

Some in Galatia weren't interested in the simple Gospel message anymore:

Galatians 1:6 - “I am astonished to find you turning away so quickly from him WHO CALLED YOU BY GRACE, and following a DIFFERENT GOSPEL”

✓ *They were turning away from the GOD OF GRACE they'd known before, so Paul reminded them of what God had done to & through Paul himself -*

Galatians 1:15 - “But then in HIS good pleasure GOD, who...had called me THROUGH HIS GRACE, CHOSE (16) to reveal his Son in and through me, in order that I might PROCLAIM HIM to the Gentiles”

✓ *Paul had been a "practising Jew (13)," TOTALLY devoted "to the traditions of my ancestors(14)." But GOD, through HIS grace & HIS good pleasure, gave Paul a "revelation of Jesus Christ (12)," & suddenly Paul understood the full truth of the Gospel, that it was the FATHER's WILL to rescue us humans from our sin THROUGH JESUS. JESUS was the key, then, not the traditions of his ancestors anymore - so it was JESUS he preached to the Gentiles. But the Gentiles were hearing from OTHER JEWS that it was STILL NECESSARY TO KEEP THE JEWISH TRADITIONS, TOO. Paul told the Galatians to throw that RUBBISH out (7-9). For instance -*

Some were saying circumcision was still necessary:

Galatians 2:4 - “(The attempt to get Titus circumcised, verse 3) was urged on us only as a concession to certain SHAM CHRISTIANS, INTRUDERS who had sneaked in to spy on the liberty we enjoy in the fellowship of Christ Jesus, but NOT FOR ONE MOMENT DID I YIELD to their dictation; I was determined that the FULL TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL should be maintained for you”

✓ *The "full truth of the Gospel" was Jesus, not Jewish tradition as well, but Peter was bowing to pressure to go BACK to their old Jewish customs, so -*

Paul confronts Peter for reverting back to their Jewish tradition:

Galatians 2:14 - “But when I saw that their conduct DID NOT SQUARE WITH THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, I said to Cephas (Peter) in front of the whole congregation, ‘If you, a Jew born and bred, LIVE LIKE A GENTILE and NOT LIKE A JEW, how can you insist that GENTILES MUST LIVE LIKE JEWS?’”

✓ *Good question! Why were the Jewish Christians in Antioch pushing their Jewish traditions on the Gentiles when THEY THEMSELVES weren't following them anymore?! And why were they suddenly eating APART from the Gentiles at mealtime, too (12-13)? Why? Because visitors from Jerusalem had SCARED the Jews (12) into believing their old Jewish customs were necessary again. But such conduct "did not square with the TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL" according to Paul, because -*

It is only by faith in Christ that we are rescued from our sin:

Galatians 2:15 - “We ourselves are Jews by birth...yet (16) we know that NO-ONE is ever justified BY DOING WHAT THE LAW REQUIRES, BUT ONLY through FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS”

✓ *They knew by now that just because they were Jews & they kept the Jewish laws, it was only JESUS who could truly rescue them from sin. That's why -*

Galatians 2:16 - “WE (Jews) TOO have put our FAITH in JESUS CHRIST, in order that we might be justified THROUGH THIS FAITH, and NOT through ACTIONS DICTATED BY LAW; for NO human being can be justified BY KEEPING THE LAW”

✓ *The Jews had learnt from Paul's preaching that their law-keeping couldn't rescue them from sin, but JESUS could; that's why they'd SWITCHED to trusting in JESUS, instead. But they were up against those who argued that trusting in Christ DIDN'T deal with sin at all -*

The argument against faith in Christ:

Galatians 2:17 - “If then, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves no less than the Gentiles turn out to be sinners, does that mean Christ is a promoter of sin?”

✓ *If trusting in Christ leaves a person no better off than one of those awful Gentile sinners, then Christ isn't exactly the solution to sin, is he? The Law, however, was a much better solution as far as the JEWS were concerned, because obeying the law gave them CLEAR EVIDENCE they were so much better than the Gentiles! Trusting in Christ, they said, provided NO such evidence, so keeping the law to these Jews was STILL where it was at -*

Paul's answer to those who believe keeping the law is where it's at:

Galatians 2:18 - "On the contrary, it is only if I start BUILDING UP AGAIN ALL I HAVE PULLED DOWN that I prove to be the one who BREAKS THE LAW"

✓ *If Paul went back to depending on the law, it wouldn't prove he WASN'T a sinner, it would only prove he WAS, because the SLIGHTEST infraction of the law on his part would brand him a "BREAKER of the law" again. He "PULLED DOWN" his dependence on the law, then, because he knew it was IMPOSSIBLE to keep the law PERFECTLY -*

Galatians 2:19 - "For through the law I DIED TO THE LAW - to live for God"

✓ *The law only CONDEMNED him every time he broke it; that's why he GAVE UP ON IT as his means of dealing with his sin, & he trusted GOD instead -*

Living a life of faith in Christ instead:

Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ: the life I now live is NOT MY LIFE, but THE LIFE WHICH CHRIST LIVES IN ME; and my present mortal life is LIVED BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, who loved me and gave himself up for me"

✓ *Paul's OLD life, of depending on the law to prove himself righteous in God's sight, had been nailed to the cross with Christ & REPLACED with CHRIST's LIFE IN HIM. He could now live each day depending on THAT LIFE INSTEAD, because THAT's WHAT JESUS, IN HIS LOVE FOR HIM, HAD DIED FOR. It was due ENTIRELY to JESUS' love & GOD's grace, then, that Paul's sin had been dealt with, which is why Paul said -*

Galatians 2:21 - "I will not nullify the GRACE of God; IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES BY LAW, THEN CHRIST DIED FOR NOTHING"

✓ *If keeping the law dealt with our sin, then WHY WOULD CHRIST HAVE NEEDED TO DIE THEN? But he DID die, BECAUSE it is ONLY by God's grace, in offering up HIS SON for us, that we could be rescued from our sin. That's why Paul wasn't allowing ANYONE to "nullify" that grace in favour of reverting back to keeping the law, because -*

<p>No matter how good our actions are, they cannot deal with our sin, nor rescue us from the evil of our world, nor make us right with God. GOD did that FOR us because only HE could - by giving us his Son, who also loved us & willingly gave himself for us in death on the cross, & now lives his life in us. It's God's grace all the way!</p>
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Keep the law or believe the Gospel of grace - which is it to be?:

Galatians 3:1 - “You stupid Galatians! You must have been bewitched - you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly displayed on the cross! (2) Answer me one question: did you receive the Spirit by KEEPING THE LAW OR BY BELIEVING THE GOSPEL?”

✓ *It's one OR the other, it can't be both, because attempting to deal with sin by keeping the law CONFLICTS with the Gospel, which "openly displays Christ on the cross" as the only solution to our sin. And attempting to live a life of righteousness by keeping the law conflicts with the Gospel too, because that life is only possible by the Spirit & CHRIST's life in us. So, why were they so stupidly reverting BACK to keeping the law then? -*

Galatians 3:3 - “Can you really be so stupid? You started with the spiritual; do you now LOOK TO THE MATERIAL to make you perfect?”

✓ *How silly to think that "MATERIAL" HUMAN actions can EVER "make us perfect" SPIRITUALLY. Only the SPIRIT can do that -*

Galatians 3:5 - “When God gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you, is it because YOU KEEP THE LAW, OR because YOU HAVE FAITH in the GOSPEL MESSAGE?”

✓ *Only the SPIRIT can "work the miracle" of spiritual perfection in us, but God only GIVES that Spirit to those who TRUST IN HIM & NOT in their OWN HUMAN ACTIONS anymore. FAITH IN GOD is the key, & -*

Faith in God was the key for ABRAHAM too:

Galatians 3:6 - “Look at Abraham: he put his FAITH IN GOD, and that faith was COUNTED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

✓ *Abraham was "made perfect" (or "counted as righteous") BY FAITH TOO, & THAT's what we Christians "LOOK AT," because -*

Galatians 3:8 - “scripture, FORESEEING THAT GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE GENTILES THROUGH FAITH, declared the gospel to Abraham beforehand: In you all nations shall find blessing. (9) Thus it is THOSE WITH FAITH who SHARE THE BLESSING with faithful Abraham”

✓ *Abraham PICTURED what God would be offering us Gentiles NOW, a gospel of righteousness based entirely on FAITH, & we can SHARE that blessing HE received because we are now "ABRAHAM's SONS (7)" -*

<p>As Abraham’s children, we too are made perfect & counted as righteous for simply TRUSTING IN GOD. That’s the full truth of the gospel, in whatever age it is preached. It’s trusting in him.</p>

SUMMARY NO.1 - summarising the Gospel in Galatians so far:

- 1) God's plan is to rescue us from our present wicked age, from being unacceptably sinful to him to being acceptably righteous to him, instead.
- 2) God's means of accomplishing that plan is HIS SON, who GAVE HIMSELF for our sins, & now LIVES HIS LIFE IN US through the Spirit.
- 3) This is the "FULL TRUTH" of the Gospel, that we are rescued from sin & made perfect in God's sight purely by GOD's grace, JESUS' love for us & the miracle working SPIRIT creating CHRIST's life in us. It is NOT by anything WE do.
- 4) How stupid it would be then, to go back to thinking our own HUMAN actions, like obedience to the law, are required. How can any HUMAN action create SPIRITUAL perfection anyway? So, DON'T let anyone DISTRACT us into thinking there's something WE must do -
 - ✓ *Galatians is all about what the Gospel ISN'T as well as what it IS. It ISN'T about what WE do, it IS about what GOD DID FOR US THROUGH HIS SON. This is why the Gospel is called GOOD news, because -*

What if we WERE entirely dependent on our obedience to the law?:

Galatians 3:10 - "those who RELY ON OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW are under a curse; for scripture says, 'CURSED is everyone who DOES NOT PERSEVERE IN DOING EVERYTHING that is written in the book of the law'"

✓ *To rely on "obedience to the law" puts us under terrible pressure, because it means OBEYING THE LAW PERFECTLY ALL THE TIME. Just one slip & that's it, game over. The law is a KILLER. Surely then -*

Galatians 3:11 - "It is evident that NO ONE IS EVER JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD BY MEANS OF THE LAW"

✓ *It's OBVIOUS, SURELY, that relying on our obedience DOESN'T WORK, because it's IMPOSSIBLE to obey perfectly all the time. That's why -*

Galatians 3:11 - "we read, 'HE SHALL GAIN LIFE WHO IS JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH'"

✓ *The secret to "gaining life" HAS to be faith, not our obedience, because look where we'd be if we were depending on our obedience instead -*

Galatians 3:12 - "the law does not operate on the basis of faith, for we read, 'he who does this (obeys the law) SHALL GAIN LIFE BY WHAT HE DOES'"

✓ *The law is brutal because it only offers life on the basis of HOW WELL WE DO on OUR efforts alone. We can't trust in forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice, or trust in a miracle working Spirit to create Christ's life in us, because THE LAW DOESN'T OFFER THOSE THINGS. It only places us under a CURSE the moment we slip up. BUT -*

Christ freed us from the law's curse:

Galatians 3:13 - "Christ BOUGHT US FREEDOM FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW by coming under the curse for our sake"

✓ *Christ BOUGHT our WAY OUT from under the curse of the law with his OWN life instead. FOR A PURPOSE though -*

Galatians 3:14 - "The PURPOSE OF THIS was that the blessing of Abraham should in Jesus Christ be extended to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit THROUGH FAITH"

✓ *God gave us the secret to "gaining life" in the "BLESSING of ABRAHAM," which was Abraham's FAITH IN GOD being counted as righteousness. That SAME blessing of gaining life by faith has now been "extended" TO US, too. How? Through Jesus Christ. By dying for us, he lifted the curse of the law off us. We no longer have to obey the law perfectly all the time to "gain life." Instead, through faith IN HIM, we "receive the promised Spirit," & we can live each day depending on the SPIRIT to make us perfect -*

It all comes down to the promise given to Abraham:

Galatians 3:16 - "the PROMISES WERE PRONOUNCED TO ABRAHAM and TO HIS 'ISSUE'. It does not say 'issues' in the plural, but 'your issue' in the singular; and BY 'ISSUE' IS MEANT CHRIST"

✓ *The promise God made to Abraham POINTED TO what GOD WOULD BE DOING THROUGH CHRIST for US NOW. That promise is AS VALID AS IT EVER WAS, it hasn't been replaced or overruled by the law given to Israel -*

Galatians 3:15 - "When a man's will and testament has been duly executed, no one else can set it aside or add a codicil. My point is this (17): a testament, or covenant, had ALREADY BEEN VALIDATED BY GOD; a LAW made 430 years later CANNOT INVALIDATE IT and so render its promises ineffective"

✓ *When God made his promise to Abraham, it was like making out a last will & testament, it COULD NOT be changed, overruled or added to. The law God gave to Israel didn't interfere with that promise, because the law was given 430 years AFTER the promise was made. We Gentiles then, don't have to worry about trying to "gain life" by meeting the demands of the law -*

Galatians 3:18 - "If the inheritance is by legal right, then it is not by promise; but IT WAS BY PROMISE that God bestowed it as a FREE GIFT ON ABRAHAM"

✓ *If it's true that our inheritance comes to us by "legal right" - by our keeping the law - then why was Abraham's inheritance promised to him as a "FREE GIFT"? But if NO law-keeping on HIS part was required to receive HIS inheritance & no law-keeping is required on OUR PART EITHER, then -*

What was the purpose of the law in the first place?:

Galatians 3:19 - “Then what of the law? It was ADDED to make wrongdoing a LEGAL OFFENCE; it was in INTERIM MEASURE pending the arrival of the ‘issue’ to whom the promise was made”

✓ *The law was only put in place TEMPORARILY, UNTIL the arrival of Jesus Christ. It was an ADDITION God made, simply to define human wrongdoing in the form of "laws" or "LEGAL" terms, so that BREAKING one of those laws would amount to a RECOGNIZABLE "LEGAL OFFENCE" against God. It certainly helped to CONTROL PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOUR -*

Galatians 3:23 - “Before this faith came, we were CLOSE PRISONERS IN THE CUSTODY OF LAW, pending the revelation of faith. The law (24) was thus PUT IN CHARGE OF US UNTIL Christ should come, when we should be justified by faith”

✓ *BEFORE Christ came & FAITH took over, there was no escaping the "custody" or "control" of the law. It operated like a prison where behaviour is tightly monitored & controlled constantly. But the "strong arm of the law" has ALWAYS been effective in KEEPING A CHECK on people's behaviour. When a nation has LAWS to go by & it can make wrongdoing a LEGAL OFFENCE, & it has a police force & a justice system with enough power to strike fear in those tempted into wrongdoing & the power to penalise those who weaken - IT WORKS!. So, God set up that system in Israel, because it worked with them, too. But -*

If the law works that well, why the need for Christ?:

Galatians 3:21 - “Does the law, then, CONTRADICT the promises? Of course not! If a LAW HAD BEEN GIVEN which had POWER TO BESTOW LIFE, then righteousness would indeed have come from keeping the law”

✓ *The promise of Jesus Christ would be TOTALLY UNNECESSARY if the "power to BESTOW LIFE" was possible by law -*

Galatians 3:22 - “BUT scripture has declared THE WHOLE WORLD to be PRISONERS IN SUBJECTION TO SIN”

✓ *The law hasn't helped ANYONE ESCAPE SIN. All through time sin has HELD US ALL under a curse. But WHY has God allowed that to happen? -*

Galatians 3:22 - “SO THAT FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST should be the ground on which the promised blessing is given to those who believe”

✓ *The "promised blessing" of rescue from the curse goes to those who LOOK TOTALLY TO JESUS CHRIST as their only solution to sin. So -*

SUMMARY NO.2 - Obedience to the law is not required of us, because:

- 1) We are now Abraham's children, receiving our inheritance on the same basis he received his. He received his as a free gift based entirely on his trusting God.
- 2) Abraham was never required to obey the law, because the law wasn't given to him in the first place. It was given to Israel 430 years later.
- 3) The law doesn't contain the power to "bestow life" for all people in all ages anyway, because it was only meant for Israel, purely as a temporary measure to monitor & control their behaviour as a nation. The law was also given through an "intermediary" (3:19-20), meaning it wasn't legally binding for ever.
- 4) There's only one way of gaining our inheritance by law-keeping, or by "legal right," and that's by obeying the law perfectly all the time. Break the law once, however, & we're under the curse & prisoners of sin again, & there's nothing we can do to free ourselves - *but, as Abraham's children, it's different, because -*

For us it's faith, not the law:

Galatians 3:25 - "Now that FAITH HAS COME, (the law's) CHARGE IS AT AN END"

✓ *The promised "issue" of Abraham, Jesus Christ, "HAS COME," opening up FAITH IN HIM as the means of dealing with our sin. The law was very helpful in keeping the NATION OF ISRAEL under control, but what "counts as righteousness" FOR US NOW is FAITH IN GOD. Strict obedience to the law is NOT what WE depend on to make us acceptable to God, because -*

Galatians 3:26 - "It is THROUGH FAITH that you are ALL SONS OF GOD in union with Christ Jesus. (27) Baptised into union with him, you have ALL PUT ON CHRIST like a garment"

✓ *It's "THROUGH FAITH" IN CHRIST that we receive our inheritance as "SONS OF GOD." That's why we're "baptised into union with CHRIST" & we "put on CHRIST" - & -*

Galatians 3:28 - "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female; for you are ALL ONE PERSON IN CHRIST JESUS"

✓ *We're ALL THE SAME TO GOD when we trust in Christ, because -*

Galatians 3:29 - "if you BELONG TO CHRIST, you are the 'issue' of Abraham, and HEIRS BY VIRTUE OF PROMISE"

✓ *No matter WHO we are, we are INCLUDED amongst the descendants of Abraham when we belong to Christ, so WE receive OUR inheritance JUST LIKE ABRAHAM RECEIVED HIS, purely "by virtue of PROMISE." EVERYTHING that came to Abraham came to him PURELY because God PROMISED IT, as a GIFT, there was no need to earn it, but -*

God didn't give us our inheritance immediately:

Galatians 4:1 - "This is what I mean: so long as the heir is a minor, he is no better off than a slave, even though the whole estate is his; (2) he is subject to guardians and trustees UNTIL THE DATE SET BY HIS FATHER. (3) SO IT WAS WITH US"

✓ *OUR INHERITANCE AS GOD'S CHILDREN HAS BEEN OURS EVER SINCE GOD FIRST PROMISED IT TO ABRAHAM. We are heirs to ALL of it, the "WHOLE ESTATE," BUT God didn't just hand it over right away. He DELAYED a while, put our inheritance in trust & HELD OFF RELEASING IT TO US UNTIL A SPECIFIC DATE, much like a young child's inheritance is held in trust until he's older. Instead -*

Galatians 4:3 - "during our minority we were slaves, SUBJECT TO THE ELEMENTAL SPIRITS OF THE UNIVERSE"

✓ *DURING the period God held our inheritance in trust, our lives were ruled by OTHER powers out there, & we served them like slaves, but THEN -*

Galatians 4:4 - "when the APPOINTED TIME CAME, GOD SENT HIS SON, born of a woman, born under the law, to (5) to buy freedom for those who were under the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons"

✓ *The time came when God sent his Son to BUY OUR FREEDOM. It was time to RESCUE us from our slavery to these "elemental spirits" & the curse of the law, & RELEASE OUR INHERITANCE to us at last. But why the delay? Why did God HOLD OFF releasing our inheritance UNTIL we'd experienced a period of slavery to OTHER powers & curses FIRST? -*

God wants to prove to us we are his children:

Galatians 4:6 - "TO PROVE THAT YOU ARE SONS, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying 'Abba, Father!'" (7) You are therefore no longer a slave BUT A SON, and if a son, AN HEIR BY GOD'S OWN ACT"

✓ *God gives us ALL KINDS OF PROOF THAT HE LOVES US. He made us inheritors of all that he promised to Abraham, as a GIFT, REQUIRING NOTHING FROM US to receive it. That's because he made our inheritance TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE DEATH OF HIS ONLY SON, NOT on anything WE do. To make sure of that, he deliberately put us in SLAVERY TO OTHER POWERS, so that it could only be by HIS POWER that we could be freed from them. AFTER he frees us, he then sends the SPIRIT of his Son into our hearts, CONSTANTLY convincing he is our loving Father & we are his children. THAT TOO is PROOF he loves us as his children, that everything we receive is by HIS doing, not ours, from beginning to end -*

SUMMARY NO.3 - How God proves we are his children:

- 1) He sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts so we know he is our loving Father, & we know he loves us as his very own children.
- 2) He gave his Son in death to free us from the curse of the law & the elemental spirits that held us in their grip, so that we could receive that Spirit, instead.
- 3) He made us sons of Abraham, so the promised Spirit would be ours as an inherited gift, requiring nothing from us to receive it.
- 4) He kept that gift in safe keeping until the time came when he sent his Son, the promised seed of Abraham, to free it up to us.
- 5) We can experience his Spirit in our hearts every day, constantly confirming he is our Father & we are his children.
- 6) It's all his doing from beginning to end, BECAUSE he is our Father & we are his children - so -

Why go back to where we were before?

Galatians 4:8 - "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were SLAVES TO GODS WHO ARE NOT GODS AT ALL"

✓ *Until we were made aware of what God had done for us through his Son, we were totally dependent on "ELEMENTAL spirits" & "gods" that had NO POWER AT ALL (like the law) to gain life -*

❑ **Galatians 4:9** - "BUT NOW that you do acknowledge God - or rather, now that he has acknowledged you - how can you TURN BACK to those FEEBLE and BANKRUPT elemental spirits? Why do you propose to ENTER THEIR SERVICE ALL OVER AGAIN? (10) You keep special days and months and seasons and years. (11) I am afraid that all my hard work on you may have been wasted"

✓ *Why GO BACK to depending on "feeble & bankrupt" spirits (like keeping special days from their old Jewish tradition) to be acceptable to God, when God is pouring HIS Spirit into our hearts telling us we're ALREADY acceptable to him, because he loves us as his very own children?! Why, then, were they tempted to go BACK to the OLD ways again? -*

❑ **Galatians 4:14** - "...you welcomed me (*in the past*) as if I were an angel of God, as you might have welcomed Christ Jesus himself. (15) WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE HAPPINESS YOU FELT THEN?"

✓ *So they HAD experienced the happiness of the Spirit, but "OTHERS are lavishing attention on you (17)... SO THAT you may lavish attention ON THEM." It was blatant FLATTERY & CHARM by the law-keepers that was pulling the Galatians BACK into their fold, so -*

Paul explains the difference between the two sons of Abraham:

Galatians 4:21 - “Tell me now, you that are so anxious to be under law, will you not listen to what the law says? (22) It is written there that ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS, the one by a SLAVE (Hagar), the other by a FREE-BORN woman (Sarah). (23) The slave’s son (Ishmael) was born in the ordinary course of nature, but the FREE WOMAN’S (Isaac) through GOD’S PROMISE”

✓ *Paul goes on to say that Hagar & Sarah represent 2 covenants. Hagar the slave-woman represents the OLD Covenant made at Mount Sinai (24) & the SLAVERY her children would experience under that Covenant, like those living in the city of Jerusalem in Paul's day (25). Sarah the free-woman, however, represents the heavenly Jerusalem & the FREEDOM those under the NEW Covenant would experience (26-27), who "like Isaac, are children of GOD'S PROMISE (28)." Children of slavery on the one hand & children of promise on the other, both of them AT ODDS WITH EACH OTHER as brothers, & STILL AT ODDS with each other IN THE CHURCH too -*

❑ **Galatians 4:29** - “but just as in those days the natural-born son persecuted the spiritual son, SO IT IS TODAY”

✓ *Just as the slave-born son of Hagar was a problem for the free-born son of Sarah, so were law-keepers in the church at Galatia, who were trying to CHARM the Galatians BACK into keeping the Jewish laws -*

❑ **Galatians 4:30** - “Yet what does scripture say? ‘DRIVE OUT THE SLAVE and HER SON, for the son of the slave SHALL NOT SHARE THE INHERITANCE with the son of the free woman’. (31) You see, then, my friends, WE ARE NO SLAVE’S CHILDREN; OUR MOTHER IS THE FREE WOMAN”

✓ *Hagar & her son NEVER got to share in Abraham's inheritance. Instead, they were driven out. Sarah's children, however, DID receive Abraham's inheritance, & so do we, so IT'S CLEAR WHOSE CHILDREN WE ARE. That being the case, why would anyone be trying to weasel people BACK into being Hagar's children again? The lesson from scripture is clearly, "DRIVE OUT the slave & her son" BECAUSE -*

God sent his Son to set us free:

Galatians 5:1 - “IT IS FOR FREEDOM THAT CHRIST SET US FREE.

STAND FIRM, therefore, and REFUSE to submit again to the yoke of slavery”

✓ *It was to FREE us from ever being "slaves' children" again that Christ set us free, because "OUR mother is the FREE woman." Hagar & her son were DRIVEN OUT, NEVER to return, a lesson meant FOR US, too -*

SUMMARY NO.4 - What Hagar & Sarah mean to us now:

1) HAGAR pictures slavery, the Old Covenant, the law, our obedience, our actions, or any other “feeble, bankrupt” god or elemental spirit we might be depending on, to make us either acceptable to God, or to “gain life” by. But Hagar & her son were driven out & didn’t share in the inheritance, as a lesson for us now that Hagar is not the way to go to be acceptable to God or to gain life by.

2) SARAH pictures freedom, the New Covenant, & being free to depend entirely on what Christ did to make us acceptable to God & gain life by. We share in the inheritance purely because God promised it to us, as his gift, made possible through his Son. It is never because of anything we do, because Christ freed us from that -

✓ *So, it's either Hagar OR Sarah -*

It's either law or grace:

Galatians 5:4 - “When you seek to be justified BY WAY OF LAW, you are CUT OFF FROM CHRIST: you have put yourselves OUTSIDE GOD’S GRACE”

✓ *Some still believed they needed to be circumcised (2-3). But as soon as a person seeks to be justified "by way of law" it means having "to keep the ENTIRE law (3)" - which is a terrible burden, AND a TERRIBLE WASTE OF CHRIST'S DEATH & GOD'S GRACE -*

Galatians 5:5 - “For it is BY THE SPIRIT and THROUGH FAITH that we hope to attain the righteousness which we eagerly await”

✓ *Righteousness, justification, being acceptable to God & knowing we are the children of God, all come by ONE MEANS & ONE means ALONE - by way of "THE SPIRIT" & faith in Christ, NEVER "by way of law" -*

Galatians 5:6 - “If we are in union with Christ Jesus, CIRCUMCISION MAKES NO DIFFERENCE AT ALL, NOR does the lack of it”

✓ *Why bother being circumcised, or bother about ANYTHING WE MUST DO, when ALL that "we hope to attain (5)" comes from our union with Christ? -*

❑ 3:22 - “FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST should be the ground on which the promised blessing is given”

❑ 3:26 - “It is THROUGH FAITH that you are all sons of God IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS”

✓ *GOD DIRECTS OUR FOCUS TOWARD HIS SON, not the law, because -*

Galatians 5:6 - “the ONLY thing that counts is FAITH expressing itself through love”

✓ *How else can we live the life of love Jesus lived? It is ONLY by faith IN HIM that we "come to have the form of Christ (4:19)" -*

SUMMARY NO.5 - The problem with the law:

- 1) To live by the law means living by all of it (5:3).
- 2) To seek justification by way of law means cutting ourselves off from grace (5:4).
- 3) To try to attain righteousness by the law doesn't work because righteousness only comes by the Spirit (5:5).
- 4) To try & gain God's blessings by keeping the law is a waste, too, because ALL that we hope for can only come from union with Christ (5:5, 3:22,26).
- 5) To look to the law to create "the form of Christ" in us (4:19) is an empty quest too, because only faith in him can produce the kind of love he had (5:6) -
✓ *Obedying the law was clearly NEVER MEANT to be the source of all that we hope for. God SENT HIS SON to be the provider of every blessing for us, because WE'RE NOT SLAVES, WE ARE HIS CHILDREN. We're not the children of the slave woman, we're the children of the free woman, who receive every blessing from God as a promise & a gift, INCLUDING THE GREAT GIFT OF LOVE, which is, of course, WHAT THE LAW WAS ALL ABOUT IN THE FIRST PLACE -*

Christ freed us so we could truly love others:

Galatians 5:13 - "You, my friends, were CALLED TO BE FREE; only beware of turning your freedom into licence for your unspiritual nature. Instead, SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE; (14) FOR THE WHOLE LAW IS SUMMED UP in a single commandment: 'LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF'"

✓ *The ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF FAITH IN CHRIST is to fulfill the ultimate purpose of the law, which is loving our neighbours as much as we love ourselves. To FULFILL that purpose, Christ FREED us from trying to love as the law demands by our OWN efforts & replaced it with dependence on the SPIRIT because only the SPIRIT can help us love others as the law demands. As Paul said earlier, "the life I live is not my life, but the life which CHRIST LIVES IN ME (2:20)." That's why, he continues, "my present mortal life is lived by faith in the Son of God," because CHRIST's life in him would enable him to fulfill the law. Some, however, thought freedom meant they could throw out the law all together & do whatever they wanted, so INSTEAD of loving one another, they ended up "fighting one another, tooth & nail (5:15)," which wasn't what God had in mind at all, because -*

<p>The law is wonderful, it's all about love, but it carries the curse of being impossible to obey by human effort alone. Christ freed us from that curse though, by living HIS life of love in us, through his Spirit.</p>

SUMMARY NO.6 - “What I mean is this”, Paul says, in:

Galatians 5:16 - “What I mean is this: BE GUIDED BY THE SPIRIT and you will not gratify the desires of your unspiritual nature”

✓ *There's only one way we can obey the law of love & that's by the Spirit of Christ in us, because we are stuck with an "UNSPIRITUAL NATURE" that constantly cries out to be satisfied, producing behaviour in us that closes the doors of the kingdom of God to us (19-21). It makes us "prisoners in subjection to sin (3:22)" & there's absolutely NOTHING we can do to FREE OURSELVES from that prison. The SPIRIT CAN free us, though, because -*

The Spirit fights against our nature:

Galatians 5:17 - “That nature sets its desires against the Spirit, while THE SPIRIT FIGHTS AGAINST IT. They are IN CONFLICT WITH ONE ANOTHER so that you cannot do what you want”

✓ *The Spirit is foreign to our unspiritual nature, so our nature resists it. But THE SPIRIT BLOWS A DOOR RIGHT THROUGH THE WALL OF OUR HUMANITY, so that our unspiritual nature is NO LONGER FREE TO DO AS IT PLEASES. It doesn't STOP there though, because -*

Galatians 5:18 - “if you are LED BY THE SPIRIT, you are not subject to law”

✓ *With the Spirit of Christ fighting for us, we don't NEED the LAW to FORCE us to behave anymore either, because -*

Galatians 5:22 - “The HARVEST OF THE SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, (23) gentleness, and self-control. AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW”

✓ *There is NO LAW that can resist the wonderful harvest the Spirit is producing in us. NOR can our unspiritual nature resist it, either -*

Galatians 5:24 - “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have CRUCIFIED THE OLD NATURE and ITS PASSIONS and DESIRES”

✓ *Through SPIRIT power the raging passions of our unspiritual nature no longer control our behaviour. "It is for FREEDOM that Christ set us free" - free of our nature AND free of the law as our means of controlling it - so -*

Let the Spirit be our guide:

Galatians 5:25 - “If THE SPIRIT IS THE SOURCE OF OUR LIFE, let the SPIRIT ALSO DIRECT ITS COURSE”

✓ *What a blessing God promised through Abraham, the blessing of the Spirit becoming the heart & core of our being. Give the Spirit full rein then! -*

Live by the Spirit:

Galatians 5:26 - “We must not be conceited, inciting one another to rivalry, (or be) jealous of one another. (6:1) If anyone is caught doing something wrong, you, my friends, WHO LIVE BY THE SPIRIT must gently set him right...(2) Carry one another’s burdens, and in this way YOU WILL FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST”

✓ *Live by the Spirit & we CAN "fulfill the law of Christ." The "law of Christ" is simply "love one another" ("for the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: 'love your neighbour as yourself'" - verse 14). We CAN live that law of Christ because his SPIRIT now lives it IN US. "We MUST NOT be conceited" COULD, then, be translated "we don't HAVE TO BE conceited," because our unspiritual nature no longer NEEDS to rule our behaviour. There's NO NEED for "rivalry" or "jealousy" when the Spirit is constantly blowing a hole right through OUR nature PREVENTING it from being free to do as it pleases. Where there IS rivalry & jealousy, then, those who live by the Spirit can GENTLY POINT OUT to the culprits what GOD MADE POSSIBLE through the Spirit to FREE us from such things -*

Galatians 6:7 - “Make no mistake about this: God is not to be fooled; everyone reaps what he sows. (8) If he sows in the field of his unspiritual nature, he will reap from it a harvest of corruption; but IF HE SOWS IN THE FIELD OF THE SPIRIT, he will reap from it a harvest of eternal life”

✓ *There's NO NEED for our unspiritual nature to rule our behaviour BUT, if it does, then EXPECT CONSEQUENCES. There are always consequences to our actions, & that doesn't suddenly stop when we have the Spirit of Christ in us. PAUL's FOCUS, though, is on "eternal life" which, like the Kingdom of God, is all about the qualities of the Spirit. "Sow in the field of the Spirit" & we can experience eternal life now. Do we understand, then, what we've been given? Christ died & now lives in us through his Spirit so that we CAN sow in the field of the Spirit. So, WHY would we want to do OTHERWISE? -*

Galatians 6:9 - “Let us NEVER TIRE OF DOING GOOD, for if we do not slacken our efforts we shall in due time reap our harvest. (10) Therefore, as opportunity offers, let us WORK FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, especially members of the household of faith”

✓ *"Our efforts" now are aimed entirely at the Spirit of Christ fulfilling the law of Christ in us. WE cannot live that law BUT THE SPIRIT CAN. So, THAT's now our focus, it's having the SPIRIT in us "work for the good of all".. because that's what the Spirit is IN US FOR. "Let us never tire of doing good," Paul says, but that becomes POSSIBLE when the SPIRIT is at work in us -*

SUMMARY NO. 7 - What the Spirit does for us:

- 1) Works miracles among us (2:5)
 - 2) Enters our hearts crying ‘Abba, Father!’ (4:6)
 - 3) Helps us attain the righteousness we’re hoping for (5:6)
 - 4) Prevents our unspiritual nature doing as it pleases (5:16)
 - 5) Removes our dependence on the law to force us to behave (5:18)
 - 6) Produces a wonderful harvest of fruit in us (5:22-23 & 6:8)
 - 7) Becomes the source of our lives (5:25)
 - 8) Guides (5:16), leads (5:18) & directs us (5:25)
 - 9) Fulfills the law of Christ in us, the ability to love one another (5:26)
 - 10) Enables us to gently set people right & carry other people’s burdens (6:1-2)
 - 11) Works in us for the good of all, never tiring of doing good (6:9-10)
- ✓ *It's no wonder then, that the purpose of preaching the Gospel & the reason for believing it, is the RECEIVING OF THE SPIRIT (3:2,5). But this is what Christ died for, to set us free from the curse of having to gain life by what WE do (3:12-13), so that THE SPIRIT could be the source of our lives, instead. And THIS IS WHAT GOD PROMISED WAY BACK TO ABRAHAM, that through Christ the Spirit would be given to us Gentiles so we could become God's very own children, no longer ruled by elemental spirits or gods who are not gods at all, OR by the passions & desires of our unspiritual nature, either. We can be free of our old lives, & free INSTEAD to LIVE THE LAW OF LOVE, because Christ would be living HIS life in us. And how was it all made possible? -*

It all comes back to the Cross:

Galatians 6:14 - “God forbid that I should boast of ANYTHING BUT THE CROSS OF CHRIST, through which the world is crucified to me and I to the world!”

✓ *Think what God, through Christ's death, freed us from & freed us to, from slavery to a whole new creation -*

Galatians 6:15 - “the only thing that counts is NEW CREATION! (16) All who take this principle for their guide, peace and mercy be upon them, the Israel of God!”

<p>God rescued us through his Son so that HE could make us into an entirely new creation. It’s all HIS doing; it’s by HIS MERCY we are no longer hopelessly entangled by sin & by HIS PEACE we no longer depend on our OWN efforts to extract ourselves. It’s all HIS doing.</p>
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