

12. To those who desire to be condemned

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Long ago, I used to enjoy watching a TV series "Perry Mason". He was one good and very sharp criminal attorney, not like many ACLU scummy lawyers nowadays. It seems that he always protected innocent clients who needed his defense.

His opponent in the court room was District Attorney Hamilton Burger who thought that he had a solid case against Mason this time. He had all the ducks in a row – evidence, witnesses, etc. He thought that he had that special ace card that would nail Mason and his defendant on the wall.

But at the end of the movie, Burger was only to find out that his case was like a house of cards. Suddenly, everything he thought was substantial became inconsequential. His ace in the hole also became Mason's trump card. And the "big guns" Burger thought he would pull out to wow the jury? They just blew up in his face.

That is how it is about to go down at the end of chapter 4 of the Book of Galatians. These Judaizers were holding three aces – Abraham, Moses, and the Law. They thought, "How can Paul possibly come up with his defense against these? We got him this time."

But in these last eleven verses of chapter 4, Paul, arguing like a skilled lawyer, will wrap up his defense of justification by faith. And when he's finished, the Judaizers will be picking up the pieces that once they thought an air-tight case.

Paul is about to use their own evidence against them. He begins with Genesis, the first Book of the Law. Then he homes in on Abraham, whose physical descendants, the Judaizers believe, enjoy a spiritually privileged position with God. By the time he's done, Paul has once more shown the superiority of grace over the Law.

Many commentators consider this section of the Book of Galatians to be the most difficult section of the letter, because we have to understand the technical side of the OT laws as well as the allegorical side of rabbinic style of teaching.

To understand this better and to follow the flow of Paul's argument and interpret the text accurately, we need to divide this into three sections:

- Historical facts in v22-23
- Allegorical facts in v24-27
- Personal facts in v28-31

A. TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

Paul begins with a pointed, and somewhat sarcastic, question in this verse.

One thing for sure, I absolutely have nothing that I can show off against the Lord's holiness and righteousness. I know that I am an utter failure and sinner. I also know that I cannot make my way to heaven with my own merit. I am completely at the mercy of God. I was completely condemned under the Law. But in His grace, He has extended His scepter of grace toward me through Jesus Christ as He did toward you as well.

B. HISTORICAL FACTS

Galatians 4:22-23 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

Paul directs his readers once again to the Book of Genesis and the life of Abraham. As we have noted earlier in this study, nothing made the Jews feel more proud or secure than their descendancy from Abraham. Since they were physically related to the man with whom God made His covenant promises, they assumed that they were "in" with God.

When the same kind of the elite Jewish religious leaders had argued with John the Baptist, John let them have it:

Matthew 3:9 and do not think to say to yourselves, " We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

In chapter 8 of the Book of John, Jesus also made it clear that the Jews must trust in Him for salvation like any other sinners including the Gentiles. Physical connection to Abraham gave them no spiritual privilege before the Lord.

Though Paul does not mention the names of Abraham's two sons, we do know who they were. Ishmael who was born by Hagar, a servant of Abraham's wife, was born according to the flesh which means by the will of men. It required no miracle and no promise of God. On the other hand, Isaac was born to the free woman Sarah, Abraham's wife, through God's promise and miracle when Abraham and Sarah were to have a child even though it was humanly impossible due to their old ages.

In this brief look at the Jewish origin, Paul illustrates the incompatibility of salvation by natural means (the keeping of the Law) and salvation by supernatural means (the grace of God). In Ishmael and Isaac, Paul provides a picture of what he's been arguing throughout the letter: Salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, not by human effort.

C. ALLEGORICAL FACTS

Galatians 4:24-27 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar-- 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband."

Paul was fully expecting the counter argument from the Judaizers regarding what he said. They would argue that since Isaac was the son of promise, wouldn't the physical descendants of Isaac also be children of promise?

1) Hagar and Ishmael – v24-25

To remove any issues, Paul explains what Hagar symbolizes allegorically. Hagar represents the old covenant of the Mosaic Law, given at Mount Sinai. Just as Hagar's son Ishmael was a slave, so those who live under the Law are slaves. In other words, the Law requires perfect obedience, which no one can possibly attain. Therefore the

Law continually condemns us, exposing our sin and keeping us at bay from God's salvation.

There are a few things we must keep in mind regarding the illustration of Hagar that Paul is making to symbolize the law:

- **Hagar was Abraham's second wife**

God did not begin with Hagar; He began with Sarah. As far as God's dealings with men are concerned, God began with grace in the Garden of Eden. Even after they sinned, in His grace He provided them with coats of skins for a covering. If it was according to the law, what Adam and Eve did was the last living act of them.

- **Hagar was a slave**

Sarah was a freewoman, and she had liberty; but Hagar, even though married to Abraham, was still a slave. Likewise, the Law was given as a servant and it served as a mirror to reveal men's sins and as a monitor to control men and ultimately lead them to Christ.

- **Hagar was cast out**

It sounded humanly cold and callous, there was not room in the household for Hagar and Ishmael with Sarah and Isaac; one pair had to go.

It is impossible for Law and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, to compromise and stay together. God did not ask Hagar and Ishmael to make occasional visits to the home; the break was permanent. The Judaizers in Paul's day – and in our own day – are trying to reconcile Sarah and Hagar, and Isaac and Ishmael. Such reconciliation is contrary to the Word of God.

- **Hagar was not married again**

The Judaizers wanted to "wed" Mount Sinai which represented the Law and Mount Zion where Jerusalem was located and represented grace, but to do this would be to deny what Jesus did on Mount Calvary. Hagar is not to be married again.

God never gave the Law to any other nation or people, including His church and it is not applied to anyone again.

2) Sarah and Isaac – v26-27

The apostle threw in other symbolic words here in v26 – 'the Jerusalem above'. What does it mean? The emphasis is on 'above', not on 'Jerusalem' just as the definition of 'born-again' which is "born from above". Not by human will or effort, rather completely by the grace of God.

This 'Jerusalem above' represents those saved through faith in Christ. It is a place and a people characterized by freedom, not by enslavement to the Law.

D. PERSONAL FACTS

Galatians 4:28-31 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Just as Isaac was a child of promise of God, we, born-again Christians, are children of God's promise through Jesus Christ. As after Isaac was born, Ishmael persecuted

the child of promise, the Judaizers persecuted the believers of Jesus Christ for their faith in Him.

This still goes on. Historically, the persecutors of the true church are somewhat related to the church itself. They are the religious people who embrace a small portion of Christianity. Our Lord Jesus was bitterly opposed, rejected, mocked and condemned by His own nation. The fiercest opponents of the apostle Paul, who dogged his footsteps in his three missionary journeys were the Judaizers from the official church of Jerusalem. The medieval papacy and its monolithic structure persecuted all Protestant minorities with ruthless ferocity in the name of God.

Catholic against Protestant; Protestant main denominations against non-denomination Bible teaching churches; big mega church against small churches. Wonder how much Satan is laughing at us and how much grief we bring to our Lord God with our stupid behaviors.

As Paul said, we must cast out the bondwoman and her son, the legalism out of our church. Legalism is one of the major problems among Christians today. We must keep in mind that legalism does not mean the setting of spiritual standards; it means worshiping these standards and thinking that we are spiritual because we obey them. It also means judging other believers on the basis of our own standards, not God's. A person can refrain from smoking, drinking, and attending theaters, for example, and still not be spiritual. The Pharisees had high standards; yet they crucified Jesus.

All who have trusted Christ by faith are free! The judgment's paid. The trial's over. Case closed.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We are saved by faith in Christ, not by work. These two cannot be mixed.
- 2) We do good work for the glory of God not for our salvation.
- 3) Legalism within the church grieves our Lord Jesus and delights Satan.