

Sunday, February 28, 2010—Grace Life School of Theology—Understanding Galatians and the Law—Galatians 4:19-31

Galatians 4:19-20

- *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, 20) I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.”*
- The Greek word translated “children” carries the idea of a young of small child. This is the only time this phrase is used in any of Paul’s epistles.
- In light of the context, Paul is not using it as a term of endearment or affection.
- I John 2:1, 3:18—when John uses the term it is more positive in nature.
- The phrase in Paul’s usage carries a derogator tone. Paul is literally calling them spiritually immature children.
- I Corinthians 3:1
- *“I travail in birth again”*—travail literally means to experience the pains of giving birth.
- Paul obviously is not talking about giving birth to them in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense. He is speaking about their spiritual birth.
- Paul is using the pain of child birth to represent the time, energy, and labor, that he expended in order that the Galatians might know Christ. If we are going to conduct the ministry according to the Pauline ministry pattern we are literally going to have to fight for every convert.
- Also please note the use of the word “again” in verse 19. This is not the first time Paul expended himself on behalf of the Galatians.
- *“until Christ be formed in you”*
- Ever believer when they get saved receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. You are placed into Christ and Christ come and lives in you.
- What Paul is talking about in this verse is letting that edification or maturing process take place inside you. If the Galatians had left the grace of God in favor of law keeping there would not have been much edification.
 - Colossians 1:27
 - II Corinthians 4:11
- Verse 20 is straight forward yet extremely profound when you understand what Paul is saying.
- *“I stand in doubt of you”*

- Paul is questioning whether or not the Galatians had truly believed the gospel to begin with. The Galatians were outwardly good people. They were not involved in overt sins of the flesh.
 - I Corinthians 5:1—the Corinthians on the other hand had been an extremely carnal church. People would have looked at them and thought there is not way those people could be saved.
- Yet Paul never questions the salvation of the Corinthians like he does the Galatians.

Galatians 4:21

- *“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?”*
- Paul asks the question don’t you hear what the law has to say? All the law can say is guilty.

Galatians 4:22

- *“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.”*
- Genesis 16:15—Ishmael was born of Hagar the bondwomen
- Genesis 21:2—Isaac was born of Sarah the freewomen

Galatians 4:23

- *“But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.”*
- Genesis 16—Ishmael was the product of Abraham’s flesh.
- Genesis 17:15-19—Isaac was born of promise that God made with Abraham.

Galatians 4:24

- *“Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.”*
- This verse is the key to understanding the last part of chapter four. An allegory speaks of that which has a meaning other than a literal one, or it is a record of literal events that have spiritual significance. This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament.
- Paul is using an allegory here to illustrate a point. Hagar represents the covenant of the Law that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai. She bears, gives birth to, and brings forth children whose end is bondage and slavery under the Mosaic Law.

Even Hagar was a slave, likewise her offspring symbolize those in legal slavery under the Mosaic Law.

Galatians 5:25

- *“For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.”*
- The verse identifies Hagar specifically with mount Sinai.
- Exodus 19:4-8—Sinai is where Israel chose to subject themselves to the Law.
- Jerusalem was the center where the law was still being practiced even during Paul’s day. This verse identifies Hagar with Jerusalem. Even as Hagar was once in physical slavery; likewise Jerusalem was in spiritual slavery under the Mosaic Law.

Galatians 4:26-28

- *“But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 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. 28) Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”*
- Following the symbolism Paul is using Jerusalem above to correspond with Sarah, the free women, the mother of all who enjoy spiritual freedom in Christ.
- Paul is saying that we are free because we are heirs with Isaac.

Galatians 4:29-31

- *“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 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. 31) So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”*
- “This persecuting attitude goes back to the mother of the one born according to the flesh, namely Hagar (Genesis 16:4). This despicable attitude produced such tension between the two women that Hagar fled into the wilderness. There the angel of the Lord told her to return to her mistress, and to submit herself under Sarah’s hands (Genesis 16:9).” Campbell, 115.
- The first record we have of the one born according to the flesh, Ishmael, persecuting the one born according to the Spirit, Isaac, goes back to the time when Isaac was weaned (Genesis 21:8-9)
 - Genesis 16:12
 - Psalms 83:2-8—Ismaelites attitude towards the Lord’s people.

- Just as those born of Hagar according to the flesh persecuted Israel; so those in legal slavery in Jerusalem were persecuting those born of the Spirit, those of the church the Body of Christ. “ot only were the Ishmaelites and their allies still trying to cut off Israel from the land of living. But, also those engulfed in legal bondage and slavery, are bent toward persecuting those living for Jesus Christ.” Campbell, 115.
- Genesis 21:10-12—Abraham was upset by this.
 - Genesis 17:18, 20
- See appendix for Campbell’s commentary on Galatians.