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Galatians 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Galatians 4.

Topics.

- The heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave.
- The elementary principles of the world.
- When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son.
- The spirit of the world.
- Until Christ is formed in you.
- You who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?
- A slave woman and a free woman.
- The children of the desolate one will be more than the one with a husband.
- Children of promise and children of slavery.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter the Galatian were being bewitched and enticed to add Jewish law to their salvation so Paul spends the entire chapter on God's promise to Abraham and shows how the promised Seed of Abraham the heir of the world is the Lord Jesus Christ and that righteousness is by faith and grace. Paul brilliantly shows the Galatians that all who are in Christ are the offspring of Abraham regardless of whether they are Jews or Gentiles and that no matter how noble or how common, how rich or how poor, whether a leader of a global church or the church mouse all are equal in Christ, no-one is superior to another.

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NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

GALATIANS 4:1-2

The Heir, as Long as he is a Child, is no Different from a Slave.

- **Galatians 4:1-2:** I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

The rightful heir: is Israel.

The guardians and managers: refer to the prophets, priests and the law.

The slave: is a symbol of Israel under the law.

The date set: refers to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Father: of course, is God.

Paul is saying that even though Israel is in a sense living like slaves because they are still under the bondage of the law, they are nevertheless the rightful heirs to the inheritance and to all God's promises.

The inheritance refers to the following oath God made to Abraham saying, "By myself have I sworn to Abraham" as an everlasting covenant:

- Thy seed will come from his own bowels and be thine heir.
- Thy seed will multiply as the stars of heaven and the sand on the sea-shore.
- Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.
- Thy seed will inherit all the land of Israel for an everlasting possession.
- In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.
- God will be the God of thy seed.

This is the promised inheritance and everlasting covenant God made to Abraham. Paul in the following glorious and majestic words: -

- Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16).

Reveals the eternal wonder of the everlasting promise God made to Abraham thousands of years ago which is, Abrahams seed is the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Gen 12:1-7) (Gen 13:14-16) (Gen 15:1-6, 18) (Gen 17:1-8)
(Gen 17: 15-19, 21) (Gen 21:12) (Gen 22:11-18).

Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of (Ephes. 2:11-22) that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:13) (Rom. 4:16-18) (Gal. 3:16) (Gal. 3:27).

**THE FULFILMENT AND ABSOLUTE AWESOME SPLENDOUR,
WONDER AND BREATH-TAKING MAGNIFICENCE OF
GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM WILL REACH ITS
CLIMAX WHEN THE FOLLOWING EVENT
COMES TO PASS.**

2

The Lord Jesus Christ returns as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

For further information on the Promised Seed of Abraham see:

- Galatians chapter 3

In, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GALATIANS 4:3

The Elementary Principles of the World.

- **Galatians 4:3:** In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

The words, "In the same way" is contrasting the Gentiles (without Christ) to being slaves to the, "Elementary principles of the world" to Israel (without Christ) being slaves to the law.

Elementary: (Elements in KJV) principles of the world from Strong's Concordance in this context means the uncomplicated and first basic fundamental principles and carry the idea of walking orderly i.e., keeping in step, walking in a regular line and in arrangement and refer to virtue, morality, godliness, goodness integrity, uprightness, justice, chaste, prudence, piety devotion, grace, homage, faith and godliness which show that the elementary or fundamental principles of the world is goodness.

Is human nature fundamentally good or evil? If we focus on the corruptness and wickedness in the world (which many churches do) i.e., wars, murders stealing, human abuse and oppression, etc., no-one could be blamed for arriving at the conclusion that human nature is fundamentally evil at its core. But if we focus on the good in the world i.e. the people of nations rallying together to help countries that have suffered extreme natural disasters, or supplying food in a crisis of famine, youth groups, famous people and strangers trying to raise money to help the poor, a friend comforting another, families and even total strangers risking their lives to help those in danger and the multitudes of good and selfless deeds that are being done in the world every-day we would arrive at the conclusion human nature at its fundamental core is good.

So, which of the two scenarios is correct? To understand how these two extremely different natures co-exist within the same human body we only have to look at what the Bible says about human nature. It teaches that human nature can be both good and wicked this is because it is contaminated with a virus that the Bible calls sin (or the flesh). Today we would call it, self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc., these entities affect every human to lessor or greater degree; the flesh (self, ego and pride etc.,) will abuse, oppress and use other humans to achieve its own selfish

desires. It starts wars and kills thousands of innocents to achieve its own goals, it destroys marriage partners who once loved each other, it breaks up friendships and families, it murders, rapes and steals, all to fulfil some selfish desire of the flesh (self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc.). Obviously not all humans are dominated or controlled by the flesh (or sin) to that extreme, the majority of the human population simply desires to live in peace and be able to raise their children in safety and never deliberately afflicts harm on others. There are literally thousands of kind acts done throughout the world by many generous people, but sadly we don't see these kind acts simply because these stories don't make big profits for televisions global news T.V. stations. Nevertheless, despite how generous we maybe not one of us is free from the contamination of selfishness, ego, pride, lust and greed etc., we are all infected at some level and to some degree.

It is like a spiritual cancer which runs rampant in the body of some people bringing about all sorts of horrific suffering and destruction while in others the cancer lays dormant and only in certain circumstances is it inflamed. Naturally this cancerous virus or entity (sometimes called the devil) has greater potential to inflict harm upon the world's populations through leaders who have authority and power over nations and governments who have global influence over the world, but we all are guilty of harming others in some manner because we are all tainted by selfishness, pride and ego etc. For the majority of us this cancerous virus lies in an inactive state in the human body and only manifests itself in the smaller issues of life i.e., a child's rebellion to its parents, an argument between husband and wife, divisions in groups and churches etc., but those with less control over this human aberration are more likely to erupt like an explosive volcano and inflict great harm and pain on others. Modern psychiatrists of this world today refer to this aberration of human nature as the lower nature of mankind and to that part of human nature that desires to do-good (especially to others) as the higher nature.

The elementary principles of the world: the elementary (or fundamental principles) of the world in the context of this chapter refer to religious things people do by their own self-effort to attain righteousness thereby be counted worthy by God of deserving eternal life. Paul calls all of these religious acts the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world since they have no power to save to eternal life (v9-10).

In the Gentiles: the elementary (or fundamental principles) of the world refer to trusting in one's own goodness and in all the religious things we do i.e., attending church every Sunday, studying the Bible, singing in a church choir or being a Sunday school teacher, preaching the gospel and witnessing or simply doing what the church expects or demands etc., though many of these things are good in themselves and bring rewards when Christ returns, they have absolutely no power to save us to eternal life. Therefore if we are trusting in these religious works to make us righteous and be counted worthy to be saved to eternal life we are simply conforming to, "the elementary (or fundamental principles) of the world" i.e., trusting in our own self-effort to be counted worthy, righteous and saved to eternal life.

In the Jews: the elementary (or fundamental principles) of the world refer to their religious lifestyle of strictly adhering to Moses laws of purification and Jewish customs, ceremonial laws and traditions. The Jews demanded the legalistic outward keeping of their religious laws and ceremonial practises before a person could be accepted by God and counted worthy to be saved to eternal life.

NOTICE: Paul is not saying that abiding by the elementary principles of the world is wrong he is simply stating that they are weak in regards to salvation, because they have no power to save anyone to eternal life. Obviously in themselves many are good habits to develop. They only become wrong when a person believes by doing them, they are making themselves worthy of salvation, earning salvation or maintaining the salvation they already have. Once a person begins to trust in their own goodness and their own works the following three things happen:

1. They place themselves under the bondage of law since the law states "Whoever does not perfectly keep all its commandments is condemned not only to mortal death, but also eternal death (2 Cor. 3:9). Paul in the book of Romans stated the same thing with the following words, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) which means whosoever sins is already condemned to mortal and eternal death and if anyone is going to trust in their own self-effort to be righteous they must keep all the law to attain to its perfect and holy standard and there has only been one man who walked on this planet that has ever achieved such perfection and he was God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Trusting in self-effort tends to produce self-righteousness which pride loves since self-righteousness allows pride to rise up and exalt those who are self-righteous above others who they consider to be less righteous than themselves which in turn gives the self-righteous person a sense of superiority.
3. Those who are trusting in self-effort are denying Christ's sacrifice and God's gift of righteousness that comes by grace and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment we trust in anything other than Christ is the moment we nullify what the Lord achieved for us on the cross. Jesus horrific, cruel and brutal death counts for nothing when we trust in what we ourselves do. The moment we rely on self to attain to God's perfect standard of holiness we make Christ's death serve no purpose.

Paul is saying that the people of the world without Christ are slaves to:

- The elementary and fundamental principles of the world (v3).

To attain to God's perfect standard of righteousness, meaning they are slaves to religious works, good deeds or some form of spiritual self-improvement or religious and ceremonial practices to make themselves feel that they are holy, righteous and accepted by God and deserving of eternal life. The elementary or fundamental principles of the world in this context are all those things people do to make themselves feel they are accepted by God because human nature at its fundamental core, desires to do good or is good, but the flesh (self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc.,) is constantly craving to have their own needs satisfied. These entities (self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc.), (often referred to as the devil) have contaminated and corrupted human nature and it is this contamination that causes us all to sin because behind all sin is at some level the desire to satisfy, self, ego, lust, greed and pride etc., thus the underlying current of sin is self-gratification. It only takes a few moments to ponder why people act corruptly and it becomes clear that the underlying motivation is to gratify-self either physically, financially, sexually, emotionally or spiritually thus the reason the Bible often refers to all these entities, self, ego, pride, lust and greed etc., as the devil (within).

GALATIANS 4:4-8

When the Fullness of Time Came, God Sent His Son.

- **Galatians 4:4-8:** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. ⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

The "the fullness of time" (v4) refers to the birth of Christ by his mother the Virgin Mary (notice Jesus was born under the law). Paul is writing to the Galatian church which has within it Jews and Gentiles, thus the words, "To redeem those who were under the law" (v5) refer to the Jews who were under Moses laws and the Levitical laws of purification. The words:

- You were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods (v8).

Refer to the time prior the Jews knowing God (or God calling them out of Egypt and thereby knowing them) when they were much like the Gentiles who worshipped idols and pagan gods. Paul is speaking to both Jews and Gentiles in the Galatian church and though what he is saying primarily refers to the Jews, the same principal applies to anyone (i.e., Jew or Gentile) who trusts in outward religious works (i.e., adhering to ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions) to earn righteousness and be counted worthy of eternal life. Paul in this chapter is basically saying that Christ came to deliver the Jews from the bondage of the law and Gentiles from their pagan gods so that they might both be adopted as sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ.

Abba! Father! The Spirit in the following verse, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (v6) refer to the Spirit of love. The Spirit that motivates anyone to praise and exalt another with such endearment is love. God through Christ's horrific, cruel and brutal death has produced in the heart of all who have faith in Christ such great love for God's Son that they are by this love not only adopted by God as His sons and daughters and thereby become heirs of everlasting life and eternal glory, but are also delivered from the bondage of the law, the deception of all other religious belief systems and from any form of self-effort as a means to know God and to attain to righteousness that leads to salvation and eternal life, thus the reason Paul states:

- We are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God (v7).

GALATIANS 4:9-10

Now that you Know God, or rather are Known by God.

- **Galatians 4:9-10:** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰You observe days and months and seasons and years!

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Paul is writing to a mixture of Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Christ, but are being enticed back under Jewish laws (v17) he is stunned that now that they know God through Christ and God knows them that they would even entertain the idea of going back to the bondage of, "The weak and worthless elementary principles of the world" (v8) to gain God's favour and be counted righteous by their own self-effort in keeping religious laws, ceremonial practises, customs and traditions.

Paul's greatest struggle: one of the major problems Paul's had with the Galatian church is found in chapter one. Paul says:

- He is astonished that they are so quickly deserting Paul who had called them into the grace of Christ, but now they are now turning to a different and distorted gospel (Galatians 1:6-10).

Jewish religious leaders, men of stature, authority and oratory skills who though they were teaching Christ to their congregations they at the same time were denying grace and therefore enticing their followers back under the law to be saved or to maintain their salvation and in this way they were making their followers slaves to self-effort to attain righteousness. The "The weak and worthless elementary principles of the world" (v9) in this context refers to the practice of endeavouring to keep the law to be counted righteous and worthy of eternal life and by extension can refer to doing good works or anything that involves self-effort to be saved or maintain salvation.

Paul is shocked that the Galatians now having known God through Christ "Would put themselves in bondage to outward works again?" The outward works Paul is referring to is what he calls:

- The weak and worthless elementary principles of the world.

This is referring to things such as walking in virtue, morality, goodness integrity, uprightness, justice, devotion, grace, humbleness, faith and godliness. Paul is not saying these are worthless in themselves, but that they are worthless to save a person to eternal life because not one of us can walk in them perfectly thus the reason Paul refers to them as, "The weak and worthless elementary principles of the world" when the Galatian brothers and sisters are being enticed to practice them to be righteous and earn God's favour to be saved to eternal life.

NOTE: those who belong to Christ are called to walk in virtue, morality, goodness integrity, uprightness, justice, chaste, prudence, devotion, grace humbleness, faith and godliness, but not to be saved or maintain their salvation, but rather because it is the right and loving thing to do, it brings a good testimony to God and is a good witness to the name of Christ, but none of these qualities though good in themselves have any power to save a person to eternal life, that is only obtained through repentance and through faith in Christ.

The spirit of the world: the fundamental or basic nature of humanity at its essential core desires to be good, but self, ego, pride, greed and lust etc., stop it. Self-survival, ego and self-gratification are the dominant driving force that stops humans from fulfilling the law perfectly. Self is constantly craving to have its own needs satisfied which results in sinning to satisfy its own appetite, desires, cravings, longing and ambition. For further information see the following titles:

- The Motivation of Sin.
- Sin and Self-Gratification.

Both titles are in, Sin (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GALATIANS 4:11-16

7

Paul is afraid he May have Laboured over the Galatians for Nothing.

- **Galatians 4:11-16:** I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain. ¹²Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. ¹³You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴and though my condition was a trial to you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵What then has become of the blessing you felt? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

Paul fears he has laboured in vain, because the Jewish teachers have influenced the Galatians into adding to their salvation in Christ Jewish laws of purification and depending on them for their justification, righteousness and salvation rather than trusting in Christ alone.

Become as I am, for I also have become as you are: though Paul was a Jew by birth and had a Jewish education, and so had once been zealous and in favour of keeping the ceremonial law and all the rites, habits and ceremonies of Judaism and from the deepest conviction he was thoroughly passionate to its laws, but since knowing Christ he has laid aside the religious bondage to Jewish traditions and the observance of legal ordinances as being necessary for salvation to eternal life and now being free has made himself as a Gentile to Gentiles it is in this sense that Paul tell the Galatians to:

- Become as I am, for I also have become as you are (v12).

Meaning Paul has become as the Gentiles are i.e., free from the bondage of the law. Paul is telling the Galatian brothers and sisters who were never under obligation of Jewish religious laws, but are being bewitched into adding them to their salvation in Christ that they should not only do the

same as he has, but should also never think of coming into the bondage of religious laws since dependence upon them is totally unprofitable and adds nothing to salvation. Paul is doing everything he can to convince those in the Galatian church who have been enticed to add Jewish customs and laws to their salvation, "To become as he is" (v12) and cease from depending on Jewish observances as he had done. The fact that he had laid all Jewish customs aside while among Gentiles should have been enough evidence to the Galatian brothers and sisters that he regarded them as no benefit at all in contributing to justification or adding anything to salvation in Christ in any manner at all, and proof that they should therefore regard them in the same light as he did (i.e., totally worthless in regards to adding anything to their salvation). Paul's object is to persuade the Galatian brothers and sisters to abandon Jewish laws and customs. He appeals to them by using his own example thus the words, "Become as I am" (v12) means, "Imitate me in this thing" i.e., follow my example, and yield no conformity to Jewish rites and customs. In regards to spiritual matters Paul's statement:

- "Become as I am, for I also have become as you are" (v12).

Means that Gentiles and Jews are alike in Christ, both are chosen in him and redeemed by him; both are equally renewed by his Spirit and both are children of God by faith in him and no more servants; both are all equally Christ's free men and have a right to the same forgiveness, mercy and grace and both are free as Paul was from observing the ceremonies of the law and from the bondage of it since both Jews and Gentiles by their faith in Christ are upon an equal foot and upon the same foundation in the Lord. Thus; the words, "Become as I am" simply stated means, live under grace as Paul does and not under the law.

The practical lesson for us today: though there is little danger that any of us will be enticed to follow Moses laws of purification and Jewish customs, there is a danger that brothers and sisters in Christ fall under the subtle deception of believing that they are made righteous by their regular church attendance, their faithfulness to church leaders, their own personal Bible reading or their commitment to the service they provide to a religious institution, a religious mission organisation or the help they have given to others. Though many of these things are good in themselves and may will bring rewards when Christ returns, they are nevertheless worthless in adding anything to our salvation in Christ because not one of them has any power in saving anyone to eternal life. Since no form of self-effort can cure us from our corrupted fallen nature with all its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations (i.e., selfishness, pride, ego, lust, greed, jealousies and the list goes on). The moment we think we can add any form of religious works to salvation or begin to trust in our own self-effort or start depending upon works rather than trusting in Christ alone is the very moment we nullify what Christ achieved for us on the cross.

NOTE: Paul's observing the law among the Jews was not inconsistent with this, for he only followed Jewish custom so they would accept him into their midst in order to win them to Christ, (1 Cor. 9:20-22), but at no time did he compromise the Gospel. On the other hand, the Galatian Gentiles, by adopting the Jewish legal ordinances, showed that they regarded them as needful for salvation. This is what Paul is combating.

You did me no wrong, have I now become your enemy? When Paul was with the Galatian brothers and sisters "they did him no wrong" (v12) in fact quite the contrary not only did they treated him as an angel from God, but if was humanly possible would have gouged out their eyes and given them to him such was the love they had for Paul, but now tragically he feels that he has become an enemy to them by speaking the truth? In this context the most likely reason Paul said, "You have not injured me at all," is because he wants them to know that what he is writing is not motivated by any personally hurt he may feel or because they have personally wronged him. He wants them to know that he is not encouraging them to forsake any form of dependence on Jewish customs and return to trusting in Christ alone for salvation for any personal gain

or benefit to himself or because their perversion of the Christian faith is any loss to him. Paul is saying they have not injured him at all, but they are injuring themselves and injuring God whose will it was that dependence on the law should be abolished and also injuring Christ who laid down his life to break down the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. Added to this they are corrupting the Gospel which proclaims liberty to the captives held by the bondage of the law. Thus by the words, "You have not injured me at all," Paul is basically saying even though the Galatians were accepting a perverted and distorted form of the gospel that he had preached to them he is not speaking out of anger and resentment or from any personal offence they might think their actions are to him since they have done him no personal injury (to strengthen this idea to them he re-accounts the kindness they showed to him) (v14), but rather it is because of his earnest love for them that he is encouraging them to forsake self-effort and their dependence on religious rules and laws and return to depending on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.

GALATIANS 4:17-18

They want to Shut You Out, that You May Make Much of Them.

- **Galatians 4:17-18:** They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you.

The words, "They want to shut you out (v17)" refers to the Jewish teachers who are bringing the Galatian brothers and sisters back under the law. These false teachers are telling those in the Galatian church that to be saved in Christ they need to add Moses laws of purification and Jewish customs and traditions to their faith, but the moment anyone adds anything to God's majestic plan of salvation that Christ achieved for us on the cross is the moment that they shut themselves out of the gospel and out of Christ's Kingdom. This is because the instant we trust in anything other than Christ alone for our righteousness is the instant we have begun to trust in self-effort and thereby we nullify the grace of God that Christ through horrific suffering achieved for us on the cross and thereby make his death serve no purpose.

That you may make much of them: the words, "That you may make much of them" (v17) means that these false teachers (driven by pride and ego) are enticing those in the Galatian church back under the law so they can boast in the size of their own religious empire and not because they have any concern for the spiritual well-being of those they are influencing, but rather are using them for their own gain.

It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose: the words, "It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose (v18) means it is not a bad thing to be used by those in authority or leadership if it is for the benefit and help of others, but to be used to by those who are privileged with authority and gifted with leadership simply as merchandise to achieve their own selfish ambition, goals and dreams and to be a means of boosting their own spiritual pride and ego is of course totally against the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.

GALATIANS 4:19-20

My Little Children.

- **Galatians 4:19-20:** my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth *until Christ is formed in you!* ²⁰I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

This verses shows the true spirit of a shepherd and the compassionate heart of Paul, even though he is hurt, disappointed and in anguish over the Galatian brothers and sisters who are putting greater trust in Jewish religious teachers than they are in Paul he does not dismiss them, but still affectionately continues to speaks to them as his little children. Paul sees himself not only as a teacher of the Gospel, but also as a father to those he teaches. At the moment Paul's spiritual children are being led astray so out of compassion and an intense love for them he as any natural father does is speaking harshly in the hope, they will forsake those who are leading them astray. Paul's one desire and highest goal for all who he teachers and by extension all who read his letters is that, Christ would be formed in us, thus the reason he is so passionate about encouraging the Galatians to remain in the gospel of grace that they once embraced and trust in Christ alone for their righteousness and not their own self-effort and religious works.

Until Christ is formed in you: Paul's highest goal for the Galatians and by extension every brother and sister in Christ is that "Christ would be formed in them" (Gal. 4:19).

Christ being formed in you carries two ideas:

1. That our heart and mind would be full of love, compassion, mercy, kindness and forgiveness etc., not only to our brothers and sisters in the Lord but also toward those outside the Kingdom of God.
2. That God's will, God's eternal plan, God's love, His purposes and promise are engraved in our hearts and in our minds and that the Lord Jesus Christ is our greatest love and our greatest desire.

God has designed our hearts, minds, imaginations, memories and emotions in such a connected manner that whoever we deeply love and worship is automatically and mystically formed in us, i.e., every married person who has ever experienced self-sacrificing, compassionate and supporting love will have experienced the one they loved being formed in their heart their mind and their emotions. When someone loses a spouse, family member or friend they have been close to for many years and loved deeply the presence of that person will remain as a real entity in their heart, their mind and their emotions. For some it will remain to the end of their lives while for others it will dissipate over time (depending on the depth of love and the length of time they have loved) for others though the memory will remain the spiritual presence will pass when new love blossoms.

The following is a true story and a good example of a person being in the heart of another. An eight-year old disabled girl, whose best friend was her mother was doing her first live stage show at her school. The mother loved her daughter but could not be at the opening show as she was in hospital with cancer. A television reporter asked the mother's daughter if she would be sad and miss her mother at the opening of the show. The young girl with tears in her eyes said, "Yes I will miss her, but she will be in my heart where she belongs." Love for a person creates the reality and presence of that person in the human heart. It is in this way that the spiritual presence of Christ is formed in those who believe in him, the more we come to realise how far short we fall of God's perfect Holiness and the deeper we understand what it cost God and the Lord Jesus Christ to save us and the more central the majestic eternal hope of being raised to eternal life and everlasting glory becomes to our thinking the more our love for the Lord deepens and the greater the love, the greater the spiritual presence of Christ is formed in us.

NOTE: those who faithfully follow Christ do not aim to keep the law to be saved, but rather their motivation is from this spiritual love for God and the Lord Jesus Christ hidden in the heart of all who know Christ. It is this love that is the motivating power driving those faithful to the Lord to follow (howbeit not perfectly) God's laws, do-good and keep the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings since love desires to honour the one loved.

Mystical phenomena and spiritual moments that cannot be explained: though all the above is the natural way in which Christ is formed in us, God's presence and his Spirit should never be limited since there always remains a certain amount of mystical phenomena that cannot be explained by human reasoning or human understanding, especially in times of great crisis and sorrow when God by His Spirit often overrides any power or lack of it within us and invades our hearts with comfort and our minds with guidance and wisdom etc. These spiritual moments are individual, intimate and personal experiences that cannot be explained and, in most instances, only have true spiritual value and meaning to the ones who experience them.

GALATIANS 4:21

You who Desire to be Under the Law, do you Not Listen to the Law?

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

Paul is saying if the Galatians listened to the law, they would hear it loudly declaring them sentenced, judged and condemned since the law is without grace and without mercy. It states that whoever breaks one part of the law or does not keep every part of the law is guilty and since not one of us no matter how hard we try are able to keep all the demands of the law we are all by it judged guilty. Since the law is so clear in its demand Paul is saying that if the Galatians (and by extension all of us) are open to hear its condemning voice we would hear it declaring us guilty.

GALATIANS 4:22-26

A Slave Woman and a Free Woman.

11

- **Galatians 4:22-26:** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. ²³But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. ²⁴Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

Allegorically: (allegoreo) (allos) means something else, something different from another (in many applications), a story, legend parable or tale.

Jerusalem: is often personified in the Bible as being a mother with children. Her children are all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, prophets, husbands, wives and their children.

The slave woman: refers to Hagar. God promised Abraham he would have a Son from his own bowels, but when God first gave this promise He never mentioned who the mother would be until one year before Isaac was born (Ishmael was fourteen years old by then). After Abraham and Sarah had been living in Canaan for ten years no-doubt trying to have the baby God had promised Abraham Sarah was still barren. So, Sarah now in doubt of God's promise gave Hagar her slave to Abraham to wife and Hagar by Abraham gave birth to Ishmael. Since Hagar gave birth to children of slavery, she is not only a symbol of the covenant of law Israel made with God at Mount Sinai but also of the present Jerusalem because the inhabitants of God's holy city are still under the law.

The free woman: of course, refers to Abraham's wife Sarah who was a free woman who gave birth to the promised son Isaac. So because Isaac was born of a free woman Sarah became a symbol of all those who are free from the bondage and slavery of the law and of the heavenly and

spiritual Jerusalem which refers to all those who are saved by God's grace by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ since they are free from the bondage and slavery of the law and from earning righteousness by self-effort and the practise of religious ceremonial customs and traditions.

GALATIANS 4:27

The Children of the Desolate One will be more than the One with a Husband.

- **Galatians 4:27:** For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband (cited from Isa 54:1).

The barren woman in this context refers to Sarah while the one who had a husband refers to Hagar. Abraham became Hagar's Husband when he went into her and she conceived Ishmael, while Sarah was still barren. During the Old Testament era when a man had children to a woman that woman automatically became his wife. Though Sarah was Abraham's wife by love, Hagar became his wife through child bearing thus Isaiah through prophecy (Isa 54:1) and Paul in citing his words are both saying that Sarah though barren will have far more children than Hagar even though she has a child and a husband. This is because Sarah's children are not limited to the nation of Israel but embraces people from all nations who by faith trust in the Lord Jesus Christ since he is the promised seed of Abraham and Sarah and therefore whoever belongs to the family of Christ are children of Abraham and Sarah. For further information on the Promised Seed of Abraham see:

- Galatians chapter 3 in, Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

GALATIANS 4:28-31

Children of Promise and Children of Slavery.

- **Galatians 4:28-31:** Now you, brothers like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman ³¹So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Here again we see the stunning brilliance of Paul's mind and not only his insight into the word of God, but the magnificent way in which he is able to apply it. The words, "Cast out the slave woman and her son" (v30) would immediately take the mind of every Jewish man and woman to the following Scriptures in Genesis:

- The child (Isaac) grew and was weaned And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned, but Sarah saw the son (Ishmael) of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing (mocking in KJV) 'So Sarah said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son Ishmael for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." (Gen 21:8-10).

All who are in Christ can be likened to Isaac because they are born of the Spirit and therefore children of the promise because of their faith in Christ in contrast to those who are born in the same manner that Ishmael was (i.e., the flesh referring in this context to a natural birth). Paul is pointing out that in the same manner that Ishmael the child symbolising the law mocked Isaac (the child of promise) Jewish leaders who hold fast to the law will mock those who are born of the Spirit. Paul is warning the Galatian brothers and sisters to do as Sarah did and cast out those who want to go back under the law and have nothing to do with them because teachers who trust in the law and self-effort will not inherit eternal life and the Kingdom of God, neither will those who follow their corrupted teachings.

Interesting facts:

- Isaac was a result of God's promise and a miracle birth in the same manner those in Christ are a result of God's promise and a miracle birth.
- Those who believe in Jesus Christ from the heart are spiritually born according to the Spirit of God.
- Just as Ishmael and Isaac have always been in conflict with each other so too will the law and the Spirit of grace always be in conflict with each other.

The practical lesson for us today: those who are trusting in Christ for their righteousness and faithfully following him should expect to be mocked by many who do not know the Lord. Nevertheless, this does not mean we should treat them as enemies or go to war against them, but rather we should aim to follow Jesus teachings in his famous Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5). But if our faith is tender and not strong enough to withstand the distorted and twisted teachings of those whose are enticingly leading others away from God's, free gift of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ then the best action to take is to follow Paul's advice to the Galatian brothers and sisters and withdraw from them altogether.

The key to understanding why Christians should aim to keep the law: the spirit behind the law is love, because each law protects another human from harm. In the book of Romans Paul states:

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10).

The spirit of the law is to protect the innocent from physical, financial, sexual, emotional and spiritual harm, thus those who know God aim to keep the Law because it is the right and loving thing to do. It fulfils the Ten Commandments regarding man, and the Royal Law:

- Love thy neighbour as thyself (Mark 12:31) (Jas. 2:8).

It pleases God and brings a good testimony to His name and the name of, Jesus and the church. Those who belong to Christ aim to keep the law not to get saved, but because they are saved. They understand that righteousness is a free gift of God that comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by self-effort. Though the law is splendid as a guide to understanding God's will, as a means of reunion with God, the God we have sinned against, it is a hopeless failure nevertheless both law and grace go together, the law without the Gospel is diagnosis without remedy, but the Gospel without law is only the Good News of salvation for people who don't believe they need it because they have never heard the bad news of judgment, the law is not the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lawless (Rom. 3:19-20) (Eph. 2:13-22).

God's and Jesus Commandments: Micah says:

- What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God (Micah 6:5-10).

Isaiah tells us:

- The LORD loves justice and hates robbery and wrong doing (Isaiah 61:8).

Jeremiah says:

- Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These

are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour. The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive, which means that Christ-likeness is about doing all we can do to protect people from harm and being dominated by the thought, "What action can I take or do that will help and encourage this person." It is all about doing right to others, thus the reason the message he spoke on the mountain is referred to as, "The Famous Sermon" because the principals if followed not only by Christians but all humanity are the only way to peace (Matt 5). For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see:

- Matthew 5 in Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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