

Galatians 4 Commentary-Barber

Galatians 4 Commentary Verse by Verse Exposition Dr. Wayne Barber

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Galatians 4:1-7 Sons and Heirs

We're seeing what happens the moment a person receives Jesus into their hearts. You think about it, you don't really feel this. You really don't feel it. You're not aware of that. You just know your desperation and you cry out to God and there is a change immediately in your heart. But sometimes it takes a while for us to fathom what actually took place the moment we received the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. How awesome it is to know that we learned in chapter 3, at the very moment of receiving Him, we become sons of God.

Turn with me to Galatians 4. We're seeing what happens the moment a person receives Jesus into their hearts. You think about it, you don't really feel this. You really don't feel it. You're not aware of that. You just know your desperation and you cry out to God and there is a change immediately in your heart. But sometimes it takes a while for us to fathom what actually took place the moment we received the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. How awesome it is to know that we learned in Gal 3, at the very moment of receiving Him, we become sons of God. Look at Gal 3:26: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

At that very moment, when we become sons of God, when we receive Him into our hearts, we are baptized into Christ. We are totally immersed into His power, His passion, His presence, everything about Him. He is in us; we are in Him. We are immediately clothed with the garment of His righteousness. That's an amazing thing. If you didn't know it from Scripture you would not perhaps understand that. Paul says in Gal 3:27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." This is what Peter tells us in his epistle. He says we have been given everything for life and for godliness. It's all in Christ. And it was all received the moment that we were saved.

Just think about it. Believers are instantly one with a huge family that is worldwide. It doesn't matter what race you are, what color skin you have. It doesn't matter what language you speak. Paul says in Gal 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek," and the word "Greek" there refers to all the nations on earth aside from Israel. It doesn't matter if you're from Israel, from any nation on this earth, you are one together. You receive the same thing. All of us have become sons. It does not matter if you're rich or if you're poor. He says, "There is neither slave nor free man." What a message to preach to those who don't have anything physically, but can have everything spiritually. That's what happens the moment a person receives Jesus Christ.

Not only that, it doesn't matter if you're male or if you're female. It doesn't matter. A male and a female, they receive the same thing. That's his point—that we become one. It says, "there is neither male, nor female" and then he says, "for you are all," whether you are rich, poor, no matter what race you are, no matter whether you are male or female, "you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Paul says in Gal 3:29, "And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." Now, I love that phrase, "if you belong to Christ." The moment you receive Jesus into your heart you become His. Does that bless you like it blesses me? We used to sing that little chorus, "I am His and He is mine." It's wonderful to know that He is mine, but to realize that I am His, that's the beauty. We belong to Him. This is what Paul said to the Corinthian church when he says, "You are bought with a price. You are not your own." Did you think you were your own? Do you think you can live like you want? Oh, no, no; you are His property now and you have the privileges of sonship. I love that phrase.

I am reading a book right now called *The Majuba House*, written by a friend of ours, Joyce Brogdon. She is in her 70's, and she sent it to me to preview it. And sometimes if the book doesn't have a lot of pictures I don't like to read it. But this is a good book. It was an autobiography really of her life growing up in pre-World War II England, Westhaven, England. She was in an orphanage early on. And then they finally sent her to a family which really made her feel like she belonged. The family's name was Saunders, and they lived in a place called the Majuba House. One side of the house was a shop, the other side was the home. And it was a beautiful story, a story of a father who took her in as if she were his own daughter, and how he loved her and sat by the fire and tell her stories and just make her feel that sense of belonging. Every day she came home from school—he had been crippled—and she could see him in the window looking for her to come home. And the momma, who would sew her clothes and fix her meals and always made her feel that sense of belonging.

Now that's where Paul is headed here. We belong to Him. We are sons of God. We are one with the family of God. We are dressed in His robe of righteousness. He says, "If you belong to Him." Literally it is "if you are Christ's in a possessive sense." "If you belong to Him," he says. And "If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." Now, in Gal 3 he talked about inheritance. But in Gal 4 he's going to talk about being an heir, "heirs according to promise." To be an heir you have to be a member of the family. Now we have already established that, because the moment you receive Jesus you are sons of God. You are His. You belong to Him. You are in the family. You are not naturally born into that family, you were supernaturally born into that family. But to be an heir you have to be a member of the family.

My momma, when she died—my daddy died when I was 23, in 1966, and my mother died in 1981—when she died she didn't have very much. We had everything as far as a family would be concerned, in the sense of love and those types of things, but she didn't have very much to will to her two children. I have a sister who is three years younger than I am. But what we did get we basically used to pay the funeral costs, and that's kind of the way it was. But there were many things that she had that she gave to us. And I still have them. It's beautiful to know that you are in the family and that you can inherit from somebody who paid a dear price for you to be born.

It's a beautiful thing to be an heir, to be an heir. But when you compare that to being an heir of the promise, he says "You are heirs according to the promise." Now, what he's doing here is showing you that what was promised to Abraham and to his seed, we become heirs of all of that. We are heirs "according to the promise," according to all the spiritual blessings that we have in salvation and in Christ. We are heirs according to that.

What was promised to Abraham, if you put it simply, it's justification by faith, salvation. He was justified by faith that was passed on to his seed; and his seed, as Galatians 3:16 says, was the Lord Jesus Christ. And in salvation comes all the promises of God. We become heirs of all of that. I don't know if that blesses you, but that really blesses me. I don't have to ask Him for something that is already mine. I have to learn to say yes to Him so that I can appropriate that in my life. I don't ask Him for patience; He is patience in my life. I don't have to ask him for joy; He is the source of my joy. When I bow before Him, when I am willing to live by faith, as we have been seeing all the way through chapter 1 of Galatians, then what happens is I enter in to the joy, I enter in to the fulfillment of the promises that are mine in Christ Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 1:20 Paul says it in a very different way, but I think a very powerful way. He says, "For as many as are the promises of God," and I love that. He doesn't tell you how many there are, "as many as there are," I mean, you can't begin to number them. "In Him" Christ, "the seed promised to Abraham, they are yes," they are yes, "therefore also through Him, Christ is our amen to the glory of God through us." I will tell you what, folks, if we just understood this morning who we are and whose we are and what we have in Him, it would just blow us away. But what happened to the Galatians was that they walked away from that beautiful truth.

Now all of this is in direct contrast. Paul has been building his case. He's like a lawyer in a courtroom. And he's been putting on one side what the law offered, which is nothing more than condemnation, it can't produce salvation, can't give you the Spirit of God. He's already told us that. It does have a role. But then he puts on the other side what Christ offers us. He in no way is referring here—by the statement that you are heirs according to the promise because you are spiritual descendants of Abraham—he's not talking about the physical promises given to Abraham. He's not talking about the land. He's not talking about the nation. He's talking about the spiritual things that are promised in Christ Jesus. You see, God sent His Son into this world. The Son of God became the Son of man as we will see in a little bit. And He came through that nation that God had given promise to Abraham. We are on the other side of that. We get to receive the spiritual promises that are ours in Christ Jesus.

Now in chapter 4 Paul wants to illustrate the spiritual immaturity of people like the Galatians who go back up under the old performance mentality of religion, when they would rather live by a set of rules than they would walk in the relationship they could have with the Father. And it's a beautiful thing he does here. You see, by going back under the law the Galatians not only did a stupid thing; remember the word "foolish" in Gal 3:1, can be translated stupid. It's an interesting word. And I don't know about you, but I do stupid things. I don't do dumb things. I know too much to do dumb things. Dumb things is when you don't know any better; stupid things is when you know better and you do it anyway. And the Galatians did a stupid thing. Not only did they do a stupid thing

by going back up under religion, they did an intensely immature thing. You see, we don't think about it that way. We think religion is maturity. Oh, no! It's gross immaturity is what it is, and he's going to show us that right here. I want you to think about this as you walk through this life, as you choose to do things your way, how immature and childish you have become. When we can walk as the adult sons of God, when we can live in maturity, if we will just simply learn to relate to Him and walk by faith. This is your contrast. This is what Paul is trying to show us.

Well, there are three things here. First of all Paul makes a comparison. And this comparison is awesome. Gal 4:1: "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child he is not different at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything. But he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father." In Gal 4:3 he says, "So also we." He's making a comparison. That "so also we" means he's taking something from their cultural background that they understand and he's comparing it with a spiritual truth that he's trying to teach the Galatian believers. "So also we;" he's simply explaining again the difference of being under law and being in Christ. In Gal 4:1 he says again, "Now I say as long as the heir is a child he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything." There was at some age in every culture that a young boy became a man. He entered through that rite of passage. And it was a beautiful thing and it was a cultural thing and they understood this language.

For instance, in the Roman world when a ceremony was held for a young lad to become a man, it was called the Toga Virilis, and it was a very special celebration when the young boy was no longer an immature child. He had entered into adulthood. In the Jewish world the same ceremony for young boys was held when they were 12 years old, and it was called the Bar Mitzvah. You already know that because it still goes on even today. The day finally came known as that Bar Mitzvah. It was a day that a young boy would now celebrate his adulthood, his manhood. It was observed on the first Sabbath after his 12th birthday. At that time the boy's father would pray "Blessed be Thou O God, who hath taken from me the responsibility of this boy." I love that. The young boy would pray this pray back. "O my God, and God of my father, on this solemn and sacred day which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto Thee and declare with sincerity and truth that henceforth I will keep Thy commandments and undertake to bear responsibility of my actions towards Thee."

In Greece, the boy would have to wait until he was 18 years old. At the age of 18 a celebration was held and the boy at that time was called an *ephebos*. It's kind of like a young cadet. For the next two years he would have a special responsibility to his family, to his city, to his country. It's kind of like it is in Switzerland even today. You automatically at a certain time go into the military for two years. It's not an option of a draft or a volunteer signing up. It's automatic that every young man does that. His hair would be cut off. I think we have adopted some of that in our military. I remember when I went to military school and they shaved my head to the skin. It would be cut off and then that hair would be taken and given to the god or Greek god Apollo. When the Romans held their ceremonies it was so sad. The children would bring their toys and their dolls. Little boys would bring their toys. The little girls would bring their dolls and they would sacrifice them to the gods and it was symbolic of relinquishing their childhood.

So with this cultural practice in mind they know what he's talking about immediately. Paul says in Gal 4:1, "As long as the heir is a child." Now, the word "child" there is *nepios*. We have seen that in weeks before. It's the child without any understanding. It's a baby. It's somebody that has to be carried around, can't talk, can't walk. It's the word used when Paul was upset with the church of Corinth who had chosen to go back into immaturity and he called them babies in Christ. "You just will not grow up." That's the word there. This would be immediately understood in their culture.

Paul adds, "Now as I say, as long as the heir is a child he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything." He doesn't differ at all from a slave. He is owner of everything. Even though a young boy was going to inherit the whole estate, when he hadn't gone through the rite of passage, he was no different than a slave. He had to live under the rules that were administered by other people. Paul says in Gal 4:2, "He is under guardians and managers, until the date set by the father." The term "guardian" was a term that referred to slaves hired by the father to make certain that the children were taken care of, that they got to school on time, that they ate their meals the right way. It is very much like the word "tutors" that we saw in Gal 3. The law became a tutor to lead us to Christ.

Then the word "managers" is the word *oikonomos*, which was the manager of a household. He's the guy that made sure everything took place. You eat at this time. You go to bed at this time. You eat this kind of food. You don't eat that kind of food. You got to school at this time. You do your homework at this time. You dress this way. You wear this. You don't wear that. And he had to live under that until he went through the rite of passage, then he was an adult. Then he could choose to live a different way. He lived this way until the date that was set by the father. The young boy was under control until a certain day that could only be determined by his father.

Now, this was going on everyday in their culture in Galatia. And Paul wanted to recall them to this practice so he could make his illustration. He lays the principle of the practice of a child becoming an adult. Did you know this? In 1 Corinthians 13:11 the apostle Paul says, "When I was a child I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child. When I became a man I did away with childish things." And on side he shows you the immaturity of when he was a Pharisee, when he was under religion. And then he

brings in his spiritual coming of age and he talks about his salvation.

Well, in Gal 4:3 Paul says, "So also we." Here comes the connection now. He's making a comparison. It's very clear here comes the connection. "So also we, while we were children," he goes on to say, "we were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world." I don't know if you have ever thought about it or not, but salvation is releasing you from a bondage. Before we became believers we were held under the elemental things of the world, just like those children that were kept under guardians and managers. Why? Because they were too immature to make their own choices. They had to be told what to do. They had to have a set of rules. It governed their behavior that governed the way that they thought. Now Paul is enlarging on what he has taught in Gal 3. You have to be real careful with this passage. The illustrations that are physical and tangible in Scripture can never fully and adequately explain a spiritual truth. Remember that. Don't try to read too much into the physical.

Listen to what he says is the spiritual application. Remember back in Gal 3:22 he has already built upon this. He says, "But the Scripture has shut all men up under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed." All Gentiles, all Jews, no matter, Gentiles had their own pagan religion. The Jews had their system, the Mosaic system. But whatever system you were under, he's going to refer to that and show how immature religion is, no matter what it is in this world, compared to the adult privileges we can have in Christ Jesus by trusting Him by faith.

"So also we," he says in Gal 4:3, "while we were children were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world." The word "elemental" there is the word *stoicheion*. *Stoicheion* means the ABC's of something. It's the basic set of rules that determines behavior, and begins to frame conduct and morality. Now what is he referring to? Many people wonder what these ABC's are. There are a lot of opinions, but I think if you will let Scripture speak for itself, it tells you what it is. ABC, as he speaks of here, is religion of any sort, any form, any shape. Look down in Gal 4:9, and he uses the same term and defines what he's talking about. He says, "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless," notice how he categorizes them, "elemental things [*stoicheion*] to which you desire to be enslaved all over again. You observe days and months and seasons and years." And he goes on to explain.

It's clear as a bell what he is talking about. Why would you go back up under this old immature system called religion when you can walk in the adult privileges of being a mature son of God? Why is it that you would want to do that? You see, on one side there's a relationship. On the other side there's a religion. In the Gentile world religion and philosophy were carefully brought together. And whatever system that was, it had its own set of rules. In the Jewish world it involved a system of rabbinic teaching. Whatever it is, he says, religion of any kind, be it Islam, be it Buddhism, be whatever it is, you put it over here. It's for the immature that need a set of rules and it doesn't save you in any way, shape or form.

It has got some good points to it. For instance, religion has helped frame government laws. These people who say the Ten Commandments don't belong in the courthouse because of some stupid reason they come up with, separation of church and state, they don't understand that to begin with; if you would just look our laws are framed by the very laws of God. That's where they come from. That's what religion is good for if you want to find some good for religion. It's good for conduct in every culture. It will shape culture. You can go to the darkest part of Africa and they are worshiping something. It might be a stick. It might be a stone. It might be a snake, but they are worshiping it, and that worship determines their behavior and their conduct and it determines their laws. It's all tied together. It's inherent within us, however—and this is the problem—that if we obey all those laws of religion that somehow that will justify us and then we can be right with God. That's the downfall. It can't work that way. That's what he is trying to point out.

I wonder how many of you here were members of a church, thought you were saved, until at some point in your walk, in your journey, you finally met Christ and now you look at the difference in your life. I raise my hand first. Is there anybody else that has had that experience? You see, we know exactly what he's talking about. Religion is for anybody; the weak-minded can go there because it is for the immature. You come of age at salvation and that's when you put away childish things. That's when you learn not to walk by your flesh and by your feelings. You learn to walk by faith in the living Lord God and faith in His Word. You trust Him and Him alone. But the Galatians had walked back under that old immaturity.

I will never forget the time it happened in my life. I thought I was saved. I was in the ministry. That's kind of good, to have saved ministers. But I was in youth work 17 years, thought I was saved. And finally God brought me to the end of myself and I remember bowing before Him and He showed me the ugliness of my flesh and I cried for two hours when I finally saw the difference of being convinced I had sinned and convicted I am a sinner. That's what he's talking about. People that are in religion are a dime a dozen. They are everywhere. And I guarantee you it's something that's for the immature. That's what Paul is saying. But people that have been born from above, have entered through the rite of passage and walked into adulthood. Now they've been taught to walk by faith, stand on what God said and don't let the feelings get in the way. You just walk saying yes to Him.

Well, salvation is becoming of age spiritually. There comes a time in the comparison here, a date that is set by the father. Boy, I love that. People talk about seekers in our day and time. And I want to tell you something, nowhere in Scripture do you find that. Isaiah

said there are none who seeks after God. It's never the creation seeking after the Creator. It is the Creator seeking after the creation. And He sets the date and the time. He knows that moment and that hour. He already knows that, when we are going to enter into spiritual adulthood, when we are finally born from above. He knows that. We don't know that. Sometimes it is at six years old; sometimes it is at 60 years old. Who knows? God knows that hour. I remember my brother-in-law who didn't get saved for years and would laugh at me when I would say the blessing. But he was a very good man, a very moral man. Finally God saved him and you know what he told me? He says, "Wayne, God had a time, God had a time. I didn't know when that time was." And he's as different today as night and day.

It's beautiful to see the change that comes in somebody's life. That's what Paul is saying. There comes a time in everybody's life. Children are those under religion and under law, but at some time, at a date set by the Father, He finds us and at that moment we receive Jesus into our hearts. We enter the rite of passage. We become sons of God, baptized into His Spirit. We belong to God and that's when salvation takes place.

But there's a second thought here. Oh, this gets exciting. Not only is the date set by the father that we enter spiritual adulthood, just like in their culture in a physical sense and a spiritual sense, not only is the date set by the father, but also the time of Jesus who came to this earth, that date was also set by the Father. Many people don't understand why it took God so long to send Jesus to this earth. And they think it was a knee-jerk reaction to the bad situation on earth or whatever. Oh, no! Time is nothing to God. God is a very purposeful God, and it was at the exact moment in history when Jesus came to this earth. He's the completion of all that has been promised. He's going to say in a moment it was "in the fullness of time" that Jesus came.

Do you realize what Paul is doing here? He's trying to bring the Galatians back to understanding who they are and whose they are, what they have in Christ, to show that even though we have not arrived, we can still walk in the mature privileges of sons. Why would you want to go back and do something so stupid, he tells them, and get back up under a religious system that only pleases the flesh? That's the comparison he is drawing.

The final point this morning, we have seen the comparison and the connection, the spiritual connection, but I want to show you the completion. When does it all consummate? When did it all finally come together? Well, he says in Gal 4:4-7, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son born of a woman, born under the law in order that He might redeem those who were under the law and that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, 'Abba, Father'. Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son then an heir through God."

Oh, let's walk through this very carefully. The sonship that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, which came at the moment of salvation, was only made possible by Jesus coming to this earth. That's what he's trying to bring out. Not until then, but it was a fulfilled time. It was at a date that was set by the Father. Even the most righteous of the Old Testament prophets, the ones that trusted and looked forward to the coming of Christ, in Hebrews 11:39 it says, "And all of these having gained approval through their faith did not receive what was promised because God had provided something better for us."

Now, I want to show you something here. When we choose to do things our own way, when we choose to live out of our feelings, when we choose to live out of our own agenda, we have slapped the prophets right in the face. They didn't get to live in the day that we are living in. We're living in the fulfillment of the new covenant. We're living in a time when we have been made sons of God and we can walk by faith, and that Christ lives within us. And he's trying to make a comparison here and saying you're going to go back up under that old religious garbage. Is that what you're going to do? "But when the fullness of the time came God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." The word "fullness of time" is the word *pleroma*. *Pleroma* is the word that means when something has finally been made complete. God had the exact hour. He had the exact date.

I think about the period of time from Malachi to Matthew, 400 years of silence. God withdrew His presence from the temple. He was so upset with the behavior of Israel, and He just withdrew His presence; and for 400 years it is called the period of darkness. And during those 400 years He didn't break the silence whatsoever. But it says in Hebrews then finally He broke the silence. He spoke in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He broke the darkness. He broke the silence and Jesus was born of a virgin. It was at a specific point in time, in the fullness of time, at the exact moment in time, kind of like an alarm clock that goes off.

I don't know about you, but every night I set my alarm clock. I don't like doing that because I don't like the way it disturbs me in the morning. And I usually set it for 6:30 or 7:00. And I go to sleep and I'm not even aware that that alarm clock is in the world. I'm somewhere in my dreams shooting an elk and I don't even think about that alarm clock. But I tell you what, when it gets around 7:00 and that thing goes off, man, the first thing I want to do is rip it out of the wall and throw it as far as I can. Why are you making that much noise? Because you set it, Wayne. God set it, and at a certain time it went off. God knew exactly the right moment. He knew when that was going to happen. "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son."

Now, see, Jesus is that seed promised to Abraham. In Him are all the promises of salvation. And He finally came to this earth, the fullness of time. Since the Babylonian captivity the Jews had turned back to God. They never went back to that idolatry. The pain of

disobedience had been too great for the perfect time for Him to come. When Ezra read the law at watergate and the people repented, I mean, it was a tremendous revival that came about. They didn't have to worry about going back to idolatry again, buddy, they're not going to do that. The Greek culture had been established by Alexander the Great when Jesus came. Greek was the main language, well, actually the second language of everybody that lived on the face of this earth. Greek is the most exact language that has ever been given in any language. It was the perfect time for Jesus to come. Nobody could misunderstand the things that God wanted to tell them. The Roman Empire had established a peace that allowed people to travel freely on the road so that they could take the message of the gospel here and there and nobody would hinder them. It was at the perfect time that Jesus came. The time was right "when the fullness of time came," when everything was completed that God needed to complete, "then God sent forth His Son, born of a woman."

Now that term "born of a woman" is not to point to the fact that He is born of a virgin. Yes He was, but that's not his point here. What he's trying to say is He was fully man, and He was fully God. He had to be fully God for the sacrifice to atone for man's sin. Had He not been fully God then it would have been just a good man that died on the cross. But He also had to be fully man in order to represent all of us, Jew and Gentile. That's what He came for, to die for our sins. To become our elder brother He had to be born of a woman, so He was born to the virgin Mary in Bethlehem.

"But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," now watch, "born under the law." The law that held everybody prisoner, He was born under that law, like every other man. And, like every other Jew, He was under obligation to obey and be judged by the conformity, His own conformity to the law that God had given. But unlike every other Jew, He completely satisfied the requirements of the law. He fulfilled every single one of them. He dotted every "i," He crossed every "t." Because He lived in perfect obedience, as the God-man He was able to redeem all of us from being shut up under sin, from being in bondage to sin, up under the law.

It says in Gal 4:5, "In order that He might redeem those who were under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons." And the word for "redeem," oh, it is such a beautiful word. It is *exagorazo*. It means to pay a ransom to secure somebody's freedom. In other words, you can see a person on a slave block and he is chained and he has a big old chain and ball on his foot and he cannot go anywhere. And a man comes along and says, "Wait, whoa, whoa, I want to pay that man's debt," and he goes over and unleashes the chains and sets the man free. That's what He came to do for you and I. His death on the cross atoned for us and set us free. Have you ever thought about that?

There's a hymn that I learned. It's "And Can It Be?" Listen to this: "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood? Died He for me who caused His pain, for me who Him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be, that Thou my God should die for me?" And listen to this verse. "Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night Thine eye defused a quickening ray. I awoke the dungeon flame with light my chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth and followed Thee. Amazing love how can it be that Thou my God dost die for me?"

Let me ask you a question: does this motivate you during the week? Do you stop sometime and tears flood your eyes when you realize that Jesus came at the perfect time, that Jesus came to die on the cross to take your sin upon Himself, and then He wants to come to live in you? He set you free from the bondage that all of us have to the law; its condemnation, its control. You know what I think is going on in our generation? We have lost the wonder of our salvation. We have lost the awe. And I tell you more than that, we have lost the joy of our salvation. That's what's wrong with us. I will tell you, I have done it myself, just recently. Man, I have had to ask God to bring back the joy of my salvation. I tell you what, being in the pastorate is like being the center of bull's eye in a target. I don't know if you ever saw that *Far Side* cartoon when the deer had that big target on him and said, boy, that's a bummer of a birthmark, you know. I know exactly what you are talking about. It's amazing to me how quickly I can get my eyes off of Jesus and I can put my eyes on a circumstance. I can listen to the criticism and not even see what God is doing in the midst of it. And I have to have the joy of my salvation brought back.

What is wrong with us? This is truth. This is truth that ought to literally motivate us until the day Jesus comes back, but we sit and we snore and we look at our watch and we say "Ho hum." That's exactly what is wrong with us. That's what is wrong with the Galatian church. It wasn't good enough anymore. They wanted to go back to that old system. They liked to be babies again. Let's go back in the nursery. Let's play around with our feelings. Let's just get our way, you know, let's hold people hostage so we can get our own agenda accomplished. That's Galatia. And Paul is trying to put up next to it the beauty, the beauty of being a son of the living God, living in the mature privileges of God simply by walking by faith and trusting Him.

The word for redeemed, as we said, means to purchase somebody off the slave block. The word for adoption is a word we have already seen, *huiothesia*, sonship. It also meant to be brought into a family to which you are not naturally born, to be adopted into a family. Christ came for at least two reason that Paul very clearly states. One, to release us from the law, from the bondage, not just the Ten Commandment, but the whole Mosaic system and all religions no matter what they are. But secondly, to secure for believers the rights of sonship which was promised to Abraham and to his seed. He came to accomplish that, and it is in Christ that we receive

it, we receive it by faith. Gal 4:5 again, “In order that He might redeem those who are under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

When a person puts their faith into Christ Jesus to be their Lord, he is purchased off the slave block of sin and he is immediately made a son of God. He is adopted into the family of God. And Gal 4:6 is going to show us how precious this is. Religion doesn't offer this; only Christ offers this. “And because you are sons,” he said, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,” now look at this, “crying Abba, Father.”

Now, first of all, he clarifies who the Holy Spirit is. He is the Spirit of His Son. It's interesting to me how many people think you receive the Lord Jesus at salvation, later on you have to get the Holy Spirit. No way, no way! There are not three Gods, it is one God and three Persons. You receive Jesus, He, and His Spirit comes to live in you. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:9-10 clarify that. It says, “However you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” He calls Him the Spirit of God. He calls Him the Spirit of Christ. He is the Holy Spirit that comes to live in us.

But what is it that the Spirit does in this context? And this is what blesses me. It has taken the whole message to get right here. “And because you are sons, God has sent for the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, ‘Abba, Father.’” One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit of God is to enable the believer to cry out to the Father and to understand the tenderness and sensitivity the Father has to His children. It's a beautiful picture here. The Spirit enables us to cry out to the Father. “Abba” is the Aramaic word for daddy or papa. It's that tender little word that a child knows. A child doesn't have any trouble with this at all. Adults, yes we do. We don't think of it in that light.

I love it, as a matter of fact, when my son, who is now 30, calls me daddy. He does that every now and then. Sometimes it's “dad.” That's kind of hard. But, boy, when he is tender and when he is hurting he calls our house, he says, “Daddy, can I talk to you?” Shew, that grabs my heart. I don't know about you but that grabs my heart. You know what Paul is saying here? Paul is saying the law, when you fail, will condemn you. You want law? Go ahead, help yourself. But if you want the relationship of walking with maturity in the sonship of God of trusting Him, when you fail God He doesn't condemn you. He forgives you. Why? Because He went to the cross to pay your sin debt. So when you cry out Abba Father in the midst of your failure, and it's the most beautiful truth here—and I think he's trying to begin to plant seeds for the Galatians; they have failed; they have gone back to the law—but if they will run back to the Father, and cry out Abba, Father, He hears their cry.

Paul is saying, “You want religion, is that what you want? You want to throw away the fact that you have an intimacy with the Father? Do you want to throw away the privileges you have as adult sons living in Jesus Christ? You want to stop walking by faith? Would you rather lose the joy of your salvation and go do it yourself? Do you want to go back to the most immature thing you can possibly come up with which is called religion or do you want the maturity of walking in a relationship?” That's your difference. That's why some people that are believers don't have clue what we're talking about. They are religious and have never been willing to enter the relationship by faith.

Colossians 2:6, “As you therefore have received Him [by faith], so walk ye in Him.” The same way you walk in after you receive Him. There is no difference. This is his point. And in Gal 4:7 he finishes it up, “Therefore you are no longer a slave.” He doesn't say you are no longer a child. Some people try to use this and say, well, some Christians are children, some Christians are sons. No, that's not what he's saying. He says, “you are no longer a slave,” bound to the law, condemned by it. He says, “But you are a son.” And he's reminding them of who they are. And then he says, “And if a son, then an heir through God.” Do you know how helpful this is in our Christian walk? My daughter has the ability to remind me who I am as much as anybody who lives on the face of this earth. Between my daughter and my wife and the Holy Spirit I'm going to get there. I have to tell them from time to time there is no vacancy in the Trinity. I am sorry, He is not going to. But it is awesome how God uses my daughter and my wife, particularly. That's what Paul is doing in Galatians. He's trying to gently remind them of who they are. Stop living as children, he said. Stop living as children and walk in the adult privileges of sonship. But if you get under religion, that's your flesh. That's all it is and that's what he's warning them against. And the division they brought in the churches in Galatia was incredible and you will see it as it comes up in Gal 5 and in Gal 6. He's laying his foundation, right here.

Galatians 4:8-12 Son or Slave?

Christianity and the Christian life—and I hope we understand this from the text that we have been studying—is all about Christ. It's all about Christ. It's about me learning to say yes to Him, and you, all of us, and letting Jesus be Jesus in us, letting Him be the life in us, manifesting His character through us.

Turn with me this morning to Galatians 4. We are going to be looking at Gal 4:8-12 today. What a wonderful book, the book of

Galatians. Christianity and the Christian life—and I hope we understand this from the text that we have been studying—is all about Christ. It's all about Christ. It's about me learning to say yes to Him, and you, all of us, and letting Jesus be Jesus in us, letting Him be the life in us, manifesting His character through us.

Let me introduce you this morning to Edgar. [Edgar is an oven mitt.] Somebody gave me this years ago and I said, "What am I going to do with it? I cannot cook. I cannot even boil water." However, it serves as a great illustration. You know Edgar, Edgar, I want you to say hello to all these people out there, because, you know, they're our friends. Would you just say yes, hi, to them and say something to them. Just wiggle a little bit. Would you do that? Well, Edgar, you're just not very helpful. Just do something. Make a noise. Can you make a noise? Isn't it interesting that a person without Jesus Christ is about like that? You can put a law over it; it can't even respond. It has no clue what to do. But I tell you what, you put a little life inside of Edgar, just put a life inside of Edgar [slips "Edgar" on his hand]. Edgar, would you say something to these people? "Hey, how are y'all doing?" Boy, it just does all kinds of things now, doesn't it? Well, now it's amazing.

You know what we just learned? It's not about Edgar, is it? Edgar can't do a thing. He can't do a thing. It's all about the life that's in Edgar. That's what Paul is trying to get across in the book of Galatians. We don't need Edgar to teach us that. The book of Galatians teaches us that. We need to understand that the Christian life is not me trying to do anything for God. It's letting God do something in and through me. And what is it that unlocks that door? What is it that releases the presence and the power of God in all of our lives that are believers? It is one word, and it's the word "faith."

Faith unlocks the door to all the blessings that we already have in Christ Jesus. Faith is allowing Him and His Word to dwell richly within our lives. It's not a performance mentality. It's not this mentality that says if I go to church this many times and if I study my Bible this much and if I give out this many tracts, these many tracts, then somehow I can prove myself to be spiritual. That's religion. That's a performance mentality. No sir! It's not Edgar. It's saying, "Lord, I can't do it, but You can and I am willing to cooperate with You in all ways. I am willing to trust You. I am willing to bow before You," and then letting Jesus be Jesus in us. That's the subject of the whole book of Galatians. And Paul takes this subject of faith, which is the key that unlocks the door, and he weaves it all the way through the six chapters of Galatians. It's not maybe the main theme, but it's one of the main themes.

And just for a second, in fact, a brief one, I want to show you how he weaves this thought through Galatians. In fact, in every chapter he does the same thing just a little different way. In Gal 1:23 he gives his testimony. And in giving his testimony he talks about how the believers, back when he was saved, were talking about him. Many of the believers had never met him. They had only heard about him. But this is what they began to say once the message got around that he had become a believer. And Gal 1:23, "But only," Paul says, "they kept hearing [and here is what they kept hearing] he who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith that he once tried to destroy." The term "the faith" covers it. That became his message. Here is a man that lived religiously most of his life and now he's a believer. It was faith that received the Lord Jesus into his heart and became a believer. But it's also faith once you have become a believer. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:6, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus [by faith], so walk you in Him," by faith. That's his message. And this message began to identify who Paul was even to those early believers.

Now certainly faith in Christ is the way to [[salvation]]. And Paul rehearses this for Simon Peter in Gal 2:16. He has to get right in his face. He has to remind him that it was not works of the law that saved them; it was only faith in Jesus Christ. And in Gal 2:16 he says, "Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified [that word means saved; he's not saved] by the works of the law [there's not anything he can obey to obtain [[salvation]]] but through faith in Christ Jesus." He had to remind Simon Peter of that.

But then on the other hand in Gal 2 he also shows that it's faith after you get saved, that which is his message. He says in Gal 2:20 the clearest statement about what the Christian life is that you can find anywhere. He says in Gal 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live [and I love this], but it is Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh [in this same body I had before I got saved] I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." Now, to understand faith, we have to realize that faith allows no confidence whatsoever to be placed into the flesh. There's no confidence at all can be put into our flesh.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful when all of us were growing up and we were in churches, if you grew up that way, and you were in committee meetings and they said, "What can we do for God? How can we help Him out?" Wouldn't it have been wonderful if we could have understood this truth? Because, you see, there is nothing we can do for Him, other than surrender to Him. He doesn't want our abilities; He wants our availability to Him.

So in Gal 3 he quizzes the Galatians, the foolish Galatians. And he wants to make sure that they rethink what they've done. They've gone back up under religion, and he says in Gal 3:2, "This is the only thing I want to find out from you," Paul says. "I only have one question of you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?" And, of course, the answer was clear: They knew that the law had never done anything for them. They remembered the day when they bowed in total desperation, seeing themselves as sinners. They remember receiving Jesus into their hearts. And so Paul asked them now in Gal 3:3, "Are you so foolish," he says, "having begun by the Spirit?" You remember what it was like. You were desperate. You couldn't save yourself. "If

you had begun that way, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" And in that phrase he shows you the enemy to faith. The enemy to faith, to living by faith is the flesh. The flesh will be religious. The flesh will pray; it will sing; it will do whatever you want it to do, as long as you let it rule and reign your life. And he said that's the enemy to the living the Christian life, to letting Jesus live His life through us.

Now to strengthen his argument he starts back with that [[salvation]] again, by faith. And he goes to Abraham and he says in Gal 3:6, "Even so Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." You see, he takes them right back to their hero, to Abraham. And then he opens the subject up to believers, Jew and Gentile and he makes a powerful statement in Gal 3:7. He says, "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith [who are out of faith, who originate out of faith, nothing else] are the sons of Abraham."

But then, you see, he's doing the same thing. He shows that [[salvation]] is by faith, proving it through Abraham. And then he turns right around and shows that once you get saved that's the only way to live and to enjoy the relationship. In 3:11 he says "Now, that no one is justified or saved by the law before God is evident, for the righteous man [the one who is already saved] shall live by faith." And he quotes out of Habakkuk 2. He says it has always been this way.

And then in Gal 3:26 he moves it to an entirely different level. And look what he says here. He says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." You have entered into the adult position of sonship in Christ Jesus. This is your position in Him. You are no longer children under the law. You are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

And in chapter 4 what he does, and we saw the beginning of it last week, Gal 4:1-7. And what he's doing there is to try to show the immaturity of anybody who lives religiously as opposed to those who walk in the adult privileges of sonship. And his point is if it was faith that caused you to receive this position, it's only by faith that you can enjoy this position. In other words, if a person isn't going to walk in the intimacy of a relationship, confessing his sins, making sure the blood daily is cleansing him, a person who is saying yes to God and yes to His word moment by moment by moment by moment, then he only has one other choice, and that's to walk after the flesh, and the flesh cannot produce what only faith can.

Faith causes us to enter that which we already have in Christ Jesus. In fact, what Paul does is he compares a principle of their day and he shows how a son, a child, at some point in his life, whether it be Roman culture, Grecian culture, Jewish culture, entered into a time of adulthood, the rite of passage. That's when he became an adult and there was a celebration for that particular time. And he compares that practice that they understood culturally, he compares that to the spiritual coming of age which is salvation. He says in Galatians 4:1, "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child he does not differ at all from a slave, although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world."

Paul said there was a time that we were just like those children. There was a time when we were under the ABC's of what he would call religion. And he said that religion may have helped us; it may have governed some of our external behavior; but it couldn't change us from the inside out. And the word "elemental" there means the ABC's. What he's saying is a person who puts themselves under law has put themselves back up under immaturity. And in Gal 4:4 he says, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law so that He might redeem those who are under the law that we might receive the adoption as sons." You see, He forgave us of all of our sin. Jesus had to come and pay the price on the cross before salvation could be completed. And now we live in that new covenant. And he says we used to be children and we used to be up under the rules and the regulations whether we rebelled against them or whether we sought to live after them.

But he says one day when Jesus came He birthed us into the family of God. And then in Gal 4:6 he says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying 'Abba, Father.'" And that is that little word we looked at last week, Daddy, Daddy, papa. It's a precious tender word that we have in our relationship with the Father that under the law you don't have. When a person is under the law and living after his own flesh, then he is under a curse. He has put himself there and there is no forgiveness in the law. However, when a person is under grace and he chooses to walk and live that way, he can cry out when he fails because he is not going to be condemned.

There is no condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus, and he can cry out "Abba, Father, I have failed again," and God immediately surrounds him and the forgiveness is his; and he can stand up and continue to walk in the newness of life that God gives to him. We don't have that under law. We have that under grace. Now technically, positionally, it is always ours, but we can refuse it when we choose to do things our own way.

One of the beautiful things about my children—and they are in their 30's—when they call me and they are hurting—that's not beautiful—but when they call me they say "daddy," they always say daddy. If they aren't hurting it's "dad," and that's more respectful and that's more adult. But when you're hurting you cry out for daddy, you cry out for daddy. And that's what you have in the relationship. If I choose to walk by faith I enter into the fullness of that relationship even though positionally I have always had it. I get

to enjoy it for myself. That's why Paul says in Romans 12, "Prove for yourself what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

And then in Gal 4:7 the apostle affirms our sonship and he calls us heirs. You have to be in a family to be an heir. He says, "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but you are a son; and if a son then you are an heir through God." Now, I want you to think with me because Paul is trying to get the Galatians to think. Let's think with him. What are the implications of that statement, "you are no longer slaves, but you are sons," with full privileges in the family of God? You see, if you're not enjoying that, perhaps you have to be taught it and you still don't know it. Even though it's true, we still haven't grasped it. Once we are free from the bondage to the law we are free from slavery. We have to learn to live by faith because it is faith that appropriates what is already ours in the Lord Jesus.

You know what the Galatians did? They dropped out of the school of grace and they re-enrolled into the kindergarten of law. That's exactly what they did. And how many times in our life have we all done the same thing? When we choose not to live in that intimacy of a relationship, we choose not to say yes to God, we choose not to let His word totally affect our behavior and our life, we choose to enroll one more time in the school of the law, the kindergarten of law. We have a choice today. We have a choice to live as a slave and we have a choice to live as a son. Slaves have no relationship with the Father and they have no relationship with the family. Only by faith do we enjoy those relationships. Even though technically, positionally, they are ours, we don't enjoy them unless we are willing to live by faith.

And this begs the question that I am going to address today in Gal 4:8-12. And here is the question: Are you—now draw a circle around yourself and forget that anybody else is here, but just draw that circle and say—am I living as a slave or am I living as a son? Have I chosen to say yes to God? Have I chosen to lay everything down and just let Jesus be Jesus in my life, or have I chosen not to go that route? Am I living as a slave or am I living as a son?

And there are three things that are a downside of living as a slave that Paul addresses the Galatians that I want us to understand this morning, three things in Gal 4:8-12. First of all, we want to see the frustration of being a slave. Now, Paul has to take them back and remind them where they used to be. What is it like to serve a master, a god, little "g" that is helpless and uncaring? You see, my flesh cares about nothing but itself. And when I choose to do things my way, I step outside of the compassion and the presence and the power of God. What's it like to serve as a slave rather than to live as a son? And Paul takes the Galatians back to their pagan past. He takes them back to when they were sinners, totally in bondage to the law, whatever law that was, the condemnation of the law in Gal 4:8. "However, at that time," Paul says, "when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods."

Now what he's talking about, "when you did not know God," refers back to when they weren't believers. It wasn't talking about when they didn't know about God, really. But he is talking about, they knew about Him, but he is talking about when they didn't know Him intimately. He uses a particular Greek word here. It is *oida*. But it means to intuitively know someone. A little baby intuitively knows the sound of his mother's voice. It's something intuitive. He doesn't have to go to school to learn it. It's something that's given to him. This is the word used in Romans 8:28, "For we know that God causes all things." It's something that is intuitive. You don't have to be taught this. And he's referring back then to a time that they had never come to intuitively or divinely perceive who the Lord Jesus Christ truly is.

He says, "However, at that time when you did not know God," that time refers to that pagan past when they used to live as slaves to their flesh. Paul takes them back to that terrible, terrible time. "However, at that time when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods." Now, Paul points here to the gods that they used to serve, and he puts it in the plural. We only have one God, but he says the flesh has many gods, little "g," little gods. He takes them back to the days of living in bondage. And if you have ever studied their culture, going back to the days of superstition and slavery, they had some of the weirdest philosophies. The world came into being by a giant egg that hatched and people came from that. I mean, you wouldn't believe some of the things they believed back when they were pagans and the gods that they served.

He says, "You are slaves to those which by nature are no gods." Now, to make this practical, to help us understand it, an idol or a [[god]], a false [[god]], is anything that comes from man. We have got to understand there is only one true God. So anything else that a person chooses to worship comes from man. It is from man's creativity, from man's mind. In fact, Acts 17:29 really nails this. It says, "Being then the offspring of God [he speaks to believers], we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone." Their gods were made out of all three of those things. "An image formed by the art [the creativity] and the thought of man." Any idol, it doesn't matter what it is, comes from man. If we believe God that's something totally entirely different. He says, "To those which by nature are no gods." The word for "nature" is the word *phusis*, and *phusis* is the word that means did not have any origination from God. It's used in Galatians 2:15 when Paul says "We are Jews by nature." And he says those gods you served back before you became a believer, they didn't have any nature of God in them. There was nothing divine about them.

Now, you have to stop and think; Paul doesn't become specific here. If they were Jewish, the mindset of the Galatians may be it was the 613 laws that man added to Mosaic law, and perhaps that become their god. Maybe that's what he's talking about, back when

you used to let the law be your master. Or to the pagan Gentile in Galatia, he could be referencing thousands of pagan idols that they had. But how does that relate to you and me in the 21st century? And I will tell you what it is. Anything that is an idol is nothing more than pure flesh. And if we want to put it in simplistic terms for us today to get anything out of what Paul is saying here, he is saying, remember when you were lost and you used to serve the idols that your flesh came up with, whatever that was? Maybe it was your job. Maybe it was power. Maybe it was money. Maybe it was something else, but you were a servant before you got saved to some kind of pagan idol. And he wants to identify what those things are as to their character.

He says, "To those which by nature were no gods." And the word "gods" is the word *theos*. And *theos* is that beautiful word for God that we see in Scripture, the divine personality, the divine power, the divine passion. He says anything that you have ever served, other than God, has no divine personality, no divine power, and no divine passion in it. Why would you ever want to yield to anything other than the One who is the true God? Anything that the flesh can come up with, whatever it is, has no divine power, personality, or passion. So when the Galatians were lost they were frustrated. They couldn't, they could not receive anything from these gods because those gods couldn't give them anything back. They had no divine personality. There was nothing in what they served to give them any fulfillment whatsoever.

Now why does Paul bring this up, because these are saved believers? He brings it up because the Galatian believers had chosen rather than to walk in the fullness of the promises, rather than to enjoy the full adult privileges of being intimate with the Father, and walking daily with Him, they have chosen to go back to what their flesh has come up with. They have chosen what can give them nothing but despair, frustration. Paul has been there before himself and he says, why, why would you go back to a slavery that you have been set free from? Gal 4:9 says, "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" You know, if I could get inside of Paul's brain, what he's saying is, it's literally insane, it's insane for a believer to deny the fullness of what God offers him in Christ and to choose anything else that he becomes a servant to.

Let me ask you a question. Are you living as a slave or are you living as a son? If you are living as a son, the character of Jesus, like in Edgar, is being manifested in your life. He's motivating your life. He's moving your life. He's presenting His presence in your life. If you are not, you've got something you have attached yourself to and chosen to become its slave. And it's what is driving you. It's what is framing your mindset. It does everything against relationships. That's what Paul is trying to get across to the Galatians. He's not down on them, he's frustrated. He's trying to get them back to the place that God would have them to be.

The frustration of being a slave. I've been there, I understand it. I'm not pointing a finger at anybody. I have four pointing right back at me. Everybody in here has been there at least once this past week. If you haven't then you can't say with Paul "I have not yet arrived." Nobody has arrived in this yet. But it's good for us to understand the stupidity of the choices that we make. I know I have got a PhD in how to do stupid things.

The second thing: the frustration of choosing to be a slave. Let's just all be honest here. The foolishness of choosing to be a slave. Not only the frustration; you can never get out of it what you are looking for. It can't offer you anything. It has nothing of God in it. But he said now the frustration, the foolishness of choosing to be a slave. The Galatians were not slaves because somebody made them be; they were slaves because they choose to be. Now that is the height of stupidity. When I was in Romania once I said to some precious Romanians, "I'm so sorry that they have forced you into this communism." And they looked at me very sheepishly, almost as if the blood had drained out of their face. And I said, "Did I say something wrong?" And they said, "Wayne, don't you know?" I said, "Evidently not." They said, "We weren't forced into communism. We voted it in. We made the choice. We chose the slavery that we have been under for all these many years." That's what the Galatians did. That's why Paul says in Gal 3:1, "O foolish Galatians!" What are you doing, he said to them. Gal 4:9: "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turned back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"

Now the phrase at the end of that verse governs the whole verse. We have to understand that before we can go back and start at the beginning. "To which you would desire to be enslaved all over again." Now that's the key thought. The word "desire" is the word *thelo*. "You choose to continue to desire," because it's in a tense that is present active. You are choosing. You are choosing as I write, Paul said. Your constant choice is you desire to be enslaved again. It means that you have every intention of doing it. That word *thelo* means a conviction. I mean, it's an intense word. "I'm going to do this, bless God, and nobody is going to stop me." And that's the attitude that he's referring to right here. "I'm going to expel all energy that I have to go this particular route rather than walk with God. I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it." That's the word "desire." And that phrase governs the verse.

And now if you take that, just start back at the beginning of the verse and see what he's talking about here. He says, "But now that you have come to know God." See, he's contrasting something here. "Come to know God," the word for knowing God is to experience Him, *ginosko*. It's a different word than what we saw earlier. It means to know Him by experience. And it's in the aorist tense and it's active. It means there was a time when an event took place in your life. You experienced God. You knew Him the very moment you bowed in faith before Him. That was a knowing of God. Isn't that awesome! I got to tap into, experience actually, the

God that created the air that I breath. I got to know Him and experience Him the moment I bowed and received Him as my Savior.

It was an established fact that they had experienced God in salvation, so he's just documenting that. "You are believers, but let me talk to you as believers," he said. But quickly he changes it from us knowing God to God knowing us, which puts salvation in its proper perspective. There's no such thing as us seeking after God. God has always been seeking after us. He says, "But now that you have come to know God," and look what he says, "or rather to be known by God," and he puts that in the passive voice. And what he's saying here is God has known us since before the foundations of this world. That truth continues to overwhelm me. He knew everything about me. I couldn't do anything today that He was not already aware of. He knows my thoughts before I think them. He knows the words before they ever come out of my mouth. He knows what I'm going to do, and yet, He still loved me and knew me.

That's a very intimate word, far beyond anything I can explain. He has fully known us and He has desired that we come to know Him. And, you see, when we came to know Him, His knowing us, it all became a completed cycle. And that's what He has been about all; He finally completed it. He brought us into the family. He wanted us to be free from sin before the foundation of the world. He wanted us to walk in that beautiful relationship before the foundations of this world. He knew that man would sin, but He also knew that Jesus would come and die as our Redeemer upon the cross, and He wanted us to be a part of the family. He wanted us to be able to cry out "Abba, Father," and he's reminding those Galatians of that.

With this in mind, then he says, "You have come to know Him, but He knew you long before that." And now that the cycle is complete, now that you're in the family, look what he says: "How is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?" Wow, to go back to the weak and worthless things. We have already determined that elemental means ABC's, means religion, and we are going to show that even more clearly now in just a second. Why would you go back to religion which requires performance, and performance is nothing that God accepts? Why would you go that route, he said? And then he sums up all religion and everything that it involves in one phrase. He says, "How is it that you turned back again to the weak and to the worthless elemental things?"

He uses two words that sum it all up. The word for "weak" is the word *asthenes*. It means it has no strength; it has no inherent power. Have you ever tried to go back to some religious performance mentality and realized there's nothing here? You can have your quiet time till you fall over in the floor, but if you're not there to meet God out of love for Him, it's not going to do a thing in the world for you, but just suck some time out of your life. That's all it's going to do. You can give your tithe to the church, and you can do that and do that and do that. It can become so mechanical all you end up is broke. It hasn't done any good. It's weak. It's not in the doing. He said the doing isn't the key. It's the becoming. And he says all religion offers is weak. And then secondly he says, it's worthless. And the word "worthless" is the word *ptochos*. *Ptochos* is the word for someone who is absolutely and totally helpless. It's a beggar. It's somebody lying on a stretcher that can't even move. It's the word God uses in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," *ptochos*. It's the word that means you're helpless.

And he says you want to go back to the flesh. Do you really want to just play church? Do you want to see if you can come up with a good opinion as to what the church ought to be? He's saying this to the Galatians. This is a religious, this is a Christian context here. Do you want to go back and offer your ideas to God, or do you want God to offer His ideas to you? Your ideas, your religion, your system, your rules, your regulations, he says all that is, they are weak, and they are worthless, and you have desired—it blows me away—you have chosen, you have committed yourself to going back to the very thing Jesus has freed you from.

Well, in Gal 4:10, he tells us what those ABC's were, and we see that it's religion. He says, "You observe days, and months, and seasons and years." Now, as a former Pharisee, Paul identified with these very quickly. Because, remember, the deceiving people that had come amongst them were Judaizers, the Mosaic law, the ceremonial, etc. They had come to put this back on these Galatians, and the Galatians had foolishly bought it. See, that terminology and that vocabulary, "the days and the months, seasons and years," would most likely be Jewish terms. The term days would refer to them to Sabbath days, to feasts days, to the fasts days. The term months would refer to the harvest celebration such as the month of Abib, when the corn was finally ripe. On the 16th day of the month of Abib the harvest would take place. On the 17th day the firstfruits would be offered unto the Lord. Seasons would be seasons such as the Passover season or Pentecost or Tabernacles. And it would mark specific events in the history of Israel that they would set aside as holy days. The term years would be such things as the sabbatical year, the seventh year or the year of Jubilee, which would be the fiftieth year.

Now, you see, many of those Pharisees had observed every one of those things during their lifetime. And yet they had no life in them whatsoever. It's like a lot of people today. They can come to church. They can give to the church. They can't miss anything for a whole year. Back when I was growing up they had attendance pins and some people would trip over them as they walked through the door. They have never missed a time and they are spiritual, yet they are the meanest people in the whole church. It hadn't done them any good. And that's what he's trying to say. You want to go back to that kind of thing? All these terms most likely fit the Judaizers, terms that they had deceived them with in their false doctrine. These Galatians which Paul calls foolish, or as we could

say stupid, had re-enrolled in the kindergarten of the law instead of graduating into the school of grace, learning what grace is and walking in that relationship with Him.

We have to be careful when we deal with them however cause every one of us, when we choose our flesh, have just done exactly the same thing. We love to measure what we do. "How many did you have at church last week?" "Well, we had this many." "Well, we had this many." "Oh, you're more spiritual than we are." And we tend to measure ourselves by the way the world measures us. Brother Hession told me one time, he said, "Wayne, we are preaching the same message in England you are preaching over here. We are losing people; you are gaining people. Which one of us is doing it right?" And the point was well taken. When God does something you cannot measure. You don't know exactly what He's doing. You just let Him do it. But, you see, when we get back up under that mindset that's what kills us. That's what robs us of the intimacy of relationship we can have with Christ.

But the utter foolishness of choosing to be a slave, the frustration; it's not going to provide anything for us. There's nothing divine in it with the flesh. But not only that, the foolishness of it, why would you choose to go back to something that offers you nothing? And then finally, the feat of choosing to be a slave. What feat does, is accomplished when we choose to go back to slavery. And evidently this is a real problem, because if those believers under Paul had been taught by him could do that, we can certainly do that in our time. What does it accomplish?

I want to make sure you understand something, nothing positive, nothing positive. But there is one thing that you can always take to the bank that it will do, and that is it will absolutely break the heart of anybody who lives and teaches the message of grace. It will break their heart. It broke Paul's heart. It broke his heart. Paul is grieving when he says in Galatians 4:11, "I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." Back in Gal 3 he says almost the same thing in Gal 3:4. He said, "Did you suffer so many things in vain?" Then he says, as if he stops and rethinks and he says, "If indeed it really was in vain." Maybe you didn't come to know Christ to begin with. Maybe everything I taught you just went right over your head, in one ear right out the other ear. It never lodged; you never received that truth. You never were changed by that truth.

Well, in Gal 4:11 "I fear for you," he says "that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." The word for "fear" is the word *phobeo*, and *phobeo* means to be terrified, to be terrified. It's the idea of shuddering, of shivering, you're afraid. Paul never was afraid of the Romans and the domination. He says "To live is Christ, to die is gain," that doesn't bother me. But what really terrified him and caused him to shudder were the people that sat under his teaching and heard the message of grace and refused it and never heard a word that he said. That's what broke his heart. That's what caused him to shudder. He said, "I shudder to think that you have missed this whole thing." I guess in his mind he was wondering, "Did you hear anything that I ever said?" I can so identify with that. And sometimes, you know, you preach and you can fall over in the floor when you walk out, did anybody hear anything that has been said?

That's exactly the heartbeat of what Paul is saying. All the labor that he had given for them: In Lystra he almost died; he was beaten and taken outside the city to be dead. I mean, he has been through it preaching the gospel of grace to these people. He was sickened to death when they found him and it was beautiful, the whole situation how the Galatian church was birthed. But I wonder, I wonder, if he would come to church in the 21st century, to any given church, walk in the backdoor and set on the back row. I wonder if his epistles are being taught. I wonder if he would say again, did they ever hear anything that I said, because it caused him to shudder that such a precious jewel of truth could be so callously ignored and walked away from.

And in Gal 4:12, I tell you he's a born-again optimist and I love that about him. He will not turn it loose. You will see this again before we finish the epistle. He says in Gal 4:12, "I beg of you," and he is urging them. He wouldn't do this if he didn't know that they could "become as I am." He says, "become as I am." Actually, the tense there, present middle imperative, become and keep on becoming as I am. Now, he puts it in a command form. And you know what he is saying here? He isn't some egotist who is on an ego trip. No, no. What he's saying is, you live like I am seeking to live. "The life I now I live I live by [what?] faith in the One who loved me and delivered Himself up for me." He says become and keep on becoming as I am. Don't look at me, but look at the faith that God is encouraging within my heart. You look, pursue your relationship with Him.

And I guess that comes back to the question. It begs to be asked. It begs to be asked. You say, "Wayne, you've got an agenda." No, I don't, before God I don't. I'm just trying to tell you what Paul is trying to tell them, and he is trying to tell us today. And here is what it is: are you living as a slave or are you living as a son? Only by faith can you live as a son, which means this Book right is going to become your spiritual refrigerator. You live out of it. It dictates your thoughts. It renews your mind so God can transform your life. If you love Him you will love His Word and then you begin to enter into what is already yours in Christ Jesus. The life comes inside of you and now there are things that you can do that you couldn't do before, not because of you, but because the life that is inside of us.

This ought to be the magnet that draws everybody to what we have right here. We have Jesus living in us, and when they see us living after the flesh, they will walk away so fast it will make your head swim. They say, "I have that misery in the world. Why do I want to come to the church and get it?" That's the question. Are we living as slaves or are we living as sons? You know, when you

have lived as a slave for so long this is the frightening part of it. It's like searing your conscious that we talked about in another epistle.

The Indians had this thing about arrows being in your conscious and it would turn and it would prick you. But the longer you put up with it, the duller the arrows would get, and after a while you became callous to what even was going on in your life. And do you realize that's what can happen? When we choose to walk after the flesh to the point that we become dull of hearing, which was talked about in another epistle, in Hebrews, what happens is we don't even hear truth anymore. Truth has no impact on our life.

Here's what I'm saying: if we are living as slaves you'd better be careful and I'd better be careful because we become dull of hearing and truth, truth can no longer affect us. And what will happen is, in our disorientation, in the dullness of our senses, we will turn and go right back into that which destroys us. That's why it's so important. Are you living as a slave or are you living as a son?

Galatians 4:12-18 Who Are You Listening To?

Paul is the spiritual father to these spiritual children there in Galatia. He's the one who took the message to them and he feels a responsibility to them. He has watched them turn and go the wrong way. He has corrected them. He has done everything else, and now he takes a different approach.

Turn with me to Galatians 4 today. We're going to be looking at Gal 4:12-18. It's very interesting what's going to happen in this passage of scripture. The apostle Paul begins by saying something entirely different than he had been saying. He starts off in Gal 4:12 and says, "I beg of you, brethren, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong." Now, most of us in here have children, or if we don't, we are somehow around them from time to time. But you realize what Paul is going to do today. Have you ever been a parent and you've seen your child not listen to what you're saying, and they're going to do what they are going to do? It doesn't matter what you say at all. And you've tried correcting them; you've tried chastening them; you've illustrated to them where they're going wrong, and they just will not listen, and you are exasperated with them. And finally what do we do? We resort to begging them. Just pleading with them, "Please listen to what I'm trying to say." That's exactly what's going on in our text today.

Paul is the spiritual father to these spiritual children there in Galatia. He's the one who took the message to them and he feels a responsibility to them. He has watched them turn and go the wrong way. He has corrected them. He has done everything else, and now he takes a different approach. He's going to beg them. He urges them to go back to what they used to have, to go back to walking by faith. In Gal 4:1-6, just to review a bit, they have chosen to become slaves again. You see, as slaves they can't now enjoy any of the privileges they have in Christ Jesus. It's incredible. So many people know what they have in Christ, but they're not experiencing it. You know why? Because they will not come His way. It's all conditional on the fact, are we willing to say yes to Him as believers? Faith is the key that unlocks the door to everything, all of our resources in Christ Jesus.

Then in Gal 4:7-11, he doesn't say it outright, but he says it. It's kind of like he's saying, "Why would you ever go back to live as a slave if you are a son of God, in Christ Jesus?" You see, we received our position of sonship when we received Christ into our life. Gal 3:26 is really a catalyst for all of what he's saying in Gal 4. In Gal 3:26 he very clearly says, "For you are all," Jew and Gentile, if you have come to know Christ, "you are all sons of God." And that term "sons" is *huios*. It's the mature son. And you say, "I'm not mature in Christ. I might be mature in age, but I haven't come to perfection yet. Paul said he hadn't arrived." That's correct. The only time we enjoy the privileges of our position is when we choose to walk by faith. That's how we received it. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." The only way to walk in the privileges, the adult privileges of sonship, and I will say it again, is to walk by faith. That's how we receive them. That's how we appropriate them into our life.

Galatians 2:20. So clearly—this is one of the key verses to the whole study of Galatians—Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh," in the same body I had before I got saved, I still have the same body. It hasn't changed on the outside. It has changed on the inside. He says, "I now live... by faith." There it is right there: "I live by faith." How did he receive it? By faith. How does he live in it? By faith. He says, "In the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Well, in our text today as I have said, Paul literally begs the Galatians to listen to what he has been trying to tell them. Keep on walking by faith. He says, "Become as I am." And that word means become and keep on becoming. And what is that? Walk and keep on walking by faith. Paul is not an egotist. Paul is not calling attention to himself. He's calling attention to a lesson he has learned in life. It's like a parent to a child. "I've been there, son. I've done that. Now pay attention to what I am telling you. Do as I do, which means walk by faith. Trust God. Don't go back to that religious set of rules. It will put you back into bondage."

And the only purpose he has in mind is to get them back to where they can walk in the fullness of the blessings of what God wants

to give them. His heart has been broken. He said in Gal 4:11, he says, "I fear for you." You can feel the exasperation in his life. He said "I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain." In other words, why did I even bother? Why did I even come? Why did I go through the effort? You know, you have days like this when you see people so stubborn they will not listen to what you're saying. That's what Paul is saying. He says, "I taught you. I tried to live it before you, and why in the world?" He says, "Why did I even bother? I feel like I have labored over you in vain."

You see, Paul was a former Pharisee. He knows the emptiness of religion. He has been there. Everything they are buying into he has been set free from that very thing. He knew what was awaiting them. But the Galatians had forgotten what they once were. Isn't that true with us day by day? We forget what it's like to be lost? Some time go home and sit down and take an hour and write out on a piece of paper the emptiness and the depression and the critical spirit and the judgmental attitudes and all the garbage that we had to put up with before we were released from that by the Spirit of God coming to live in our life. And understand that when we choose not to walk by faith we go right back into that old pit. We go right back into that same type of stuff. And that's what Paul is trying to tell them. They just forgot what it was like to be lost. They are Christians. They cannot lose their salvation, but, brother, they can lose the joy of their salvation. They have lost their remembrance of what it used to be.

John Newton was the man who wrote "Amazing Grace." Don't you love that song! "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound." Do you know anything about him? John Newton was an only child, lost his mother when he was seven years old. At the age of 11 he went to sea and began to work on a ship. The ship that he worked on was a ship that was dealing with the African slave trade, not a very proper thing to do. They took these poor African people and would sell them into slavery. And the kind of people that would do that were the kind of people he was around. And his life went straight down. He went from bad to worse. He was totally corrupt in his life.

At the age of 23 however, they were in a terrible storm at sea. Isn't it interesting how God has used the weather and oceans to get people right with Him? I think Jonah could sort of jump in here and testify. In the midst of a terrible storm at sea, facing death, he cried out to God for mercy, and he said, "Oh, God, save me!" And God heard his cry and God saved him. And he is the man that wrote "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." But maybe this you don't know, in order to remember daily what he came from so that he would never go back to it, he took Deuteronomy 15:15 and put it on his mantle and he put it on his mirror. Every morning when he got up he looked at this just to be reminded every day of his life. And here is what it says in Deuteronomy 15:15: "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you." And every morning he got up he looked at that before he walked out his door to remember that by choice, he could enter right back into that old fleshly way of living. He could enter back into that emptiness that it offers and he said daily he wanted to remember the grace of God and walk in the grace of God.

John Newton remembered what it was like to be lost. The Galatians totally forgot what it was like to be lost. They completely looked away and chose to go right back to slavery once again. They chose religion over Christ, the saddest testimony that anybody could have. They said, "Jesus is not enough. I need law. My flesh needs to be pampered. I'm going to do it my way."

Now sometimes people get lost in this terminology. They say, "Religion, law, you're losing me." Okay, let's put it simply. In every man's heart there is a cross and there is crown. And here is the issue: if you are wearing the crown, then Jesus is still on the cross in your life, with having no affect and not allowing you to be able to walk in the fullness of His blessing. But if He is wearing the crown and you are on the cross and He is calling the shots, then you can enter into that which God wants you to have. So I have got a choice every day of my life. Do it my way or do it God's way. The Galatians did it their way.

In our text today he pleads with them, as I said, on a personal level. He's going to take them back. They had a relationship, and this is so precious. I mean, sometimes he would write a book to people he had never seen before, but not here, not here. He didn't write this letter to people he didn't know. Oh, he knew them well. And he has gone the doctrinal route. He has shown them their error. Now, as if exasperated, he pleads with them as a friend to a friend. He has been the preacher route and the apostle route. Now he comes as a friend to a friend. His heart is clearly seen in Gal 4:12 when he says, "I beg of you, brethren."

Now that term "I beg of you" is the word *deomai*. And *deomai* is an intense plea. It's not something he suggests to them. It's not saying, "Oh, by the way, I want to ask you to." No, it is an intense plea. Let me show you how that word is used in Scripture and you will understand. Paul pled with Agrippa in Acts 26:3, "especially because you are an expert at all customs and questions among the Jews," Paul says, "therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently." The Ethiopian eunuch was just absolutely desperate to know about the prophecy in Isaiah. And in Acts 28:34 the eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of someone else?" And of course he sat down and led him to Christ. A desperate father pleads with Jesus. I want you to feel this word here. He pleads with Jesus to heal his son in Luke 9:38, "And behold a man from the multitude cried out saying, 'Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he, he is my only boy,'" and you can hear the desperate plea of a father. That's the word that Paul uses here. "I beg you, I beg you, I plead with you, this matter is urgent." You can see the deep grief that is inside of Paul, being their teacher and their spiritual father.

Let me ask you a question. Does it grieve you as it grieves me when you see fellow believers choose not to live surrendered to

Jesus? Does it grieve you? Does it grieve you what comes out of their mouth? Does it grieve you the emptiness that's in their life? Does it just cause something to happen inside of you that you don't know what you can do? You can plead with them and that's as far as you can go. That's exactly what's happening with the apostle Paul. He makes that intense personal plea. His appeal; in it you can see that they no longer are paying any attention to him. That's hard. You know, they knew he was right' they knew they were wrong. But you know what I see in the Galatians—and perhaps you see something different; but I have studied it all the way through and perhaps you will help me if I'm wrong—what I see in it, they know he is right and they know they are wrong, but they are so stubborn they're not about to give in. And Paul is at the end of his rope trying to help them to understand. He is a spiritual father and these are his spiritual children. And if you are a parent you know exactly where he is.

Three things he does in this text that I want us to look at today. First of all, he reminds them of something. They need this; they need this desperately. In Gal 4:12 in the last part he says, "You have done me no wrong." And what he's talking about is he's shifting gears. Suddenly he takes them back to when they met, and he says "You have done me no wrong." He points back to the past and he's exactly right. In fact, they went overboard. They went the extra mile to care for the apostle Paul. It says in Gal 4:13, "But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time."

Now, what Paul does here, he enters ground that scripture cannot help us with. Scripture doesn't go back to that event that he'd pointing him to. What bodily illness is he talking about? There's no story that helps us to fully grasp what he's referring to. The word for bodily is the word *sarx*, which simply means flesh. But here it's referring to a physical illness, so you know it's something physical. It's a sickness of some kind. Some suggest that Paul caught malaria when he was going through those low swampy areas of Pamphylia and this is the illness he's referencing. They suggest that once he contacted the malaria in that low mosquito-ridden area that he wanted to get to higher ground so he went up to Galatia to try to heal, to try to recover and this is what he is talking about in Gal 4:13. The fact is we just don't know. But what we do know is he was ill, and as a result of his illness somehow God put him in the front of the Galatian people that were pagans at that time, and He was able to use that platform of illness to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to these people.

Isn't that interesting? To the Ephesians and to the Philippians and to the Colossians, prison was used to teach them in a beautiful way, and even to Philemon. But here it's an illness. It is a sickness, and God used it to see His message glorified. He says in Gal 4:13, "But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time."

Well, whatever his illness was, it must have been repulsive. Now, this isn't going to be fun, but this is the text; I didn't write it. Gal 4:14: "And that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you didn't despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God as Christ Jesus Himself." Now he uses two very descriptive words here to let you know how bad this malady was. Whatever he had, it wasn't fun. The word for despise, he said, "You did not despise or loathe" "my condition," is the word *exoutheneo*. It means to treat with contempt. It's something that you don't want to fool with. Have you ever been around, if you are a nurse or a doctor you have been around people that have been sick and bad situations. You know exactly what I am talking about. You care for the person, but oh, you don't want to have to deal with this. And he said, "But you did not treat me that way." You did not treat me with contempt.

When I was growing up my daddy would take me out the river and we would catch hellgrammites, because we would go trout fishing. A hellgrammite is the ugliest looking creature you have ever seen in your entire life, one of the best baits you can use for small mouth bass and trout in a river or in some type of stream. But they are the ugliest creatures. I mean, it is ugly. It is ugly. I mean, it's long and crawly. It has legs everywhere, but then it has pinchers on its head. Its whole head has these pinchers growing out of them and they will pinch the blood out of you. And you treat them with disgust. You treat them with contempt.

And he said you didn't do that to me. You didn't treat me that way. It's interesting, this word, you have got to get a feel of it. Despise, what does that mean? "You did not despise or loathe my condition." The word is used in Luke 23:11. It said, "And Herod with his soldiers, after treating him with contempt." He treated Jesus this way. They treated Him as if he was repulsive. They treated the Lord Jesus Christ this way. "And they mocked Him and dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate." Man, you begin to understand, what in the world did Paul have that they would despise and they could have, but they did not, treat him that way. That was not their response. "That which was a trial to you [a test] in my bodily condition, you did not despise or loathe." I have known folks that have stayed with their parents until they had to take care of them until the day they died and they did not despise that condition.

The second very descriptive word is the word "loathe." In the Greek it is the word *ekptuo*. It literally means to spit out of one's mouth. But that's the nicer way to put it. It means to throw up. It was nauseating. And Paul said you did not throw up when you saw me in that repulsive condition I was in. You did not treat me with contempt and despise me because of the way that I was. You see, in most ancient countries at that time they didn't have many doctors. How many doctors do you know of in Scripture? Luke, and there is also Luke. We read Scripture out of 21st century mentality. We forget they didn't have medicines like we have. They didn't have bandages like we have. The most disgusting diseases, as a result, developed. They were disfiguring. Their stench was nauseating. It would cause one to throw up. It was the word that was used.

To be around somebody who had some of these detestable sicknesses in those times—in most of their religious beliefs if you add this, and factor this into it and Judaism particularly, they thought that these horrific conditions was because of sin in somebody's life and, buddy, they would turn away from them in a minute. "Don't get near that guy. There is sin in his life. Look how sick he is. Look how repulsive he is." That was their mindset. Remember John 9, "who sinned," when the blind man came around? His mother or his father? They thought it was all because of personal sin.

In fact, a great illustration of this is in the book of Job. Remember when Job had the boils all over his body? You think that was not repulsive? And all the runny stuff, and he using a piece of pottery to try to scrape the stuff, the sores, as they were breaking all over his body from head to toe. And three friends came to minister to him. And by the way, with friends like these who needs enemies? In Job 2:11, "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came, each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him." Right! Don't ever send these guys to the hospital when I'm sick.

Gal 4:12: "And they lifted up their eyes at a distance and they did not recognize him." See, this is repulsive to them. They didn't even recognize him. "And they raised their voices and they wept. And each one of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky." And look what they did. This is really what he needed: "Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven day and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great." That's what he really needed, wasn't it? Three friends to come, throw dirt on their heads, sit in front of him and stare at him for seven days and seven nights and never say another word. Well, that was a blessing.

Each one of them shows his opinion as to why Job is in the position he is in, and Job 4:8, Eliphaz says, "According to what I have seen," boy, it sounds like you would be in the barber shop again, doesn't it. Here comes that opinion. "Those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it." Thank you, Eliphaz. Why don't you take a long walk off a short cliff? Job 8:6, Bildad, let's see what he's got to say. Maybe he can be encouraging. He says, "If you are pure and upright, surely now He would rouse Himself for you and restore your righteous estate." And he hasn't done it, so you're not pure and upright. Oh, thanks, Bildad! Job 11:13-15, Zophar chimes in. And he says, "If you would direct your heart right and spread out your hand to Him, if iniquity is in your hand, put it far away and do not let wickedness dwell in your tents; then, indeed you could lift up your face without moral defect, and you would be steadfast and not fear."

You see, they thought that because he was sick and stricken with those boils all over his body he had sinned. And you know the story of Job. That had nothing to do with it. God was the one who initiated that whole conversation. He said, "Do you know My servant Job? There is no one righteous like him on the face of the earth." And Satan said, "Yeah. You give me a shot at him," and God said, "Okay, but here are the parameters." There was no sin in his life, but that was a common thought.

Now, for pagan people they had the same idea. Even the Jews had the same idea. And you put that into it, and the fact that there was a repulsive type of thing, Wow! It says in Gal 4:14, "And that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe." Whatever he had, nor however repulsive it was, they did not despise him. They didn't turn away from him. They ministered to him. He says, "But you received me as an angel of God [listen to this], as Christ Jesus Himself." The word "received" is *dechomai*. *Dechomai* is different from another word, *lambano*. *Lambano* means to receive, "yeah, well, I guess we'd better deal with it," but *dechomai* means to receive something with eagerness. Oh, man! We want to help you. In the midst of all this garbage that they are dealing with, to eagerly receive.

You know, that's not bad for pagan Gentiles, is it? I know of people in the church that don't receive people that way, even when they're healthy. These pagan Gentiles treated him as if he was sent right from God Himself. And they didn't despise his terrible condition. And Paul reminds them of this. There was no hesitation there. Paul's disease was God's way of getting the gospel to the Galatians and they understood that. This is what allowed him to freely preach the gospel and oh, how they responded to that gospel.

You see, what Paul wants them to do is remember that there was a special relationship between him and them. It's like a father to a child: "Don't you remember when you were birthed into the kingdom? Don't you remember what the situation was? You saw me. I lived among you. I preached the gospel to you. You were set free by that very message. Why are you turning away from it now? You're not only rejecting me, you're rejecting Christ. You're rejecting the message." There's such a bond between a person when they are suffering and people that are sensitive to them and particularly when the gospel is in the mix. There's a special bond. So Paul reminds them.

But then secondly, he questions them. You know, I can almost hear Paul say, "How long do I have to be with you before you're going to trust me in what I say?" I can hear him say that. And now he's away from them and they immediately don't trust him anymore. They don't trust what he preached. They go to something that is error. Secondly, he questions them. Gal 4:15 says, "Where then is that sense of blessing that you had? For I bear you witness that if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me." Now this verse may give us a clue as to what his disease was. He says, "You would have plucked out your eyes and given

them to me.”

Many feel that Paul had an eye disease, which from all historical accounts would have been a very gross thing. And I don't want to tell you all this stuff, but this is the text. I've got to explain it to you. It was swollen eyes with puss running down their face and people would turn, oh, oh, man that's repulsive. That's what they would think it is. It is said of Leah, Jacob's wife; remember Leah, that she had weak eyes. And that word for "weak" is a root word that we get the word "sick" from, and they think that she had that eye disease. But Rachel, it says in Genesis 29:17, "And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face," to try to make a distinction and a contrast between the two that Jacob loved.

If malaria was the reason for Paul's illness then it would explain it, because they tell me that malaria can attack the optic nerve. This could have been the thorn in Paul's flesh of 2 Corinthians 12. But, again, we don't know, but it could have been. Paul also just may be using a figure of speech just to contrast what he is about to say.

He says in Gal 4:15, "Where then?" This is a question. Here is the question right here: "Where then is that sense of blessing that you had?" That's a great question, isn't it? I wonder if there is anybody here that used to love Jesus more than you love Him now. It is one thing to love Him; it is one thing to be in love with Him. Was there a time that you were in love with Jesus, but now that is no longer true in your life? There was a time when you bowed to pray, tears would fill your eyes when you sensed that you were walking into the presence of God. There was a time when God's Word was opened; you couldn't, you could not get enough of it. You wanted to throw your watch away and just listen to it and listen to it and listen to it and listen to it and listen to it. But now something has happened.

"Where is that sense of blessing" Paul says to them, "that you once had?" The word for "blessing" is the word *makarismos*. It comes from the word *makarios*. It means that total inward spiritual satisfaction that you once had. Where did it go? Where did it go? It is the word used in Matthew 5 in the Beatitudes, and some translations foolishly translate that happy. That's a terrible translation. Happy comes from the word *hap* which means circumstance. So circumstances determine whether I am happy or not. That's not what he is saying. He's saying, "Fully and inwardly and spiritually satisfied are those people who show mercy," etc., etc., etc.

It might be interesting that there is another word for blessing—this has nothing to do with the message, but just explain something to you, because sometime when you see them in Scripture there are two different meanings to the word—the other one is *eulogeo*. *Eul* means well and *logeo* means to speak, "to speak well of." You know what that word is for? It's for praise, but it's also for blessing. When you are asking God to bless your food, it would be good to remember what this word means. "God, speak well of this food I am about to partake." You haven't caught it. If you have looked, if you have looked at the ingredients in what you are about to eat you would do well to remember this word. What does God do when He speaks? Genesis 1, He creates. And when He creates it, what is it in His eyes? Good. Hey, you better believe I am blessing the food around. I am asking God to bless it. God, speak well of whatever it is that is going into my stomach. I want to eat this. Speak well of it. Two words for blessing, one that had nothing to do with the message.

Where is the spiritual satisfaction that you once had? How did you lose it? When they had heard, received, the message of God's grace, they had been totally spiritually satisfied. You know, you can just remember. If you have ever been around somebody that has come to know Christ—and, by the way, if you have not, you have missed it—it's awesome to watch somebody receive Jesus in their life, watch the joy flood their heart and let them, look at the difference in their countenance and see them from days after that. They can't shut up. They have got to tell everybody, "I'm saved, I'm saved." They call their mother and their father and their friends. They tell everybody at work. They can't be quiet about it. That's what Paul remembers. He says, "Where is that sense of blessing that you once had? Have you lost the wonder of your salvation? What has happened to you?" He is deeply grieved.

In Gal 4:16 he said, look at this, "Have I become your enemy [now listen to me] by telling you the truth?" Nothing grieves the heart of a teacher to teach the message of God and see people be changed and transformed by it and then to watch them willingly choose to go back to that which produces nothing in their life. And then when they try to correct them they become their enemy, their enemy.

I had a friend, well, a young boy, he was in my youth group once. And I thought he was growing. I spent hours of time with him. He had a terrible family situation and I ministered to him, taught him the Word, disciplined him, mentored him. But one day he turned to me and he said, "Wayne, I wished you had the second blessing because if you could just get the second blessing God could really use you." I had already taught him you have every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. What do you mean second blessing? I've got the fullness of Jesus in my life. But he turned before I could say anything and walked off. Every time I would get up to preach to him in days ahead he would just sit there and frown at me and put that old expression on his face, "Bless me, if you can, preacher," and I could not. And I thought, isn't it interesting, because he has brought error. Because I am trying to teach him the truth, I have become his enemy.

And Paul says what in the world are you people doing? You know me. You saw me. You ministered to me. You watched me live. You heard me speak. What are you doing? "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" Years ago, when I preached in 1

Corinthians, and I got to Gal 1:4, I received a letter, a dear letter. And he said, "I hope you have as much integrity in preaching 1 Corinthians 12 as you have had preaching the Old Testament book we just came out of." And then he put in a paragraph, "because there are some people in this church that don't believe like you believe, and when you get there you remember that." and signed his name. You know what he did? He says, "Hey, you're fine as long as you're telling me what I want to hear. But you're my enemy if you're telling me what I don't want to hear." That's what happens. That's what deception does to people. They hear the truth and think it's their enemy. They don't even understand what they're listening to. They hate the very one who is trying to set them free and they choose the people that will put them right back into bondage.

"Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?" He reminds them and then he questions them. "I've got a question for you. You remember our relationship. You know me. You know me. You don't know these false teachers, but you know me. Can't you trust what I'm telling you if it's in God's Word?" And then he questions them. "Have I become your enemy?"

And then finally he warns them. Okay, he's said enough now. False teachers are dangerous people. They don't have anyone's welfare at stake. They have none of it. Paul wanted them to be followers of Jesus, not of him. But look what happens, Gal 4:17: "They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them." Paul, everything he taught them, "Don't seek me, seek Christ." Their real enemies were the Judaizers who were distorting the message of grace. Their enemy was not Paul. But yet, they had bought what the enemy had said. How many times during the week when somebody comes to you perhaps with a rumor or something like that, do you buy that rather than even go back to the fact that it may not even have any credibility to start with?

And who are we talking about here? They deny the whole relationship. And he says, "You have bought into the very people that cared nothing about you." It's amazing when you have embraced error what happens. You can see this in your family. You see, it's just like a father talking to his children. And he's saying kids, "Why are you buying what he has told you? I've been teaching you all these years. I've loved you. You've been sick, I've taken care of you. I've walked with you. I've given you money when you didn't have it. I've put you through school. Why would you listen to him? You know my heart."

That's his heart. And Paul warns, he says, "They eagerly seek you." The word for "eagerly" is the word we get the word "zealous" from, *ze/oo*. It's a real strong word. I mean, they are very zealous of getting you. It's a word used many times by a man courting a woman, and that's sort of an interesting thing to start with, and how he has got a zeal here, buddy. He will stop at nothing to get to that lady. And cults always eagerly seek you and me. You see, they prey on people that have no doctrinal background. They prey on people who won't walk in the Spirit. If you're not walking in the Spirit you're a total prey to somebody who is going to get you into their message of flesh and deceit. They make you think that it's you seeking them, but oh no, they are seeking you. They are seeking you. They want a following.

Then Paul adds "They seek after you, yes, but not commendably," and that is the word *kalos*, which means good, in a good way. And the "not" makes it no inherent good. If you take the "not" out of it, it is inherently good. He says, "What they are doing has no inherent good in it at all. Their whole intentions are evil all the way to the core. What they are doing is not commendable."

What is their motive? He says, "But they wish to shut you out." Oh, what a vivid picture he draws for us. Out from what? Now the word "out" there, "to shut you out," comes from two words. One is *ek* and the one is *kleio*. *Ek* means I've got these keys in my pocket. I take them out of my pocket. They were once a part of my pocket. My pocket is lonely now because they're gone. Well, there's another word, "from," which means my keys were next to my pocket, but never in it. In other words, the word "from" is *apo*, which is the root word for apostasy, and some people say apostasy is a Christian falling from grace. That's ridiculous. The word *apo* is used. It would have to be *ek*, to be out of. They never were in it. They were just alongside it. And when the pressure came they separated themselves from it. So there is a different word.

Ek means something was in, and *ekalos* means to call you out from under that which you were in. What are they in? They are in a precious grace relationship with Jesus Christ. They are walking in the fullness and the privileges of the adult sons by saying yes to God. And a false teacher tries to take you out from under that—you have been in it; you have been experiencing it, —and put you over here. You can't lose your salvation, but, brother, you can sure lose the joy of your salvation if you start listening to what people are saying that is contrary to what God would have to say. *Ekalos*, to shut out.

What were they currently in again? The covenant of grace. They were walking in full privileges of sonship by faith. Somebody, somebody that didn't care about them at all, caught them and they started listening to them. And the key to the whole book of Galatians is not that they were false teachers. The pitiful thing about Galatians is that they listened to them. The way to stop false doctrine is to stop listening to it. But they listened and they came out from under that wonderful position of walking in Christ and lost the joy of their salvation. These false teachers were seeking to lock them out of the very thing that set them free. "They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out."

Why? "In order that you may seek them." They want a following, folks. They want a following. You can't seek Christ and false

teachers at the same time. One is going to lock the other out. If you are walking under grace you've just locked out deceit and you're experiencing the blessings of Christ. If you are walking by faith saying yes to Him, letting God guard your tongue, letting God guard your heart, you have just locked out what will bring emptiness in your life. But if you choose to obey your flesh you have just locked out the joy and everything else you could have had in Christ. And it's a choice we have to make every single day, situation by situation into our life.

Gal 4:18 says, "But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner." He takes the "not" out of it. And he says, "Listen, there are ways to seek that are commendable. When people are seeking you so that you can know Christ and then follow Him, not them, that's commendable." And he says, "And not only when I am present with you." It's interesting here that the idea is false teachers, when they're with you, they care about you, but when they're gone, they don't, they're looking for another following. But Paul says, "I'm not even with you and my heart is broken because I don't want you following me. I want you following Christ." Paul is warning them about the flesh motives of those who were seducing them with the false doctrines of legalism. Paul's heart was full of love for the Galatians. But as a father who is grieving it just broke his heart. And he says, "I wonder if I toiled over you in vain. Was it even worth the effort?"

Paul has reminded them, questioned them and now he is warned them. You know what? This is not new to Galatia, the churches in Galatia. He does that in Colossae. He does that in most every one of his epistles. As a matter of fact, in Acts 20:28 he says to the elders—it's a beautiful thing; it's a very tender thing—he brings them down to the island of Miletus and he says, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all of the flock," he tells these elders who are not managers, but overseers, "among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure," Paul says, "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." Savage wolves; boy, you know who he is talking about don't you? He's talking about the same deceivers that got to the Galatians. He said they're coming, they're coming, and as soon as I'm out of the way they're going to be right on you. He says, "And from among your own selves men will arise." They are going to come right up among; they're right here.

I guarantee you, they are sitting right here and as soon as whoever teaches grace steps out of the picture, they come up. And he says, "Speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that day and night for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears." I stayed with you, Paul said, for three solid years trying to get you to understand this. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among those who are sanctified."

Well, if I'm not going to surrender to the life that's within me, I can't do anything but condemn, criticize and be judgmental and miserable until Jesus comes back. And as a spiritual father, Paul weeps over people who made that choice not to walk in the relationship but to do it their way, to do it their way.

Galatians 4:19-21 The True Teacher

This is what the heart of every teacher should be, and by teacher I don't mean ecclesiastically, from the pulpit, necessarily. The word "teach" in scripture simply means to communicate what God has taught you of His grace to somebody else. That's all it is. It's a communication. It's a sharing. Witnessing in that definition could fit there.

Would you turn with me to Galatians 4. And we're going to be looking at Gal 4:19-21. If you're a teacher of God's Word in any way—let me put that again; if you're a teacher of the message of grace, which is the only message in God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation—in any way, shape or form, the message today I think will have particular interest in your heart. This is what the heart of every teacher should be, and by teacher I don't mean ecclesiastically, from the pulpit, necessarily. The word "teach" in scripture simply means to communicate what God has taught you of His grace to somebody else. That's all it is. It's a communication. It's a sharing. Witnessing in that definition could fit there.

But if you're sharing the message of grace, if you're living it first, and then if you're wanting others to know the message of God's grace, whether it be a parent to a child, a grandparent to a grandchild, whether it be a teacher in a classroom or whether it be a pastor on staff, today's message is a litmus test for all of us, because this is the heart of what a person who knows grace and lives under it feels and desires. We'll be looking at this.

Paul has just begun in our context, to contrast himself with the false teachers. Let me put this simply. To simply put it, these false teachers had deceived the Galatian believers into thinking that they had to do more for Jesus or He would not accept them. Christ was not enough to these deceived teachers. These teachers followed Paul wherever he would go. They sought to undo the message, the freeing message of grace everywhere they would go. They sought to undo it, to unravel it. They sought to put people back up under the thinking that if they didn't measure up unless they did more. What a tragic bondage we put ourselves into.

Now I know I'm talking with some of you that perhaps are struggling with Galatians and you wonder. My wife has been fussing at me lately and she said, "You know, some people don't understand law and religion and performance mentality." And that's true. And so I want to do a little bit differently in introducing this. I want to try to see if we can make a connection so everybody can understand what's going on without using the words that Paul used so beautifully in this epistle. The thinking, the mindset that tells you "I must accomplish this in order to prove myself spiritual," or "I must do this or God will not accept me," the mentality that harasses our minds and our thoughts with the thinking "I'm just not doing enough, God is not pleased with me, I'm a total failure before God, there's no hope," is the very mentality that Paul is battling in the book of Galatians.

Unlike the bondage that the false teachers would people back up under, the freeing message of grace that Paul preached was a message of becoming—listen carefully—what you already are, rather than doing more in order to become. Do you see the difference? We simply become what God says we already are. That's what sanctification is. We don't earn it. We don't have to do more to get it. We already have it in Christ Jesus. And that contrasts with what the false teachers were saying, "No, no, you have to do more in order to become."

God's grace in Christ, that freeing message of grace, taught the Galatians that they didn't have to earn sonship. Gal 3:26 says it so beautifully. It says you are sons of God, not because of all those good things that you did, but because you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They only had to learn to enjoy it. They didn't have to earn it. They already had it. They just simply learned to enjoy it. And all that life is down here is a boot camp for reigning and ruling with Him forevermore. And the way we enjoy it is by yielding our lives unto Him. The Galatians could do nothing to change this relationship. If they didn't perform properly, that didn't mean they lost their relationship. This is the message of what grace does for us. It sets us free from having to earn something that's already been given to us in Christ Jesus. It sets us free from thinking that Christ is a bully and if we don't measure up He'll kick us out of the family.

God's grace in Christ is not a passive message. Don't misunderstand. Yes, we're doers of the word, but have we forgotten that in the book of Philippians that we studied before it said that Christ lives within us to will—to even give us the desire—and to work? And did He not tell us in 1 John, "My commandments to you are not burdensome"? They're not something that beats you down. Why? "You have My heart within you." And even the commands of Scripture, you want to obey them. "And My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Under grace, the believer who is already a son is simply on a journey of learning to enjoy the privileges of sonship, learning to become what God says in Christ we already are. A believer who realizes he's already a son through faith in Christ does what he does not to be loved, but because he's already loved; not to be accepted, but because he's already accepted in Christ Jesus.

A believer doesn't have to live with a fear of failure. Don't you love that? We don't have to wake up every morning scared to death that we're going to fail and God's going to beat us up. No, sir. When we fail, God simply forgives us and uses the failure to teach us how to depend more upon Him. You see, grace is Christ accepting us and loving us. It is Christ wanting to live His life in and through us because He knows we're failures without Him. Grace is Christ manifesting Himself in our lives. Grace is Christ accomplishing—now listen carefully—what we've already proven we don't know how to accomplish. He comes to do through us and in us what we could never do ourselves. We simply have to learn to live yielded and surrendered lives to Him. That is Paul's message to the Galatians. Why would you walk away from that kind of relationship? Why would you put it over here as if it's up to you? What a conflict between the attitude of "we must do in order to become" and "we get to do because we already are." Do you see the conflict? Many people think "I'd better have my quiet time this morning or God will beat me today."

A lady walked up to me one time. She said, "I had a terrible day Thursday." I said, "You did?" She said, "I did." I said, "What did you do?" She said, "I didn't have my quiet time." I said, "Is your faith in your quiet time or is your faith in the Lord Jesus who lives within you?" Where are you putting your faith? What is the object of your faith? And she looked at me and it was like a light bulb came on. She said, "Oh, my goodness! It's not my quiet time that gives me joy. It's Jesus that gives me joy." That's the message of grace. That's the message of grace. Why do we go to church? "Well, God will beat me if I don't." Is that correct? Do you really think that? No, we get to go to church; we don't have to go. We get to go. That's the opportunity that we have.

Now to review just a bit, to bring you into the flow of this river that's carrying us through Galatians, Paul had a very personal bond with these Galatian believers. They knew him. Just like the Ephesians knew him and walked among. Just like the Corinthians knew him; they had a personal bond with him. And he appeals to this. He leans on it in Gal 4:12-18. He talks about the illness that he had, and this is the very reason he met these people to start with. And God used that illness to get this freeing message of grace across to each of them. In Gal 4:12b-14 he reminds these errant believers in Galatia of how it was in a time of illness that he met them. He reminds them of this. He says, "You have done me no wrong." He points back to when they were together. Gal 4:13 says, "But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time. He says, "And that which was a trial to you," it was a real test because he had evidently a real repulsive disease, eye disease, "in my bodily condition, you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God as Christ Jesus Himself."

You see, now Paul wanted them to remember that not only the event of the illness had brought them together and given them this

relationship, but then the message of grace had bonded them spiritually and eternally. I mean forever they were, they were together and he reminds them of this. "Why would you distrust me now" he said "when we've gone through so much together?"

Then in Gal 4:15 he questions them. Just like a true friend would question another true friend, he questions them. He says, "Where then is that sense of blessing that you once had?" The word for "blessing" means that inward full spiritual satisfaction that you once had. Well, what a question. You know, as friend to friend, we have to ask each other that way. Has anybody ever walked up to you and you're not doing well in your Christian walk, and flesh is eating you alive, and somebody is enough of a friend to walk up and say, "Where's that sense of blessing that you once had? I remember, I remember when you loved Jesus. I remember when the joy of Jesus flowed out of your life. I remember when everything you were was an encouragement to the body of Christ. Where is that sense of blessing that you once had? The full spiritual satisfaction, where did it go? Where did it disappear to?" By the way, this is the first clue you and I have really of what we're going to get into in Gal 5-6, of what happens when we choose to go this route of having to do more for Jesus, that old flesh mentality.

And to summarize it again, listen, it's just a matter of control, it's losing control of your life. In every man's heart there's a cross and a crown. If I'm wearing the crown and I've taken matters into my own hands, then Jesus is still on the cross and He's not going to be able to do anything in my life, except chasten me and discipline me and scourge me. But if I'll let Him wear the crown and I'll get on the cross where I belong, then that sense of blessing returns in my life and in yours. Immediately when a person chooses to do things his own way, when a person chooses to adopt the mindset "I've got to do more so that I can become," and forgets that he already is in Christ Jesus, when we go back to doing for God, the joy just simply leaves us. And we've all been there. We've all been there.

There are times when I'd go home and I say, "Wayne, you've got to do more, son. You've got to do more." And God said, "What in the world are you doing, Wayne? Sit down and rest in Me and let Me do what only I can do." Every one of us have been there, every one of us have been there. Every time I get my eyes on numbers God says, "Now stop it right there." My joy goes. Everything goes. "Well, look what's happening over here. God, I've got to do something. I've got to do something." And I'm always in that preventive mode and God said, "Will you just sit down and shut up?" A dear sweet lady in our church told me recently, "I've been holding on to that rope of what I can do for God for so many years, never understanding His grace in my life." And she said, "I got so desperate in a given situation recently that I finally just turned loose. I just dropped." And I said, "What happened?" And she said, "I fell right in the hands of Jesus." Isn't that incredible!

Well, hello Galatians, how are you doing this morning? You see, the mindset that says grace does not work is a mindset that will not trust Christ and that's what Paul is dealing with in Galatians. They'd rather trust what they did rather than what only Christ can do. He warns them. He warns them. After he has questioned them, after he has comforted them and encouraged them, he says, "Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?" In other words, you heard the message of grace and it set you free, and I saw that sense of blessing in your life. Now have I become your enemy because I'm telling you the truth, because I'm telling you what you don't want to hear? I can hear them now saying, "O Paul, tickle our ears, make me feel better." And Paul's telling them the truth and the truth hurts.

Paul shows how these false teachers were eager to have them as their followers. False teachers, all they want is a following. That's all they want. They want people under the bondage of whatever they put on them. That's all they want. In order to do so they had to get them away from the message of grace, God's saving grace. They didn't want them to live in the freedom that Christ gives. A false teacher never wants that, because then he can't build his buildings, and then he can't do these things, if he doesn't have the people up under some guilt trip. And so he says in Gal 4:17, "They eagerly seek you out, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them." Paul shows how these false teachers sought to shut them out. What a picture. In other words, the word means to get them out from under something that they're in. Where's that sense of blessing that you once had? "Oh, it's over here." But what got you out from under that and put you over here? That's what they want to do. If you can get somebody into thinking he's not there yet, not realizing he's already there in Christ, he's a son of God in Christ Jesus by faith, and you can get him under the guilt trip of having to do more, to do more, to do more, then you've taken him out from under his sense of blessing. You've taken him out from under what God wanted to do in his life.

Gal 4:18 says, "But it is good always to be sought in a commendable manner." Paul says hey, seeking after people is not wrong. It's a commendable thing if it's to set them free. It certainly is not commendable when you put them back up under bondage. He uses the phrase "and not only when I am present with you." That gives the idea that he's so concerned with these believers he doesn't want them following him. He wants them knowing that Christ is their sufficiency no matter where they are, and he doesn't even have to be there for them to experience it. He was not like the false teachers that cared only for themselves. Paul's motive was pure and Paul's motive was commendable.

And in Gal 4:19-21 we're going to see his true heart come out. I'll be honest with you, it was a temptation to skip these three verses in a way, make them introduction and jump to the next major portion of this chapter. But the more I looked at it and the longer I

stayed with it, this has got to be heard. We have got to hear this. If you know grace this morning—and maybe you don't, maybe you talk about it, but you don't have clue. If you're not living in it you don't know it. The only way you know what the message of grace is is by living it, and you learn it by living it. That's the key. If you're not living it, you don't know it. But if you know it this morning and you want others to know it, you've got to somehow move into and understand the heartbeat that Paul has in these verses.

He has reminded them; he has questioned them; he has warned them. And now there are two things that I want you to see about the heart of a true teacher of grace. You know it. You seek to live it, and you want others to know about it. Here's the heartbeat. And if it's not your heartbeat, if this is not what's going through you, it's time to take inventory on where your walk is with the Lord Jesus. First of all, the desire of a true teacher of the message of grace. What's the desire of a true teacher? Gal 4:19: "My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you." Now, the phrase, "my children" there doesn't mean that Paul had anything to do with their salvation other than he was a vessel that God used. That's all it has to do with. He had nothing to do. We can't save anybody. I hear people say, "I won seven people to Jesus last week." No, you did not. And you weren't even looking for them. God was looking for them using you as His vessel. It's God who brings people to salvation. Men cannot save anybody. That's not what he's saying when he says, "my children."

Nor is he saying "I'm physically related to any of you." There's no record anywhere that Paul is related to anybody in Galatia. That's not what he's saying. What he's saying is that there is a spiritual connection between him and them. He happened to be there as the vessel God used to bring them into the kingdom. Now, that's got to encourage you this morning. All of us can be conduits. All of us can be vessels that God can use. If we'll learn to enjoy who we already are instead of trying to become by what we do, then God can use us to touch other people with this freeing message of grace. It's an awesome thought to me. Everywhere you go just shaking hands with somebody, just speaking kindly to them, just, just taking a bad situation and turning it around and making it a good situation and somebody doesn't understand that because that's not natural.

Over in 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul says, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ." Does that thrill you? When you got out of bed this morning did you realize you got up as an ambassador for Jesus Christ? You have a message from the King and you want to share it with everybody. You want them to see His life in you. Is that the way you got up this morning? That's the way Paul got up every morning. "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ as though," now listen to this, "as though God were making an appeal through us. We beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God." He wasn't making the appeal. God just simply needed some skin that He could work with. He got inside of Paul. And when Paul would share the word, when Paul would share what God put on his heart as an apostle God, in Paul and through Paul, would make an appeal to others. That's the Christ life. That's Jesus being Jesus in us.

My wife used to have her quiet time at McDonalds, and that was her favorite thing to do. She'd go in there and get her some coffee and she'd take her Bible and she'd get her a sausage biscuit and that was her morning time with God. One morning, she had been listening to Billy Graham the night before. And in the program he preached on blind Bartemaus, and how Jesus was just going along the road and blind Bartemaus came along and Jesus just extended His love to him and healed him and kept right on going. And Billy Graham said that's Jesus living in you. Wherever you go you shake a person's hand at the counter there at the grocery store. You're kind to a waitress. That's Jesus shaking hands. It's touching people. Why? Because He lives inside of us. And that so captured my wife.

She was sitting there that morning reading the passage of blind Bartemaus in Mark 10, and as she looked up, she saw a truck with smoke coming out of it. Then she saw the little family that was standing beside it, a husband and his wife and a little child. She walked over to them. She said God just got so over her, she walked up to the man and the woman and she said, "I just want you to know I've been sitting over here drinking my coffee and God spoke to me in His Word and He spoke to me last night. I've been listening to Billy Graham and I just want you to know that Jesus told me to come over here and tell you that if there's anything I can do for you I would love to do it."

The woman, tears in her eyes, just hugged her so tightly. She said, "Oh, you don't know the story." She said, "We got here and we were going to go in and get breakfast, and we were going to leave our little boy asleep in the back of the truck. But," she said, "something told me to go get him. And we went and got him and took him inside, and the truck caught on fire. We've lost everything. We've lost our money. We've lost everything we had with us." They lived in that truck. And she said, "I became a Christian only about three months ago." And she said, "My husband is not a Christian and he has made the statement 'I have never seen a Christian live like he was a Christian. And when I see one I'll believe,'" and she, just tears beaming out of her face, and she said, "Today, today, he finally has a model before him." That's what it's all about. That's what it's all about.

What's your life like Monday through Saturday? What's my life like Monday through Saturday? Am in the bondage to my flesh and nobody can see Jesus in me when I live that way. But when I say yes to God, even in the midst of my failure, God in me reaches out and touches others. He does that in you, and we become what we say and what God says we already are. That's what Paul's trying to get to here. That's his heart. "You're my children. I was sick and the love of God in me reached out and touched you."

He uses a similar term in 1 Timothy 1:18. He says, "This command I entrust you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the

prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight.” In other words, Timothy, you’re my son in the faith. He didn’t lead Timothy to Christ, he was a disciple in Lystra and Derby when he picked him up. But then, in 2 Timothy 2:1, “You therefore, my son.” There was a spiritual connection between Paul and these people. He’s simply stating the fact that they were birthed into the kingdom when he was there. It was under a ministry God had given him, but he had nothing to do with it. Unlike the false teachers Paul was like a caring father to his children. See how he calls his people. He doesn’t call them slaves, he calls them children. He cared about them. He cared about them. That goes with nurturing the child once he’s been saved. You see, a father that loves his child doesn’t want to see him born and left in the nursery. A father that loves his child wants to see that child nurtured and grown up, properly fed and nourished, and that’s his heart.

I had a man tell me one time, “You’re just not very evangelistic.” I said, “What’s your definition of evangelism?” You know what it is, every single time it’s a misunderstanding. “Sowing and reaping, sowing and reaping, sowing and reaping.” No sir, no sir. What farmer goes out and sows anything without first of all doing what in the field? He’s got to plow that field. He’s got to cultivate that field. And true evangelism does not start with sowing the seed. True evangelism starts with preparing the heart, not only the one who’s going to sow the seed, but of the people he’s sowing it to. A life that is real. You see, that’s what Paul was like. He wanted to see the people grow up in Christ Jesus. As a matter of fact he stayed with the Ephesian church as an evangelist for three years to make sure they had their feet on the ground. That’s what the heart is of somebody who loves people.

So he addressed them as my children. Then he adds an improbable statement. “With whom I am again in labor,” that’s interesting, “until Christ is formed in you.” Now, what in the world does Paul mean? “I am again in labor.” You’re already birthed. What do you mean “again in labor?” First of all, to be in labor again after birth is totally unnatural. But there’s a subtle rebuke in what Paul is saying here. And then you can see the pain that he’s going through. There are similar pains. You ask any momma if there’s any pain in childbirth. My wife, every time I feel bad or get hurt she says, “Well, you’ve never had a baby.” Okay, alright. When I had my gall bladder out they, they said it was kind of like childbirth, and she said, “No, no, not, it’s not, it’s not.” Paul had already been in spiritual labor with them. When he came amongst them, the pain in his heart that he labored to share the word, God had to birth them. He couldn’t do that.

But now he says “I’m in labor again. I’m in labor again until what?” He clarifies it. “Until Christ”—now listen carefully, this is the heart of every true teacher—“until Christ is fully formed in you.” The word “fully” is not there, but that’s what he means. “Until Christ is formed in you.” Now, what in the world is he talking about? Does that mean you didn’t get all of Jesus? He’s growing up inside of you? No, the word “formed in you” is similar to the development of an embryo. And the embryo in this case is the Lord Jesus, except He’s the mature perfect Son of God. He’s just using a figurative picture here. But the phrase “Christ is not yet fully formed in you,” the words “fully formed” is *morphoo*. “Fully formed,” the word *morphoo*, comes from the Greek word *morphe*, and it means the appearance or the shape of something, the recognizable appearance of something. The word has the double “o” on; it means so that everybody can see him. Now, this is the word used in Mark 16:12, “and after that He appeared in a different form to two of them.” So you get the idea it’s an appearance, it’s a shape. And then the idea that that double “o” means that everybody recognizes and can see.

Here’s what Paul is saying. “Christ is in you. I was there.” But he said, “I am now in labor again. And the reason is Christ is not at all being seen in your life.” That’s his burden. That’s his pain. He had witnessed what had happened to them and he says, “Christ has not fully formed in you.” He’s not saying that they only got part of Him. He’s not saying that they didn’t get all of Christ in [[salvation]], all of God. Some people errantly teach you get Jesus, then later on you get the Holy Spirit. That’s ridiculous. There’s only one God in three persons. That’s why Romans, Galatians and other epistles call the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ to make sure we’ve got that down. Remember back in Gal 2:20 this is what Paul’s saying about them. He says in Gal 2:20, which is the key verse of the whole epistle, “I have been crucified with Christ and it’s no longer I who live [what’s the next part?] but Christ. Where does He live? Where does He live? “In me.” Do you think He was recognizable in Paul? Oh, absolutely. That’s why they put him to death. See, the world hates the Christ that lives within us.

And he’s saying, “I’m burdened. I feel like a momma going through labor pains, because you people that I have taught the message of grace—and I’ve seen Christ in you—now I’m having to go back and go through the labor again because He’s certainly not being fully formed in your life. People are not seeing Him in you.”

In Gal 4:12, remember, he says, “Become as I am,” and that was in the present tense, “Become and keep on becoming as I am.” And what was he? He was a man that walked by faith, who trusted Christ, and Christ was fully seen in his life. They must learn to walk by faith in his word if they’re going to do this. And Paul is burdened. How can he get this across to them? That’s why he said, “Have I labored over you in vain?” I mean, you can preach until you fall over in the floor, until God speaks to the heart it’s not going to change. Paul knows that, and he said, “I’m going through the same labor I went through when you were saved. I couldn’t save you either. God had to do that. My burden is that Christ be seen in your life.” When a believer chooses to go back to this “I’ve got to do in order to become” mentality, trying to act like Jesus, trying to become what God says you already are in Him, and then what happens is Christ cannot be fully formed in that believer.

That's why, you know, you say, "I don't wake up with a conscious attitude to be this way or that way." I know. But if we're not walking by faith, this is what it looks like. Nobody sees Jesus. They just see old rotten flesh in me, in you, in all of us. And that's what he's saying to the Galatian people. The Galatians, because of their buying into a false teaching, had shut themselves out from allowing Christ to be fully formed in them.

And how this grieved Paul. This is the pain of a true teacher of God's grace. It just burdens you because you cannot change people. All you can do is be the conduit through which God works. He's got to change the people, and that's the burden and the pain that you feel when you see Christ not being fully formed. It's like the pain that goes through a parent's heart when you tell a child to do something and watch him turn and go the opposite direction. "My children, with whom I again in labor until Christ is formed in you."

Paul's attitude of caring, Paul's attitude of laboring over these people, even though he's not with them, shows the true heart of a true teacher of the message of grace. What a contrast to the fleshly motives of false teachers. Paul was in it for the long haul. But, oh, the pain of watching the process.

Let me ask you a question this morning. Let's just draw a circle around ourselves. Nobody else is here. What's your desire for others this morning? What is your desire? What is your desire? Years ago, before I discovered this truth, I had a hit list when I prayed. "God, if you could get rid of these 15 people we could have revival." You know what God taught me then and is trying to teach me now? "I've stuck them in your life to teach you to live the message that you're preaching to other people." That's the bottom line.

Let me ask you a question. If I checked with your grandchildren, or your children, and I asked them, "What is the one legacy your parents or your grandparents are leaving you?" What would it be? Is it Christ in you the hope of glory, or have you got something else you think is more important? That's the heart. And I'll tell you, it'll break your heart when you see people hearing the message of grace and choosing to do rather than to become what God says they already are.

The second thing about this is not only the desire of a true teacher, but secondly is the distress of a true teacher. We saw a little bit of it in the labor pains that Paul went through. But you see a little bit more here. With the desire comes the distress. It's just part of the package. When someone has been under your teaching and heard the teaching of grace, clearly seen it, you've seen Christ fully formed in their life; as they learn to decrease so that He might increase within them; as they've learned to lay down any kind of strings they're putting on God and just say "O God, I just want You to be who You are in my life." He's heard that Christ lives in him and then he chooses, for whatever reason, deliberately to turn away from that, instead of just letting God do through him, that's going to be a truly distressing time to any communicator of the message of grace. It's going to be a distressful time. It's going to break your heart because it broke the heart of Paul.

Gal 4:20: "But I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you." Boy, you see a tenderness come out here that you don't see all the time in Paul, but it's always there. Look closely at that phrase. "But I wish to be present with you now." The literal here is "I was just now wishing I could be with you." Paul's heart is so broken over them. He says, "I wish I could be with you." And then he adds, "and to change my tone." That's powerful to me. That's very personal here. Paul knew he was coming on strong. If you've ever studied Romans and then you turn around and study Galatians, you're saying, whoa, what made Paul so mad in Galatians? It took him 16 chapters to cover it in Romans, only took him 6 in Galatians. Chuck Swindoll said that Galatians is like Paul writing Galatians mad. He comes out with both guns blazing. I mean buddy, he has not got one good word to say about these people, he's so upset. And he knows he's coming on strong. He knew it. He longed to be with them. Why? Because it's so much better face to face. Then you can see the emotion. Then you can see the care. Then you can see the love that's in somebody's heart.

There's an interesting note here. He's having to write the letter. Yes, I know, it's under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, but he also understands that anything that's written down sometime can miss the point if you don't see the emotion in it, the facial feature of somebody that's writing it. A letter rarely communicates the emotion of a writer. Now, this is God's word, so, yes, it's what God wanted to communicate. But you sense that humanity of Paul here saying, "I wish I could be with you to talk this through. I wish I could see you face to face." Have you ever gotten one of those emails that are drive by shootings? I mean, sometimes people can just, boom, and there's no emotion. There's no facial expression. There's nothing there that communicates anything but boom. And Paul says "I wished I could be with you. I wished I could be with you."

And to change my tone. He says, "For I am perplexed about you." That word "perplexed" the word *aporeo*—"a," without, *poreo*, a resource. Paul says, "I'm without a resource." In other words, I'm at a total loss. I'm at total loss with you people. He says to the Galatians that he had risked his life, he shared the Christ message with them, and the freeing message of grace. He says, "I'm just at a total loss. I wish I could be with you. I wish I could somehow change the tone of my voice. I wish I could be there."

And then in Gal 4:21 he says, "Tell me, you who want to be under law" —that's his term, not mine—"do you not listen to the law?" You who want to control your own life, do you realize you're still up under something. You're either under grace or you're under law.

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law.” You know that “want to be” is present indicative. Not only did you want to be, but you continue to want to be. This is something you have chosen. You are so deceived you don’t realize what bondage you’ve put yourself into. The term “under law” contextually means to be back up under the system of doing for God.

I have a dear friend, and every time I’m with her she says, “I’m just so burdened,” and then she begins to cry. And I’m thinking, why? And she said, “I just need to do more.” And Paul says, “Do you listen to that? Do you understand what you’re saying?” You can’t ever do enough. The law will never satisfy your doing. There’s a rung at the end of the ladder that you can’t ever reach. Is that what you really want, to be back under that thinking that says I must perform acceptably or I’ll not measure up?

“Tell me, you who want to be [and continue to be] under this thinking.” Then he says, “Do you not listen to the law?” The word “listen” there is *akouo*. *Akouo* is the word that means to hear and fully understand. You can’t use this word if there’s no understanding. To hear and fully understand. You that want to be under the law, do you hear and do you fully understand what it is you desire? It’s amazing to Paul how the believers in Galatia had gone right back to the very thing that they had been, had held them into bondage for so long. Remember back in 1:6, he says “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.” The false teachers the Galatians had listened to, man, it had to be good, because they had to deceive the very disciples that the apostle Paul had made when he was there.

But we shouldn’t be too surprised. Do you realize that’s still going on in the 21st century? It’s still going on. Listen up sometimes when you’re hearing somebody teach or sharing the Word of God. Listen whether it’s egocentric or whether it’s Christocentric. Listen to see where the emphasis is put. Is it upon me, me, me, or is it upon Him, Him, Him? It’s everywhere, folks. It’s everywhere. A true teacher of God’s grace will at some point realize the pain that comes from wanting to see Christ fully formed in the people’s lives who say they understand grace.

You know, I could have made that introduction and skipped it and moved on, but I want us to understand today how important this message is and why it grieved this apostle to his heart. It’s so important.

Galatians 4:22-31 Flesh versus Spirit

He’s going to take them back into history and dig up some bones. He’s going to try to get his point across in a different way. Paul has clearly tried to help the Galatians understand that they are already sons of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not through any work that they could do. Works don’t cut it; the works have to be that which God does through us, and so salvation is not based on any work that we do ourselves.

Turn with me this morning to Galatians 4. We’re going to be finishing up the chapter today. Quite a bit of Scripture, but there’s a reason behind this. There’s such a profound thought that we’re going to see in Galatians 4, I just felt like if we broke it up we might miss this, and so let’s try to put it together. It’s interesting. Sometimes when you’re trying to learn something, if somebody comes along and says, you know, let’s go back to the past and look at the baggage that perhaps we have inherited—I think there’s a country song that says, “Digging up bones”—sometimes it’s good to go back and dig up some bones to find out why it is that life is like it is and what it is that God wants us to know and to learn from His word.

Well, the apostle Paul’s going to do that today. He’s going to take them back into history and dig up some bones. He’s going to try to get his point across in a different way. Paul has clearly tried to help the Galatians understand that they are already sons of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not through any work that they could do. Works don’t cut it; the works have to be that which God does through us, and so salvation is not based on any work that we do ourselves.

He has used every approach, and you’ve seen it as we’ve gone through Galatians. He’s instructed, he’s reminded, he’s confronted, he’s pled like a father would plead with his children for them to pay attention to the absurd thing that they have chosen to do. And what was that? They bought the false teaching of the Judaizers which has put them back up under that old “I’ve got to do more in order to be accepted by God.” That’s the mentality. And Paul says, “What are you doing? You’re already accepted by God in Christ Jesus. And what you’re doing He has already done.” I mean, this is really baffling the apostle Paul. Why would people who are so free now in Christ go back to something that’s going to put them right back into bondage to their flesh?

Paul, in our last message, shares that he feels like a woman that’s going through labor, he says, only the second time for the same child. Now he uses a rather abnormal terminology there. You normally only have one time you go through labor in birth. He says, “I’m going through it a second time.” And what he’s describing here, the term “labor” is the pain that he feels in his heart. And yet the pain is not to see them come to know Christ. He can’t do a thing about them coming to know Christ, he can just present the message. God’s the One who saves people. But here they’re already believers. The pain he’s feeling is, here are these believers that have been set free, Christ has come to live in them; and his pain is, Christ is not being seen in their lives. He says in Gal 4:19,

“My children with whom I am again in labor until,” and here’s the event “Christ is formed in you.” You see, Paul realized that because of the foolishness of their choices Jesus was not being seen in their life. There was too much of them for Jesus to be seen. John the Baptist had it right, didn’t he? John the Baptist said we must decrease so that He might what? Increase. The more there is of me, the less there is of Him to be seen in my life. And that’s what his pain is.

With a very tender heart he says to them in Gal 4:20, “But I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone.” He says, “For I am perplexed about you.” Now, he realizes he’s come on pretty strong. He understands that; this is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. But at the same time he wishes he could be there to tell them face to face. He wishes they could see the emotion in his face and feel the burden of his heart. He says, “I am truly perplexed about you.” And what he means is, I’m at a total loss. “I’ve done everything I know to do. I’ve prayed for you. I’ve pled with you. I’ve confronted you. I’ve challenged you. I don’t know what else to do. I’m at a total loss.”

Now, if you’re a teacher of God’s grace and you are seeking to live that message, you know exactly what Paul’s talking about. When you see brothers and sisters in the family—they’ve already been accepted as adult sons in Christ Jesus; they can walk in those adult privileges if they just choose to live by faith—when you see that and then you see them choose to go back and do what they can’t do to begin with; they understood it, and to make that kind of mistake, to buy religion at the expense of a relationship, it breaks your heart and there’s nothing you can do. There’s nothing you can do. Like a parent with his children, you can’t make decisions for them. They’ve got to make their own choices, but, oh, how it breaks your heart when you realize what they could have as opposed to what they have chosen in their life.

All he could do was just challenge, encourage and confront these Galatians. He says in Gal 4:21, and he brings it back to more of a challenge, he says, “Tell me,” you can see the perplexity in his life. “Tell me, you who want to be under law,” you who want to do it your own way, you who really think you have something that you could offer to God that He’s going to be impressed with, “tell me,” he says, “do you not listen to the law?” Now, that term “the law” there has two meanings. It’s a double-sided meaning. One is very specific, the Mosaic Law which they had bought back into as the means and the ways of righteousness. But there’s another meaning of that word, and really here you need to bring it out. It’s a general term that also includes the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch it’s called. And the first five books of the Bible they had at the writing of the book of Galatians. They had the Old Testament. And he says, “Do you mean to tell me that if you want to go back up under this old system, that’s only brought out in these books, do you not listen to what it says?”

And what he’s going to do is take them back to Genesis and dig up some bones. He’s going to dig up some bones. He said, “I don’t think you’re paying any attention whatsoever, and I want to help you go back and we’re going to look at the baggage that you have inherited.” And what he wants them to understand is they haven’t bought into anything that’s new. Man has been doing this all the way back. In fact, Abraham made the same mistake, and he wants them to understand that that mistake that Abraham made is still bringing all kinds of problems, even in the day that Paul was writing that letter.

Well, there are four things that I want you to do, to see here today. I want to try to explain to you, and Paul’s going to try to explain it to us. First of all he tells the tale of two sons. As he reaches back into history to help them understand his point, he takes them back. In Galatians 4:22 he says, “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.” Now, if you’ve noticed, in Galatians Paul has used contrasts to bring about his point over and over again. It’s a great way of teaching. When you want somebody to see this side of the story, show them the other side and put them together and sometimes it makes it more clear. He’s used the contrasts of law versus grace. Galatians 2:21 says, “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law then Christ died needlessly.” And he just shows you right there the difference of grace and law. He used a contrast of faith versus works in 3:2. He says, “This is the only thing I want to find out from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by hearing with faith?” And he shows the difference there of faith versus works.

And what he’s been doing since 3:26 is showing us the contrasts of being a slave or living as a son. So now he’s going to give us some more contrasts, four to be exact. But the first one he brings up is the two sons: “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one of them, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.” Now, the first thing you notice in this is that the father produces both sons. And what he’s going to show you is that every person that’s a believer has two choices: to do it his way, to try to help God out; or to trust God and wait upon God and let God do only what He can do.

And so we understand the story of Abraham and Sarah. God had promised them a son and Abraham makes a huge mistake. Now Paul characterizes these sons in this way. He says that one was the son of the bondwoman and the other the free woman. Now, the bondwoman is Hagar, and he’ll show you that in a minute. You know the story. And the second one, the free woman, that’s the wife, that’s the true wife. God only honors the one, the married to one woman, and that’s the key here. Now, even though he marries another woman, that’s not something that God approved of. He just allowed it, but He didn’t approve of it, and you’ll see that in the story. So the free woman is the true wife. That’s Sarah. The bondwoman is Hagar.

A bondwoman. And to tell you what that is, that was a slave. And in fact, the word is *paidiske*. It’s the word that means a female

servant. So she's just a servant. Now, even though Abraham was the father, slaves only beget slaves. You see, his true wife was Sarah, and therefore the true son would be Isaac. But with Hagar, she could only produce slaves. They were not legitimate sons in the family as far as God's concerned. Now you say, wait a minute. Where is that in Scripture? I'm so glad you asked. Because God says to him one day, doesn't He, He says, "Take your son, your only son up to the mountain." Well, in Gal 4:22 he says, "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman." Again, the free woman was Sarah. I just want to make sure you've got the characters right in your mind. The bondwoman was Hagar and we see the two women he's talking about.

Now, perhaps you don't know the story. Go back to Genesis 15 and let's just recite and rehearse what Paul is doing here to try to bring about his point. Genesis 15:1-4. "After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great.' And Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will Thou give me since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?'" Now, see Eliezer was not a blood child. He was just a slave there and a servant in the house. Now, it was true when the inheritance would come there would be some inheritance that would go to the slaves. But the true son would inherit the whole estate. Eliezer was a slave and it was grieving Abraham that he had no children. Sarah was barren.

"And Abram said, 'Since Thou has given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.' Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, 'This man will not be your heir, but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.'" Now God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. Ten years they tried to have a baby. They just wanted that son because God had promised it. Ten years go by, and Sarah is still barren and she had not conceived. And so therefore what they do is they come up with what we do so often. "Well, God said it, and He's evidently not doing anything. He's waiting on us, so we'll take matters in our own hand." And they decided to try to get a son their way. And, you see, that's exactly the way our thinking works. And this is what Paul's trying to tell the Galatians. "You go back to doing it your way; I don't care how good it is, it may even be a promise that God has given, but when you do that it's going to produce that which is illegitimate in God's understanding."

Sarah tells him to take her maidservant Hagar and take her as a wife. Hagar was a slave, the bondwoman. And so remember, slaves only beget slaves. Even though Abraham would be the father, he could only beget a slave. That could not be a true son because that was not his true wife. And Genesis 16:1, "Now Sarah, Abraham's wife, had borne him no children and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarah said to Abram, 'Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go into my maid. Perhaps I shall obtain children through her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarah." He should have listened to the voice of God. "And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan Abram's wife Sarah took Hagar, the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife and he went into Hagar and she conceived." Now the child of this wrong move by Sarah and Abraham was named Ishmael. Abraham has now another slave. That's all he has. He cannot have a true son because it was not by his true wife, even though, yes, he took her as a wife; that was not in God's program. Therefore he still does not have a true son.

And I want to make sure you understood what I said a moment ago; God says He never recognized that son to be the true son. In Genesis 22:2 God says, "Take now your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac." And that's when He tells him to go to the land of Moriah and to sacrifice Isaac. And what a beautiful chapter that is. You see, the point here is that Ishmael is what's produced when we choose to do things our way. God never sees it as what He has promised. It may be that you have heard God's promise. It may be that that's what you're wanting in your life. But if you do it your way, it will not be an Isaac. It will be an Ishmael. Paul is going to use Ishmael as a picture of what we produce when we seek to do things our way, when we choose to go back working in the energy of our flesh.

See, the religious mindset is so appealing to our flesh. It's a set of rules. We can do this, this, this and this and we can become spiritual; and we don't understand that's not what it's all about. We are already spiritual in Christ. The key is to learn to enjoy being what God says we already are. There is no way in the world that God needs our help. You know, I've been studying Scripture now for years. I've never seen a verse when God says "Oh, by the way, Paul, I'm having a tough time making a decision on this. What's your opinion? What do you think I ought to do?" I've never seen that in Scripture. God doesn't need our help. God's going to do it whether we get with Him or not.

What we need to do is get in on His program. And when we choose to do it our own way and we choose to take our fleshly creativity and come up with great things that we think God's going to honor because we studied the Word and we felt like that would be a good suggestion, God's not impressed. All it produces is Ishmaels. Ishmaels are nothing more than the illegitimacy of what the flesh can produce. What Abraham wanted was not bad. God had promised him a son. He wanted what God wanted, but he wanted it his own way. And, by the way, he passed that same attitude down through generations; his great-grandson Jacob did exactly the same thing. God said, "You shall inherit the blessing. You shall inherit the birthright," but Jacob spent his life trying to deceive everybody and contend with everybody to get it his own way. And nothing happens when we do it our way, except that which is illegitimate in God's sight. By choosing to help God out, Abraham made a serious mistake. This is baggage and this baggage was passed on. It's our flesh and we end up in the 21st century doing exactly the same thing, just like the Galatians had fallen into the same trap. God is

not impressed with what we come up with and offer back to Him, other than a surrendered heart to Him.

Gal 4:23 says, “But the son of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh.” And that’s a powerful statement there. That word “according,” *kata*, means to the measure of what the flesh can produce. And the word *sarx*, flesh, means that which is the mindset of sin and the mindset of self. And what Paul is doing is showing all believers—he’s been teaching on it now for four chapters in Galatians—he’s trying to show them that we all have, like Abraham, the capacity to do things our way. We have that capacity. We can manipulate. We can put pressure on. We can try to get what we think God would be impressed with. But if we do it our way it is nothing more than an Ishmael.

Now why would Paul be using this kind of analysis right here in Scripture? Because that’s been his point for the last two chapters, the difference of what God can do through a man and what man can do for God. That has been his point, religion versus Christianity. When we trust our flesh, we produce Ishmaels into our life.

I wonder, as we think together in the Scripture how many Ishmael’s have been produced right here? What we have come up with in a committee, “Boy, the committee was wonderful. I had the best time. We even had refreshments and we came up with a wonderful thought of what we could offer back to God and we gave it to Him.” Now, I want to tell you something, how many Ishmaels are right here in the church? But let’s get off of that for a second. How many Ishmaels are in our own lives? You’ve done it your way. You’ve just done it. Every one of us are in that boat, aren’t we?

In one church where I pastored we had flock groups. Now flock groups are basically when you get together in each other’s homes periodically. We did that because we needed more fellowship with the people, to get together and to get to know each other. But we were doing well with it. I got asked to go to a conference and while we were there they were going to have a special session on how to do flock groups. And so I said, “Let’s go and find out what we’re doing wrong, because if they’re doing it, maybe we need to do it that way. But we went to these flock groups and you know what they were heavy on? They were heavy on equipping. They were heavy on discipleship. And so we went back and we said, hey, we need to change what we’re doing.

And we got together, got all the right people, and we just killed what God had raised up. And we came up with our little Ishmael and asked God to bless it. And in six weeks we killed the whole program. Everything we came up with and asked God to bless, He let it miserably fail. And we had to get in front of the people and say, well, we missed God again. And we went back to what God had raised up, the Isaac, that which He produces as opposed to what we produced, and it quadrupled in about three months. And it was so obvious to everybody that when you trust God what He raises up is right. You can’t come up with anything that impresses God. I can’t come up with anything that impresses God.

But Abraham tried it; the Galatians did it; and we need to learn from that. Anything you or I do, offering it back to God and asking Him to accept it, that He has not initiated in our life, is nothing more than an Ishmael and is illegitimate in His sight. I don’t know how clear you can be in Scripture for Paul to drive his point home. We all have two choices—to do it our way; or to it God’s way. And the sad legacy of the church is in the last 100 years we did it our way and that’s why we’re in the mess that we’re in today. You see, only when we trust God. And when I say “trust God,” that means walk by faith, forsaking all else, I trust Him. I lay everything down so that God can produce the Isaac that I didn’t even know was on His mind. Religion produces Ishmael; God produces Isaac. And that’s Paul’s point. That’s his point.

So Paul tells the tale of two sons, why? To just simply document what he’s been teaching for the last four chapters. Well, secondly, he relates the truth about two covenants. Now he goes from two sons to two covenants, another contrast. Paul continues and explains what he’s trying to do. He’s not trying to get detailed in these stories. He’s using those truths to bring out a point.

Gal 4:24 says, “This is allegorically speaking.” Now, the Greek word for “allegorically” is the word *allegoreo*. *Allas* means of the same kind—you are taking a truth of the same kind; and then *egoreo*, which means to speak publicly. What he’s saying is, he’s using the truth as he speaks or writes to prove his point that it’s truth back here that goes right alongside with what he’s trying to teach.

Unfortunately we translated that “allegory.” That’s not a good translation. Let me tell you why. Well, an allegory does not have to be based on fact, and it frequently leads to biased and often bizarre conclusions. It’s one of the worst ways in which Scripture can be translated. So to use the term “allegory,” in our understanding in the 21st century, would not be a good term. What’s a better term? It’s the word “analogy.” That’s what really should be used here. He takes the true story from Jewish history, goes back and digs up the bone to bring out his point of what he’s trying to teach them in Galatians. Paul is not making his point and using Scripture to back it up. What he’s trying to say is, this has been going on ever since Abraham and even before him. So we need to learn from that; we need to learn from their mistakes.

Gal 4:24, “This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mt. Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.” Now Paul shifts from two sons to the two women who bore these two sons. These two women, Sarah, the free woman, the wife of Abraham, and Hagar represent two covenants. The bondwoman, Hagar, represented the

covenant of law, and the free woman, who is Sarah, represented the covenant of grace, which the Galatians were a part of, which is only entered into by faith, not by works, but by faith. "This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai, bearing children who are to be slaves, she is Hagar."

Now the word "Hagar" in Hebrew and in Aramaic means Mount Sinai. That's the word for Mount Sinai. I thought, that's interesting. Mount Sinai, where is Mount Sinai? What happened up there? That's where God gave the Ten Commandments. That's where God gave the law. So Hagar represents the covenant of law. "This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai." Now watch this, this covenant of law, what can it produce? "Bearing children who are to be slaves, she is Hagar." Anything that comes under this covenant can only produce slaves. It cannot produce sons because there's no faith that is equivalent to the covenant of law. Paul says this covenant of law can only produce slaves. And because the covenant was not of faith. It was given 400 years later than when the covenant of grace was given to Abraham. As a matter of fact, when it was given to Abraham there wasn't even an Israel at that time. There wasn't any law. It was just God's purpose for redemption.

The phrase, "who are to be slaves" is in the present tense. If a person remains under the law all he can ever be is a slave. He can never be a true son. He can never be an Isaac. He's only an Ishmael. Paul wants them to realize that the law was never intended to produce sons. It was only intended to take slaves and frustrate them. We've already seen the role of the law in chapter 3. It was only a tutor, a babysitter. It couldn't produce anything that God accepts. All it could do was keep the slaves in line until faith could come, until Jesus could be born, until the promised Seed could be born. Then in Him, He would produce the sons. But the law was never intended in any way to produce Isaacs, it could only produce Ishmaels. If you take the two analogies and put them together, the Galatians had chosen to go back under law which produced only that which was unacceptable to God. They had chosen to get back up under the wrong covenant.

Now let me ask you a question. Even though you are a child of grace like they are, you entered in by faith, what covenant are you living under? What decision have you made by your own choice of how to live? You either walk in the relationship dealing with sin every day, dealing with confession and repentance every day, making certain that God and you are in total fellowship, you have the relationship, but you're constantly cultivating that fellowship and you're walking, saying yes to Him; or you're playing some religious game over here and you're trying to manipulate and make everything happen to make you feel better which is nothing more than an Ishmael, which is nothing more than the mindset of the old covenant. That's what he's trying to show them. You can't be an Isaac and be under the old covenant. You can't choose to live doing things your own way and produce the Isaacs that God says He and He alone can produce.

Okay, the tale of two sons; and then he tells the truth about two covenants; and then thirdly he shares the tragedy of two Jeruselems. Man, this is something else. And when I studied this, this was so heavy, but now it's just so profound to me. Paul continues to help them understand what they've done. How ridiculous it is for a church to think they can offer God anything other than give themselves to Him and let Him produce the Isaacs that only He can produce. Gal 4:25, "Now this Hagar [the bondwoman] is Mount Sinai in Arabia." But look what he adds, "and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children."

Now, I'd like to have been a fly on the wall when some of the Judaizers who were the false teachers read this letter. Man, you talk about making somebody livid. You mean you're going to compare us to Mount Sinai? You're going to compare us to the old covenant. That's what he does. He compared Hagar to Sinai, to the first century Jerusalem. In other words, first century Jerusalem was in slavery, but to two things: they were in slavery to Rome, yes, but they were also in slavery to the law. "She is in slavery with her children." Now, Paul has talked about two sons that Abraham produced. One was acceptable because it was by faith; the other was not because it was of the flesh. He's talked about two covenants. One covenant could only produce the physical seed of Abraham. That's all it could produce. It couldn't produce the spiritual seed because there was no faith involved. The other covenant could produce the spiritual seed. Now he talks about two Jeruselems. "Now this Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children." Then he adds in Gal 4:26, "But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother." He shows that there are two Jeruselems. There's an earthly Jerusalem in his day and as in today, and there's a heavenly Jerusalem.

Sarah, in contrast to Hagar, is the mother of those born into grace. Remember, she's the free woman. We're free. And he again is following his thought all the way through. We're part of the heavenly Jerusalem. Believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, produced by the new covenant, the covenant of grace, out of faith and not out of works. Therefore we are the Jerusalem that is above, spiritual Jerusalem. The Judaizers, the false teachers who were born of the flesh, they were slaves along with the people they were deceiving. They didn't have any clue what Paul was talking about. Slaves of the law, slaves of the bondwoman. But we who are born of the Spirit live by faith. We're trusting God and willing to wait upon God believing that He is faithful or are we? You see, that's the way we're supposed to be living instead of trying to do what we cannot do to accomplish His will.

To illustrate this Paul quotes an Old Testament song and shows how that, even though God had promised, He waited a long time to fulfill that promise. And believing God means that you're willing to wait upon God to do what only He can do. And he takes this song,

Isaiah 54:1 and he brings it into Galatians 4:27 and changes his whole picture. He moves now from the women and the covenants and Jerusalem, he moves now to Israel. And he's not talking about Sarah, he's talking about Israel. It was to give hope that in due time God would deliver them because He is faithful to encourage and if we're just willing to trust God. In other words, captive Jerusalem, captive Israel. Israel's been through captivity so many times it's not even funny. I mean, you go back in Assyrians, and you go on to the Babylonians, and you move right on down the line, the Greeks and then the Romans. They've been in captivity in their whole history. And this is was a song that was given to them: Don't try to get out from under what you're under; just trust God to deliver you. Sarah, you were barren for a long time, but God came through with His promise. Israel, you're in captivity and it's going to be long time, but God will come through. Trusting God is the only way to see Him work in your life.

Gal 4:27 says, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; for more numerous are the children of the desolate than the one who has a husband." Now, let's break that down and make sure you understand. He says, "Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear." And again you could go back to Sarah. She went for a long time. She was 90 years old when that baby was finally born. He's moving now to Israel in captivity. The next phrase was to encourage them. "Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor." Even though God has promised you, you feel no birth pains. You who are not in labor, "break forth and shout," because if you'll trust Him, at a certain point in time He'll bring you out. You're to wait upon the promise. "For more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband." And this promise seems to say, even though you're desolate now, wait until He delivers you and you go back into your land, and look then at the children that you're going to bear. And so it was a promise; it was a song that they would sing. And they would sing it when they were in captivity.

And Paul takes this and says, "Listen, don't you see what he's saying here? He's told you you're going to get out, but you're going to have to wait upon Him to do what only He can do. He's the only one who could produce the Isaac. He's the only one who can bring you out of captivity. If you get a committee together and try to do it yourself you're going to produce an Ishmael. You're going to jump in front of God." Man, it's so clear to me. I hope it's clear to you. We cannot do anything to help God out. All we can do is bow before Him and only in His time will He produce the Isaac that only He can produce. Anything else is religion. Anything else is an Ishmael and that's what he's trying to say.

This baggage comes way back. Let's dig up some bones and see what we've inherited. It's where we all are. Israel was a nation of promise. Its descendants were as the sand on the sea. Paul takes this and applies it to believers, Gal 4:28: "And you, brethren"—now look what he's done; he comes right back to them—"like Isaac, are children of promise." In other words, you didn't just come to be. He's reminding them that even though it had taken a long time, it was a process of time. Jesus didn't come right away. Jesus, it was over the centuries that He came. We're such a privileged generation because we get to live in the fullness of the covenant promises. It was through Isaac that Jacob was born. And Jacob, of course, became Israel, who had 12 sons. Judah was one of his sons, and it was through Judah that David was born. And it was through David that the virgin Mary was born. And it was through the virgin Mary that the Lord Jesus finally came after 400 years of darkness.

And what Paul is saying is, you are children of promise. You are the result of people trusting God and waiting upon Him and waiting upon Him and waiting upon Him. You are the result of all of that. Now why would you go back to the mentality you can do anything to get God to move before God is ready to move? That's what religion is. Religion is an Ishmael; Isaac is what Christianity is all about—trusting and waiting upon God. "And you brethren, like Isaac are children of promise." So what's his message to the Galatians? By choosing to go back under the law they've chosen to go back and be slaves. They had chosen to live like earthly Jerusalem. They'd chosen to put themselves into bondage. They had chosen death instead of life. You wonder if they'll ever get it. No wonder Paul says, "I'm perplexed, I'm perplexed. I've told you everything I know to do. I've tried to make you mad. I've pled with you. I've done everything to do to clarify it." And you can see the dilemma he's in: two sons, two covenants, and two Jerusalems.

But he finishes his thought here in this chapter. Finally there are two kinds of people. He warns them of two kinds of people, the trouble between two kinds of people. And if you take the text literally here, he's speaking of lost versus saved, but you have to remember the mentality of lost -- flesh is flesh on both sides of the cross, so you've got to be able to apply it even to the church. No matter whether or not a person's saved, or whether he's lost his flesh is going to go the route of Mount Sinai. His flesh is going to go the route of Hagar. His flesh can only produce Ishmael if a person chooses to walk after it. And that's what he's bringing out.

Oh, how people who walk after the flesh, and this is his point—now listen to me carefully—those who walk after the flesh, those who have chosen this direction, they literally hate the people who are seeking to live by grace and waiting and trusting on God. There's your hostility. There's your conflict. There's churches being divided; there are families that are falling apart. Why? One has chosen Hagar and the other has chosen Sarah. And one is producing Ishmael and one is producing Isaac. And he's going to show you the hostilities that come about when these kinds of things happen.

Gal 4:29: "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh [Ishmael] persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit," and then he says, it takes history. He says this is the way it was. And then he says, "so it is now also." Nothing's changed. Gal 4:29 is a direct reference to the time when Isaac was weaned from his mother. They had a huge celebration. Genesis 21:8 says,

“And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.” Now, that’s a celebration, a feast. It’s time for him now. He’s in manhood. And Gal 4:9: “Now Sarah saw that the son of Hagar [Ishmael] the Egyptian whom she had born to Abraham, she saw him mocking him.” There’s your hostility right there with the flesh and with the Spirit.

Do you know what else he’s going to do in chapter 5? He’s going to take it to another level of how the flesh wars against the Spirit. There was immediately the realization that these two, Isaac and Ishmael, could not peacefully co-exist. One came from the flesh; one came out of faith; and they cannot peacefully co-exist. Genesis 21:10 is quoted exactly in Gal 4:30 of our text: “But what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.’” And that casting out there is a hostile word. It’s declaring war on the flesh. The two cannot peacefully co-exist. It’s almost word for word. Genesis 21:10 says “Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Drive out this maid and her son for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son, Isaac.’” There’s no way grace and law can co-exist. There’s no way. The hostility is incredible. It’s incredible. From people who are willing to wait and trust God to bring about the Isaac, and people who have chosen to, no sir, we will manipulate our way until we get what we want. That’s Hagar. That’s Old Testament. That’s flesh and he said the two cannot peacefully co-exist.

And then he says in Gal 4:31, you know, you wonder why churches are splitting all over this country. This ought to tell you right here. You’ve got religious people and you’ve got Christians trying to intermingle and it cannot be peaceful. There’s a hostility here between the two. “So then, brethren,” he says in Gal 4:31. This is all analogy. He’s using Old Testament baggage to prove his point. He says, “So then, brethren,” what are we going to make out of this, in other words? How do we draw our conclusions? “We are not children of a bondwoman, but of the [what?] free woman.” And you can almost hear him say it, and he does say it in Gal 5:1, “then live like it.” Do you realize, folks, what he’s going to do in Gal 5? He’s going to show that the way we treat one another is directly a reflection of which covenant we’ve chosen to live under. It’s directly a reflection of whether or not we’re walking by flesh or whether or not we’re walking by faith. That’s going to be his litmus test. That’s going to be the acid test in chapter 5: The war of the flesh versus the Spirit, and how to win that battle. And when you win it by saying yes to Christ, fulfilling the desires of the Spirit, He produces a character of love to where now you have the unity in the body that ought to be there. That’s what he’s saying.

Gal 5:1 says, “It was for freedom.” And that doesn’t mean the right to do as you please like the book of Judges. It means the power to do as you should. “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore”—I love those “therefore’s”—“keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” Now, I don’t know about you, but if I was sitting in the audience in Galatia and somebody read this message, I don’t think I could have missed that one. That’s about as clear as the nose on our face. The way we act directly reflects a choice we’ve made as to which covenant we’re going to live under, whether or not we’re going to obey our flesh and its whims and opinions and agendas, or whether or not we’re going to by faith trust God to raise up an Isaac that we didn’t even know would exist. That’s faith. Just like you have captive Israel, just like barren Sarah, they had to trust God and learn to wait for Him to do what only He could do.

Two sons, two covenants, two Jerusalems and two kinds of people, two kinds of people; and the hostilities between these two kinds were going on in Galatia. But as we go back to the Galatians and dig up some bones, they’re still going on today in the 21st century. And I want to tell you something, folks. God is trying to teach us something and tell us something, and He’s wanting us to deal with the sin that’s in our life that so reflects itself by the way we treat other people. You never ever sweep sin under the rug and go on. No, sir; you have to confess it and deal with it and put it under the blood to be free now, to be free for God to produce the Isaac that we haven’t got a clue about. We’re just trusting Him to do. The hostilities are not just here. They’re everywhere.

I’m preaching a message right now that could be preached anywhere in the world. I was in Romania doing a conference on grace, the covenant of grace, living as children of Sarah, heavenly Jerusalem, and seeking to have people see that and be set free from the bondage that whole country has put themselves in. A man came up to me, and you know what he said to me? “Yeah, you Americans come over here and preach grace.” He said “We preach law.” I said, “You do? Why?” He said, “That’s the only way we can control our people.” And I said, “And yes, sir, you’re going to stand before God one day and everything you’ve done is going to burn at the bema seat of Christ.” He turned and walked out. And in my flesh I said, “Good riddance.”

Cast out the bondwoman’s son. They cannot peacefully co-exist. You know what the attitude is when people walk by faith? “I can’t; God never said I could. He can; He always said He would.” The biggest problem you’re going to have and the biggest problem I’m going to have in walking the Christian life is sitting down at a table in a committee and think for one second we can do it. You’re dead in the water. You have just bought the same lie Abraham bought; you’ve just bought the same lie the Galatians bought. And look it here, it’s still alive and well in the 21st century. Where are you today? What’s your relationships like? How do you speak to one another? What comes out of your mouth tells you everything as to where you are.

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