

- I. Paul states his case concerning the genuineness of his Position and gospel message, (Chs. 1-2)
 1. **PAUL TESTIFIES TO THE VALIDITY OF HIS GOD GIVEN APPOINTMENT TO THE GOSPEL, (1:1-3)**
 2. **PAUL PRESENTS THE CENTRAL TRUTHS OF HIS GOD GIVEN MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL, (1:4, 5)**
 3. **PAUL WARNS AGAINST ANYONE MISREPRESENTING THE GOSPEL, (1:6-9)**
 4. **PAUL STATES HIS COMMITMENT TO AND THE ORIGIN OF THE GOSPEL HE PREACHES, (1:10-24)**
 5. **PAUL DEMONSTRATES THAT THE JERUSALEM CHUCH APPROVED OF THE GOSPEL HE PREACHES, (2:1-10)**
 - 1) Paul is moved by God, to go to Jerusalem, (1, 2a)
 - 2) Paul lays out the gospel he preaches for open scrutiny at a public church meeting, (2b)
 - 3) Paul defends the gospel he preaches at a private church leaders meeting, (2c-4)
 - (1) Paul is concerned that God's work could be undermined, (2c, 3)
 - (2) Paul is concerned that God's grace could be undermined, (4)
 - 4) Paul holds fast to the gospel he preaches in spite of some in the church, (5, 6)
 - (1) Paul is not the least bit submissive to the Judaizers, (5)
 - (2) Paul is not the least bit intimidated by the church pillars, (6)
 - 5) Paul receives complete approval of the church pillars, (7-10)
 - (1) There is unity in the gospel Paul and the apostles preach, (7)
 - (2) There is unity in the divine enabling that Paul and the apostles enjoy, (8)
 - (3) There is unity in the need to continue as they are, (9)
 - (4) There is unity in the desire to, in addition to preaching the gospel, minister to the poor, (10)
 6. **PAUL REPROVES PETER FOR NOT REMAINING FAITHFUL TO THE TRUE GOSPEL, (11-14)**
 - 1) Peter comes to Antioch, (11)
 - 2) Peter bows to peer pressure, (12)
 - 3) Peter leads others astray, (13)
 - 4) Peter plays the Pharisee, (14)
 7. **PAUL DESCRIBES THE JUSTIFICATION GOD PROVIDES, (15-21)**
 - 1) Paul testifies of the law's inability to justify anyone, Jew or Gentile, (15-16a)
 - 2) Paul testifies of Christ's ability to justify anyone, Jew or Gentile, (16b)
 - 3) Paul testifies of the means by which one may find justification through Christ, (16c)
 - 4) Paul testifies of Christ's ability to justify (17)
 - 5) Paul testifies of his determination not to return to the law, (18-19a)
 - 6) Paul testifies of his determination to live for God, (19b)
 - 7) Paul testifies of the change the grace of God has made in his life, (20)
 - 8) Paul testifies of his confidence in and allegiance to God's grace, (21)
- II. Paul states his case concerning justification by faith alone, (Chs. 3-4)
 1. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE GALATIAN BELIEVERS, (2:1-9)**
 - 1) Paul explains their error, (1)
 - 2) Paul calls them to give an account, (2)
 - 3) Paul impresses upon them to think, (3-5)

- 4) Paul gives them an Old Testament example of justification through faith alone, (6, 7)
- 5) Paul illustrates through the Old Testament Scriptures that God Himself intended that justification come through faith alone, (8)
- 6) Paul states in no uncertain terms, those who are genuinely justified, (9)
2. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE LAW, (3:10-12)**
 - 1) Paul explains that those who look to obeying the law as their Messiah, only end up being cursed by it, (10)
 - 2) Paul explains that those who look to faith in Christ as their Messiah, end up being blessed by Him, (11)
 - 3) Paul explains that you have to choose one or the other because you can't mingle them, (12)
3. **PAUL ADDRESSES GOD'S GRACE, (3:13-14)**
 - 1) Christ died on the cross to provide for our redemption, (13)
 - 2) The Holy Spirit indwells us to provide for our sanctification, (14)
4. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S GRACE OVER THE LAW, (15-18)**
 - 1) The intent of God's covenant of grace cannot be ignored or changed, (15)
 - 2) The heirs of God's covenant of grace cannot be overlooked or deprived, (16)
 - 3) The timing of God's covenant of grace cannot be denied or disregarded, (17)
 - 4) The truth of God's covenant of grace cannot be misinterpreted or concealed, (16)
 - 5) The law cannot give life, (21)
 - 6) The law can only reveal and condemn sinners, (22a)
 - 7) The law can only present the need for justification; it cannot provide it, (22b)
 - 8) The law held us in bondage, (23)
 - 9) The law treated us like little children, (24a)
 - (1) Teaching us about the object of grace, (24b)
 - (2) Teaching us about the means of grace, (24c-25)
5. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE POSITION GRACE PLACES US IN, (26-29)**
 - 1) The position of adulthood, (26)
 - 2) The position of Identity, (27a)
 - 3) The position of standing, (27b)
 - 4) The position of equality, (28)
 - 5) The position of blessing, (29)
6. **PAUL ADDRESSES GOD'S ADOPTION OF BELIEVERS, (4:1-7)**
 - 1) Paul states the need for adoption, (1-3)
 - 2) Paul states what God the Father did in order to provide adoption, (4-5)
 - (1) The time of His provision, (4a)
 - (2) The means of His provision, (4b)
 - (3) How Christ came, (4c)
 - (4) Why Christ came, (5)
 - 3) Paul states what believers become in being adopted, (6-7)
7. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE GALATIANS BELIEVERS NEED TO GROW UP, (4:8-11)**
 - 1) Paul reminds them of their Godless and slavish past, (8)
 - 2) Paul reminds the Galatians of their God and grace filled present, (9a)
 - 3) Paul questions the Galatians' maturity in seeking to return to a merciless slavery, (9b)
 - 4) Paul expresses his grave and personal concern for the Galatians' future, (11)

8. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR CHRIST TO BE FORMED IN THE GALATION BELIEVERS, (4:12-17)**
 - 1) Paul pleads for the Galatians to follow his Christlike example, (12-14)
 - (1) Paul was like Christ in that he became one of them, (12b)
 - (2) Paul was like Christ in that he looked beyond their rejection of him to their need, (12c)
 - (3) Paul was like Christ in that he took advantage of every opportunity, (13)
 - (4) Paul was acknowledged as a messenger of God, (14)
 - 2) Paul pleads for the Galatians to forsake their Christless path, (15-17)
 - (1) The Galatians present path led them away from the joy of their salvation in Christ, (15)
 - (2) The Galatians present path led them away from Christ's truth, (16)
 - (3) The Galatians present path led them to promote the efforts of Christ's enemies, (17-18)
 - (4) The Galatians present path led them to cause great distress for their brothers and sisters in Christ, (19-20)
9. **PAUL ADDRESSES THE PRESENT SITUATION THROUGH AN PAST BIBLICAL EXAMPLE, (4:21-31)**
 - 1) Paul asks a key question, (21)
 - 2) Paul shares a Biblical example pertinent to the question, (22, 23)
 - (1) Abraham has two distinct sons through two very diverse women, (22)
 - (2) Abraham has two distinct sons through two very diverse means, (23)
 - 3) Paul interprets the Biblical example as to how it relates to the question—each mother represents a different covenant, (24-27)
 - (1) Hagar represents the Mosaic Covenant, (24, 25)
 - 1a The Mosaic Covenant was ratified in Sinai, (24a)
 - 2a The Mosaic Covenant is a covenant of bondage, (24b-25a)
 - 3a The Mosaic Covenant depicts the spiritual condition of Jerusalem in Paul's day, (25b)
 - (2) Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant, (26, 27)
 - 1a The Abrahamic Covenant represents heavenly Jerusalem, (26a)
 - 2a The Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of liberty, (26b)
 - 4) Paul applies the Biblical example to the question, (28-30)
 - (1) Salvation is God's work, (28)
 - (2) Salvation is not by human-effort, (29)
 - 1a Human effort resists God's grace, (29b)
 - 2a God's grace resists Human effort, (30)
 - 5) Paul's conclusion to the question, (31)

Chapter summary – There was a woman who married a man who built their marriage on following a list of do’s and don’ts written down in a book. He was constantly engrossed in the book and faithfully tried to follow its instruction to the best of his ability. He lived his marriage by the book you could say. He spent far more time with the instruction book than his with wife. When his wife complained he would be quick to say, “Do I not do this and that for you and are not those things a husband should do?” His wife would affirm that the things he was doing were good, but she wanted him more than the things he could do for her.

Fortunately the husband realized that he was missing out on really connecting with his wife and enjoying a close personal relationship with her. He and his wife were soon deeply involved in one another’s lives and were fast becoming intimate soul mates.

Several years later at a marriage seminar, a very charismatic and persuasive teacher, got the husband thinking that he needed to return to the list of do’s and don’ts. You can imagine what it did to the marriage. It was a huge step backwards, not forwards. It resulted in an enormous loss of blessing. It was a very stupid thing to do.

This is the idea that Paul is trying to get the Galatian believers to understand. Before the Galatians became believers, they were following the book, a list of do’s and don’ts. Paul had introduced them to a relationship with Jesus Christ. They professed saving faith in Christ as their Savior and began to enjoy that relationship along with the blessings it provided. Then later, the Judaizers bewitched them into reverting back to the Rabbinical law. Paul here is trying to get them to see how insane that would be, to give up a relationship with God for legalism.

§ § § § § § § § § § § § § § § §

II. Paul states his case concerning justification by faith alone, (Chs. 3-4)

6. PAUL ADDRESSES GOD’S ADOPTION OF BELIEVERS, (4:1-7)

1) Paul states the need for adoption, (1-3)

 **INTERPRETATION:**

¹ **Now** (to further illustrate the significance of believers being sons and heirs of God [3:26-29]), **I say that the heir** (the one who is due to inherit certain rights and assets), **as long as he is a child** (a minor, one under age, before he becomes a man), **does not differ at all from a slave** (someone else makes his decisions for him—he is not independent to live his life as he pleases), **though he is master of all**, (though all is rightfully his, it is still only a legal right and not an actual fact yet)

- ² **but is under guardians** (those who are entrusted with the child's general care—e.g., provide for his needs, protect him and instruct him in what to do), **and stewards** (those who are entrusted with the child's assets—e.g., maintains and protects the child's estate, [the *tutor* {3:24, 25}, was entrusted with the child's education]), **until the time appointed by the father**, (that the child should become an adult—acquiring all adult privileges and responsibilities, but only at the time stipulated by the father).
- ³ **Even so** (or in like manner), **we** (those of us who are presently saved by God's grace through faith in Christ), **when we were** (past tense), **children** (without God's saving grace, we), **were in bondage under the elements¹ of the world**, (we were bound by the basic, fundamental, rudimentary rules of life and our culture as mentioned in verses one and two. There was no escape from them).

Paul states that the Jews were, like little children, in bondage to “the elements of the world.” This word *elements* means *the basic principles, the ABCs*. For some fifteen centuries, Israel had been in kindergarten and grade school, learning their “spiritual ABCs,” so that they would be ready when Christ would come. Then they would get the full revelation, for Jesus Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 22:13); He encompasses *all* the alphabet of God's revelation to man. He is God's last Word (Heb. 1:1–3).

Legalism, then, is not a step toward maturity; it is a step back into childhood. The Law was not God's final revelation; it was but the preparation for that final revelation in Christ. It is important that a person know his ABCs, because they are the foundation for understanding all of the language. But the man who sits in a library and recites the ABCs instead of reading the great literature that is around him, is showing that he is immature and ignorant, not mature and wise. Under the Law, the Jews were children in bondage, not sons enjoying liberty.²

2) Paul states what God the Father did in order to provide adoption, (4-5)

(1) The time of His provision

- ⁴ **But** (in contrast), **when the fullness of the time had come** (as for example there is a proper time for a child to become an adult—so likewise, at the proper time),

(2) The means of His provision

God sent forth His Son (Jesus Christ—it was the time God the Father, had established),

¹ **Elemental things** is from *striction*, which has the root meaning of “row” or “rank,” signifying foundational and rudimentary orderliness. It was used, for instance, of the letters of the alphabet, the elemental building blocks of writing. (MacArthur, *Galatians*)

² Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. " Jkt., Ga 4:1

(3) How Christ came

born of a woman (Mary, but conceived Christ of the Holy Spirit—He was God and He became man as well [Gen. 3:15]), **born under the law** (a Jew, just like all who are Jewish, but with one unique difference, which was),

(4) Why Christ came

⁵ **to redeem** (to rescue, to deliver, to free) **those who were under** (subject to, in bondage to), **the law** (like the child is to his guardian, tutor, and steward [3:23-25]), **that we might receive** (by Christ's work), **the adoption as** (full-grown, adult), **sons**, (with full privileges).³

3) Paul states what believers become in being adopted, (6-7)

⁶ **And** (now, presently), **because you are sons** (having received Christ, the Son of promise by faith), **God has sent forth** (in return, or in response to your act of faith), **the** (Holy), **Spirit of His Son into your hearts** (the inner man, the seat of our personality—the Holy Spirit), **crying out, "Abba** (Papa, Daddy), **Father!"** (declaring His divine presence in the new born believer).⁴

⁷ **Therefore** (by the work of the Trinity and not your own), **you are no longer** (what you once were), **a slave** (under the law), **but a son** (under grace), **and if a son, then an heir** (one with the full recognition, rights and privileges), **of God through Christ**, (not the law or by works).

F APPLICATION:

The Judaizers were saying that the Galatians would be better Christians if they followed the Rabbinical laws, if they would return to legalism. Paul was trying to prove how untrue that was. God had set them free having fulfilled the demands of the law through Christ. God had as well redeemed them from sin and death through faith alone in Christ. God was again walking and talking with them, not in the Garden of Eden, but in the center of their being; their heart. Paul was crying out to them not to become again like little children under bondage, but to remain as full-grown adults and enjoy God's presence and blessing.

³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Ro 8:3-4)

⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Ro 8:14-16).

This passage also helps us to see that the Holy Spirit comes immediately after salvation and not at a later time. The adoption is once and for all at the moment of salvation.

7. PAUL ADDRESSES THE GALATION BELIEVERS NEED TO GROW UP, (4:8-11)

Have you ever said to someone, “Grow up?” There are a lot of reasons we may say that to someone. They may be acting immature, being childish, or just not thinking. That in principle is what is happening here in Galatians 4:8ff.

1) Paul reminds them of their Godless and slavish past, (8)

⁸ **But then** (in your past), **indeed, when you did not know God** (personally, intimately as one of His redeemed adult sons), **you** (sincerely but ignorantly), **served** (submitted yourself to), **those which by nature are not gods**, (are not real living gods and thus could not provide you with eternal life, companionship or blessing).

2) Paul reminds the Galatians of their God and grace filled present, (9a)

⁹ **But now** (in the present), **after you have known God** (through faith in Jesus Christ), **or rather are known by God** (as He graciously initiated the process by drawing you to Himself),

3) Paul questions the Galatians' maturity in seeking to return to a merciless slavery, (9b)

how is it (then), **that you turn again** (away from a personal relationship with God and toward the path of impersonal barrenness), **to the weak** (elements, in that legalism cannot forgive and save you), **and beggarly elements** (in that legalism cannot protect and provide for you), **to which you** (in spite of these facts), **desire again to be in bondage** (you desire to revert back to being a child; trading in your maturity for immaturity—you want to become like slaves all over again—you would rather be subject to the cold and merciless regulations of the law than the warm and gracious companionship of God? Hello?! Is anybody home inside that head of yours?!)

¹⁰ (Don't deny it because), **You** (have already begun to), **observe days and months and seasons and years**, (of the Mosaic calendar).

F APPLICATION:

Although our lives may be quite different from the lives of the Galatians, the potential for slavery to sin[ful idols] remains the same. The names of the deities may change, but the wrongful worship continues. Which of the following slave masters exert the greatest control on your life? [An idol is anything that takes the place that God deserves.]

- Accomplishment—the lure of personal fulfillment [the Judaizers]

- Approval of others—measuring up to peer expectations
- Autonomy—the craving to do it my way or no way
- Chemical addictions, accompanied by denial
- Knowledge and technology—the faith that lends divinity to human abilities
- Pleasure—entertainment as the ultimate pursuit
- Sexual addiction—slavery to pornography of every kind
- Success—the drive to reach the top, to be number one
- Wealth—security promised through the accumulation of money, power, and possessions⁵

4) Paul expresses his grave and personal concern for the Galatians' future, (11)

¹¹ **I am afraid for you** (Galatian believers), **lest I have labored** (lit., *“I have labored to the point of exhaustion”*), **for you in vain**, (for nothing).

F APPLICATION:

Paul's fears are the same as any godly parents. As Paul had the privilege of seeing these Galatian believers come to Christ, he became their spiritual father. He then nurtured them in discipleship. He willingly made great sacrifices of time, energy and other resources on their behalf. He poured his life into them with the fervent hope that they would grow up to serve the Lord faithfully for the duration of their lives. It is no different for any parent with their children. Mentors and parents both, seek to train their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is a strenuous task to say the least and one full of emotional ties. If a disciple or child defects from that training, it is a tremendous blow. Any of you fathers and especially mothers can relate to that. A pastor has a mother's heart for his flock and is affected the same way.

8. PAUL ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR CHRIST TO BE FORMED IN THE GALATION BELIEVERS, (4:12-17)

Paul's style in his letter to the Galatians changes dramatically from this point on. Up to now he has been like the lawyer in the court or the professor in the classroom teaching and defending the principles of truth as he understands them. He has been standing alone and hitting his opponents hard; both the Judaizers and the wayward believers. Paul's approach has been sharp, confrontational and impersonal. Now he becomes very personal and affectionate. He speaks at this point more like a loving mother to her beloved children. His tone is gentle and patient.

⁵ Barton, *Galatians*. Life application Bible commentary, Page 135.

1) Paul pleads for the Galatians to follow his Christlike example, (12-14)

NOTES:

¹² **Brethren** (my fellow saints in the faith), **I urge** (I beg, I implore, I plead with), **you to become like me** (one who is liberated from the law of Moses and free to enjoy God's grace—God's presence and blessing—one who no longer lives to perform, but one who lives to see Christ formed in me),

(1) Paul was like Christ in that he became one of them, (12b)

for I became like you, (a Gentile, for the very purpose of introducing you to Christ).⁶

(2) Paul was like Christ in that he looked beyond their rejection of him to their need, (12c)

You have not injured me at all, (¹¹ by my becoming like you Gentiles. Paul's turning in his pharisaical credentials and prestige was no loss; ⁷ ^[2] neither did they harm Paul when they forsook his teaching. Paul's faith was as strong as ever and his purpose was clearer than it had ever been. Paul wasn't saying "Where did I go wrong?" There was nothing wrong with his training. It was the Galatians' choice to forsake his training. Every parent who properly trains up their child must remember this also).

How great a loss is it when we allow ourselves to be diverted from the simplicity of faith to trust in ceremonies, rites, and a prescribed routine! Let us therefore not pay slavish attention to the outward, but seek to have Christ within, and from within he will become the energy and passion of a new life. Each time we yield to the prompting of his Spirit, there is less of self and more of him. *F. B. Meyer*⁸

⁶ to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Co 9:20-22)

⁷ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. (Php 3:4-8)

⁸ Barton, *Galatians*. Life application Bible commentary, Page 139. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

(3) Paul was like Christ in that he took advantage of every opportunity, (13)

¹³ **You know that because of physical infirmity** (Paul was either seriously sick at the time or he was needing time to recuperate from a serious illness), **I preached the gospel to you at the first.** (Those were the circumstances surrounding our first encounter.)

F APPLICATION:

Paul wasn't whining about where he had planned to be. He was taking advantage of where circumstances beyond his control had placed him. He turned his illness into an opportunity. We need to do the same with our opportunities.

(4) Paul was acknowledged as a messenger of God, (14)

¹⁴ **And my trial** (my sickness), **which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject** (you did not loathe me, count me as worthless or quarantine yourselves from me), **but** (to the contrary), **you received me as an angel of God** (as a messenger from God Himself), **even as Christ Jesus**, (who is God and Master of all the angels—you gave me the red carpet treatment).

F APPLICATION:

1. We must always beware of thinking that we could ever be in a position or condition where God could not use us; age or circumstances wise. God delights in showing His strength through in our weaknesses. God delights in bringing light out of the darkest, most forsaken places. God delights in approaching sinners in the most unexpected ways. Ours is to do our best with however much or little we have, bathing everything in faith and prayer; expecting God to move mountains through it. Our position or condition never depicts our strength. Our provision of strength is always unlimited. We simply do not fully utilize it:
 - by not keeping our life clean of sin,
 - by seeking it with improper motives,
 - by not wanting to put the necessary effort into obtaining it, (e.g., fasting, prayer, concentration/focus, patience, maintaining a holy life)
 - by ignorance that it is even there,
 - by being apathetic,
 - by wanting you yourself or the situation to remain in your or its present condition,
 - by a lack of faith.

We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, (Phil. 4:13). The faith of a tiny mustard seed, can move an entire mountain, (Matt. 17:20). With God nothing shall be impossible, (Luke 1:37).

2. “Paul’s physical infirmity was a sickness that he had endured while he visited the Galatian churches. The world is often callous to people’s pain and misery. Paul commended the Galatians for not scorning him, even though his condition had been a trial to them. Such caring was what Jesus meant when he called us to serve the homeless, hungry, sick, and imprisoned as if they were Jesus himself (Matthew 25:34–40). Do you avoid those in pain or those facing difficulty, or are you willing to care for them as if they were Jesus Christ himself? When you are in need, do you allow others to minister to you even though it requires vulnerability and humility?”⁹

2) Paul pleads for the Galatians to forsake their Christless path, (15-17)

(1) The Galatians present path led them away from the joy of their salvation in Christ, (15)

- ¹⁵ **What then was the blessing** (the joy, the fulfillment, the liberation), **you enjoyed**, (when I spoke to you at the first? Where has it gone? What has become of it?) **For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me**, (you were so happy to hear and receive the gospel message I preached and taught).¹⁰

F APPLICATION:

It is very easy for a believer in Christ to lose the joy of his salvation as did the Galatian believers. There are hundreds of ways it could be lost, but the Galatian believers lost it to legalism. Legalism steals the joy of your salvation for several reasons:

- it makes people feel guilty [about their failures and/or lack of progress] rather than loved [in spite of their failures and/or lack of progress];
- it produces [a] self-hatred [an intense dislike for oneself and a belief that nothing of any real or lasting worth or significance can come about through you], rather than humility, [an understanding of ones weaknesses and strengths and working within those limits peacefully and to the best of ones abilities];
- it stresses performance [results, production, accomplishments), rather than relationship [rather than two hearts drawing closer together in understanding, unity and purpose]; and
- it points out how far short we fall [from God’s perfection] rather than how far we’ve come [to be more like God], because of what Christ did for us.

⁹ Barton, Life application Bible commentary, Page 140. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

¹⁰ It is believed that Paul had a serious eye affliction. He used a secretary to write most of his letters (Rom. 16:22, and when he did write, he used big letters so he could see what he was writing, (Gal. 6:11). This is possibly the affliction that Paul sought healing from God for, (2 Cor. 12:7-9).

If you feel guilty and inadequate and your joy is gone, check your focus. Are you living by faith in Christ or by trying to live up to the demands and expectations of [yourselves and] others?¹¹

NOTES:

(2) The Galatians present path led them away from Christ's truth, (16)

¹⁶ **Have I therefore** (after only a few years, and on my second trip to you), **become your enemy** (have I gone from being an ambassador from heaven, to an adversary from hell?), **because I tell you the truth** (about God's salvation being by grace and not of works—which once set you free as it is supposed to?—You experienced it! I'm not just telling you a bunch of empty words. You know I am telling you the truth, as the Holy Spirit has witnessed to you His presence within you.)¹²

F APPLICATION:

Truth sometimes hurts both the giver and receiver, does it not? Have you ever told someone the truth, only to have them come around and attack you for it? Sometimes the truth hurts them and they in turn around an hurt you.

Some matters that one has to be concerned with in sharing the truth are, be sure to:

- Share out of true love for the person
- Make certain your motives are right
- Be sure the issue warrants confronting and is not just a personal preference
- Be sure your timing is correct
- Offer to help them to work through the matter
- Keep the matter private

(3) The Galatians present path led them to promote the efforts of Christ's enemies, (17)

¹⁷ **They** (the Judaizers, who are the real enemy, who are speaking genuine lies, who are trying to change the gospel of grace to one of works), **zealously court you** (passionately seek to win your undivided devotion), **but for no good** (their professed love for you is not real. Their intentions towards you are not pure. Their interest in you is not for your welfare, it is for their own); **yes, they want to exclude you** (to separate you from my teaching and thus God's grace), **that you may be zealous for them**, (that by gaining your devotion to their legalistic practices, they may gain prestige with their peers for signing you up and then use you to gain additional converts for them).¹³

¹¹ Barton, *Galatians*. Life application Bible commentary, Page 141. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1994.

¹² "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn 8:32)

¹³ The verb "exclude"...was earlier used of the law which "shut up" sinners (3:23). The Judaizers desired to put up a fence of legalism around the churches and to rule over their new religious prisoners. (Gromacki, *Stand Fast in Liberty*, p. 136)

¹⁸ **But** (to the Judaizers credit), **it is good to be zealous** (as they are concerning their cause, but the cause must be), **in a good thing always** (we must be very careful to be zealous about things that truly portray and honor God), **and** (for me, Paul, this is the case), **not only when I am present with you**, (but when I am absent as well, like now as I write this letter).

F APPLICATION:

Paul was clearly explaining to the Galatian believers that his antagonism towards the Judaizers was not because they were attacking him personally. Neither did he have a problem with their zeal. Paul's problem with the Judaizers revolved around their opposition to salvation by grace alone through Christ's all sufficient, once for all and glorious work! When the Judaizers said that works must be added to acquire God's forgiveness, Paul yelled "Heresy!"

(4) The Galatians present path led them to cause great distress for their brothers and sisters in Christ, (19-20)

¹⁹ (Paul affectionately addresses the Galatian believers as a mother would her children saying), **My little children, for whom I labor in birth again** (I already labored with you once through your new birth, but to do so a second time is unnatural. It's not right, but it's necessary in the sense that I must deliver you all over again—not from sin this time, but from heresy), **until Christ is formed in you** (until Christ has free access to express Himself through you as you think and act like Him),

If ministers wish to do any good, let them labour to form Christ, not to form themselves, in their hearers.

John Calvin

²⁰ **I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone** (the idea being if Paul was there he could see if they were reverting back to the truth of the gospel and begin to affirm them rather than continue to admonish them); **for** (not being there), **I have doubts** (am at a loss, at my wits end), **about you**, (I don't know what else to do. You have me at a total loss).

F APPLICATION:

It again is like the parent or mentor who has carefully and faithfully trained up a child or disciple in the way he or she should go, only to see them head in the opposite direction. You are totally flabbergasted! Your head is reeling and you haven't a clue how to proceed. This is Paul's state of mind right here. "He could not understand how they could have been taught the gospel so well, believed it so genuinely, and then appeared to have forsaken it so quickly (cf. 1:6)."¹⁴

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Galatians*. Logos

One thing we can always do and should do whether a child or disciple is on **or** off the path of righteousness, is pray. God allows everyone to exercise free will and so must we. No matter how much it hurts sometimes to do so.

9. PAUL ADDRESSES THE PRESENT SITUATION THROUGH AN PAST BIBLICAL EXAMPLE, (4:21-31)

1) Paul asks a key question, (21)

²¹ **Tell me** (answer me this if you can), **you who desire to be under the law** (under bondage rather than under grace), **do you not hear the law**, (if you want to be under the law, do you really understand what is says and the position it will put you in)?

2) Paul shares a Biblical example pertinent to the question, (22, 23)

(1) Abraham has two distinct sons through two very diverse women, (22)

²² **For** (example), **it is written** (this is fact, I'm not making this up), **that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman** (the slave Hagar, who gave birth to Ishmael [Gen. 16:1-16—Abraham was 86]), **the other by a freewoman**, (Sarah, who gave birth to Isaac [Gen. 21:1-5—Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90]).

(2) Abraham has two distinct sons through two very diverse means, (23)

²³ **But he** (Ishmael), **who was of the bondwoman** (Hagar), **was born according to the flesh** (Ishmael was born under natural conditions, nothing out of the ordinary, he was the natural result of Abraham's and Sarah's planning and efforts to accomplish God's promise. God's promise being to make a nation from Abraham's seed and from this nation the Messiah would come as well [Gen. 12ff]), **and he** (Isaac), **of the freewoman** (Sarah), **through promise** (Isaac's birth was anything but natural, it was supernatural, miraculous—the direct result of God's intervention on man's behalf in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham as Sarah was barren at this time—Abraham and Sarah needed to exercise faith not works to receive God's promise [Gen. 18:9-14; Rom. 4:19; Heb. 11:11- 12, 19]),

3) Paul interprets the Biblical example as to how it relates to the question—each mother represents a different covenant, (24-27)

(1) Hagar represents the Mosaic Covenant, (24, 25)

1a The Mosaic Covenant was ratified in Sinai, (24a)

²⁴ **which things are symbolic** (of what is literally taking place here between the Judaizers gospel message of obtaining God's promise of salvation through the law, self-effort, versus Paul's gospel message of receiving God's promise of salvation by faith in God's grace through Christ's work on our behalf). **For these** (these two women), **are the two covenants** (the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant): **the one** (the Mosaic), **from Mount Sinai** (where Moses was given the law [Ex. 19:20]),

2a The Mosaic Covenant is a covenant of bondage, (24b-25a)

which gives birth to bondage (which not only kept those under the law under bondage to it, but the law heaped more and more oppression upon them as well [Gal. 2:4; 3:22, 23; 4:3, 7; 5:1; Rom. 3:19]), **which is** (represented by), **Hagar**—(the woman of bondage) ²⁵ **for this Hagar is** (personifies), **Mount Sinai** (where the law was given), **in Arabia** (the heartland of the Arabs, the children of Ishmael, depicting the children of bondage),

3a The Mosaic Covenant depicts the spiritual condition of Jerusalem in Paul's day, (25b)

and corresponds (as well), **to Jerusalem which now is** (i.e., Jerusalem in Paul's present day which was not only under bondage to Rome, but to the law as well), **and** (the Jew), **is in bondage with her** (Hagar's), **children** (the Arabs, as with many of the Jews, become Hagar's spiritual children of bondage—in bondage physically to Rome and spiritually as these Judaizers attest to by their legalistic teaching of salvation through personal self-effort [Paul does not include himself in the context of Hagar's children])—

(2) Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant, (26, 27)

1a The Abrahamic Covenant represents heavenly Jerusalem, (26a)

²⁶ **but** (in contrast to all of this bondage and self-effort), **the Jerusalem above** (a heavenly Jerusalem, representative of Sarah),

2a The Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of liberty, (26b)

NOTES:

is free (is liberated by God's grace, not self-effort), **which is the** (symbolic), **mother of us all**, (being transferred from the Mosaic covenant of law, to the Abrahamic covenant of grace—transferred from slavery to freedom—Paul **does** include himself in the context of Sarah's spiritual children and all others as well who live by faith in Christ's vicarious [substitutionary], work ALONE for salvation).¹⁵

²⁷ **For it is written**¹⁶ (by God as well): “**Rejoice** (cheer up), **O barren, you who do not bear!** (You who are held captive in shame and disgrace because you have no children and bear no fruit) **Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For** (the reason being), **the desolate** (Jerusalem whose inhabitants are in exile from the land of promise—Sarah who has no children yet as promised), **has many more children than she who has a husband,**” (in the end, and so will Christianity [the heavenly Jerusalem, symbolizing liberty through Sarah and Isaac] over Judaism [the earthly Jerusalem, symbolizing bondage through Hagar and Ishmael]).

¹⁵ Php 3:20—For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Heb 12:18, 22-24—For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,...but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Re 21:2—Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

¹⁶ Paul is quoting Isaiah 54:1 here. Its context in Isaiah revolved around God encouraging the those taken from the Promised Land and into Babylonian captivity. God wanted the Jewish nation to know that their captivity was temporary, that He was going to provide a way to escape from their present bondage to freedom. It seemed like an impossible task as the Babylonians never let their captives return to their native land, but God did what they thought was impossible and set them free. Those who exercised faith were encouraged by that promise.

God promised Sarah that He would liberate her from her barrenness by giving her a child. Being beyond her childbearing years, it seemed to Sarah an impossibility. But again God fulfilled His promise, and at 90, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. All Sarah had to do was exercise faith in God's promise and God would do the rest.

God now uses this same promise saying that He will liberate man from bondage again. This time from the bondage of sin and its guilt, burden and penalty that the law demanded. All a person had to do to receive this promise was exercise faith in Christ's work on his behalf and God would do the rest.

4) Paul applies the Biblical example to the question, (28-30)

(1) Salvation is God's work, (28)

²⁸ **Now we, brethren** (true believers), **as Isaac was** (a complete work of God in his conception and birth—a son of promise, independent of human effort, so), **are children of promise**, (the spiritual children of Abraham are supernaturally born, independent of human effort. Salvation is entirely a work of God—believers are those who make up the “*many more children than she who has a husband*”).

(2) Salvation is not by human-effort, (29)

²⁹ **But** (in contrast), **as he who was born according to the flesh** (Ishmael, the illegitimate son of Abraham, the product of human effort),

1a Human effort resists God's grace, (29b)

then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit (Isaac, the legitimate son of Abraham, a product of God's promise and supernatural intervention [Gen. 21:8,9]), **even so it is now**, (as the Judaizers persecute you—those born of the flesh alone are persecuting those born again of the Spirit).

2a God's grace resists Human effort, (30)

³⁰ **Nevertheless** (even so), **what does the Scripture** (God), **say?** **“Cast out** (put away), **the bondwoman** (Hagar [Gen. 21:10-14]), **and her son** (Ishmael), **for** (the reason being), **the son of the bondwoman** (the illegitimate son of Abraham through Hagar), **shall not be heir** (of the covenant of Abraham), **with the son** (Isaac), **of the freewoman,**” (Sarah—[Law and grace cannot coexist. Grace resists self-effort]).

5) Paul's conclusion to the question, (31)

³¹ **So then, brethren**, (if you “hear the law” [v. 21]), **we are not children of the bondwoman** (which is the theology of the Judaizers), **but of the free**, (as the theology of God's grace necessitates).

F APPLICATION:

Unbelievers are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), and unless God supernaturally draws them to Himself and opens their eyes to the gospel, they will not believe, (Jn. 6:44). The means of salvation was provided by God as is the ability to take advantage of those means. Just like Abraham and Sarah could not bring about the promise of a son by any amount of effort of their own, so it is with those who are yet lost in their sin. It is a work that only God can graciously perform on our behalf. God is the Author and Finisher of our faith, (Heb. 12:2).

 **INTERPRETATION:**

F APPLICATION:

 **COMMENTARY:**