

Galatians
“Living Free”
Main Teaching: 1:10-6:10
B. 3:1-4:31 Reasoned Grace
3. 4:1-31 Liberty verses legalism

4:19-31
“Stair Way To Heaven?”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 19-23 Mother or a monitor

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I. Intro.

Parents have you noticed that we never seem to outgrow our children? When they are little they are a “*handful*”, when they’re grown they are a “*heart-full*”! The events of this section actually happened, but Paul used them as an allegory, (*a narrative that has a deeper meaning*). The Jewish Rabbis held that a passage of scripture had four meanings:

1. Literal meaning
2. Suggested meaning
3. Deduced meaning
4. Allegorical meaning

Paul’s purpose in using this story as an allegory is to again reiterate that the works and grace can’t coexist. In 1971 Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin sat down and wrote the lyrics that would be the most popular rock songs ever called, “Stair Way to Heaven”. In it he wrote about “*a lady who's sure that all that glitters is gold and she's buying a stairway to heaven*”. Though Plant says that “*Depending on what day it is I still interpret the song a different way---and I wrote the lyrics*” He does go on to say, “*The woman is getting*

everything she wanted, without giving anything back.” That is in line with the subject matter of Paul’s in this section as the Judaizers were false saying that the gentile believers in Galatia could get everything they wanted without giving something back. Dear ones **there is no stair way to heaven there is only a resurrection to heaven!**

II. Vs. 19-23 Mother or a monitor

Vs. 19-20 Every parent has had to speak to their adult children as if they were little and Paul experienced just that as he felt the need to speak to those he truly loved in Christ but had chosen the law over grace as if they were children in need of being won to Jesus again. Paul didn’t doubt their salvation as he said that Christ was formed in them he was concerned that they had decided to leave what was clearly formed. Saint’s it is the job of every parent to raise adults and it is the responsibility of every pastor to raise mature believers. Paul wanted two things with regards to this communication with them:

- A. That he could speak to them in person
- B. That he could speak to them with gentler words

Vs. 21-23 Right in the middle of his letter Paul has a bible study out of Genesis 16 and the story of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. Paul will use this story as yet another metaphor between religion and relationship as he contrasts Sarah’s free son Isaac with Hagar the bound woman’s son, Ishmael. Right here would be a good time to give a little time line of the events that Paul is using as a metaphor:

At 75 Abraham was called by God to go to Canaan and is promised many descendants. At 85 the promised son has not arrived and Sarah becomes impatient and suggests that Abraham marry Hagar her maid and slave girl. At 86 Hagar becomes pregnant and Sarah become jealous and throws her out of the house. But the Lord

intervenes, and sends Hagar home and she delivers a son Ishmael. At 99 God speaks to Abraham and again promises that he will have a son by Sarah 24 years after the first promise and 14 years after Sarah suggested Hagar. At 100 years of age (16 years after the birth of Ishmael) Isaac (laughter) is born. At 103 when Isaac was three a party celebrating his weaning Ishmael (19) mocks Isaac and Abraham is told he needs to kick Hagar and Ishmael out of the house.

The sad truth concerning Ishmael's birth was that it was concocted by Sarah to "*help God out*" in fulfilling His promise to give them a child. **That is what religion is always about trying to inherit the promise of God through the works of the flesh.** One of these two sons will represent your life at any given time:

- a. Faith in God to fulfill His promises to you.
- b. Trusting yourself effort to earn God's promises to you.

Wiersbe said, "*Legalism does not mean the setting of spiritual standards; it means worshipping these standards and thinking we are spiritual because we obey them. It also means judging other believers on the basis of these standards.*" Religion offers two things but neither of them have any benefits:

1. It offers a list of outward rules to keep: But those rules gain you no real benefit
2. It allows you to take credit for your salvation: But it isn't a true salvation because it's not by grace.

Spurgeon said, "*The law is the road which guides us, not the rod which drives us.*"

III. Vs. 24-26 A tale of two hills

Vs. 24-26 Here Paul uses yet another metaphor this one deal with geography. Paul says these two contracts had two separate mountains that they came from: The law came from

Mount Sinai according to Exodus chapter 19-20. The rules passed down from that hill is all about what we must do to be right with God, and if we start climbing that mountain we will never reach the peak! Paul tells us that this metaphor equals Hagar as it makes us a slave as we try to inherit the promises of God by the works of the flesh. Note the irony here as Paul says in verse 25 that “*this corresponds with Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*” Works took control and made that which was born of the free women, born by simply trusting God, and put him into bondage as it became Ishmael instead of Isaac!

Oh dear ones Paul's words ought to speak to us who have inherited every spiritual blessing in heavenly places by simple trust in God's finished work through His Son. Because if Israel can look to their works as the basis of acceptance before God and the Galatians who began in the Spirit are now trying to be made perfect by the works of the flesh; then so can we!

“*But the Jerusalem above is FREE!*” The geography of grace is not to be visited from an earthly hill top but from a heavenly one! Look not to another hill to find grace. The Catholic church sought to find grace on the hill of Calvary but only see the sacrifice and as such their Jesus must be crucified each week to atone for their sins. (*Even that isn't enough as they will need to spend a few 1,000 years in purgatory to atone for their sins.*) No Paul says look up to heavens Zion where Jesus was taken up into heaven and the disciples didn't look down at the earth but up into heaven into the clouds. **Our relationship to God is matter of heaven coming to earth not earth reaching up to heaven.** The New Covenant is all about freedom, but there are far too many in the churches today that say they are free while they still are enslaved to their works. Paul

says the New Covenant is the “*Mother of us all*” every birth from her is a “*new birth*”, a miracle, and as such we are a new creations in Christ Jesus. To further illustrate this Paul says that it is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 54:1. This prophecy says that there will be many more of those born by faith than that will ever be borne by works.

IV. Vs. 27-31 Children of promise or children of work

Vs. 27-31 Paul says as followers of Christ we don’t identify with Ishmael, we identify with Isaac as children of promise. There is another reality as it relates to these two covenants represented by these two boys Ishmael and Isaac and that is that Ishmael the child of works and self effort will always resent the child of faith, represented by Isaac.

The answer to this problem is clear, but not easy says Paul in verse 30, “*cast out the bound woman and her son*”. Law and grace cannot coexist together in our Christian life. Every believer must “***kick out***” the idea of a relationship with God maintained by our works and effort. In saying this Paul says that you can’t continue to practice Judaism the way the Jews did during Paul’s day and practice Christianity. Today there are those that attempt to do so but one of those two boys will have to go. Only one is the true heir! It was the child of promise, Isaac that was given the inheritance not Ishmael. The Isaac’s will be persecuted by the Ishmael’s but it is the Isaac’s that inherit the promises of God not the Ishmael’s.

Dear ones there were 24 years after the first promise and 14 years after Sarah suggested Hagar. Sarah thought, “*Honey, I know God spoke to you but I think what God meant was that we were suppose to help Him out. So I’ve got this idea why don’t you take my slave girl from Egypt and father a child through her?*” The result was the birth of Ishmael and they probably thought, “*Yep that is what God meant*”; for 16 years until God

said, “*Abraham, I’m still going to give you that boy I promised you and Sarah!*” But Abraham said, “*It’s ok Lord Ishmael will do, I love him he’s my boy!*” But God Insisted and said, “*No, he isn’t what I had in mind with my promise, Abraham; I don’t need your help to fulfill My promise.*” There was years between the time that God first spoke to Abraham about giving he and Sarah a son and they took matters into their own hands. That’s a long time to wait for God to do what He said He was going to do isn’t it? Listen up saints; there is always a gap of time between God giving a promise and the fulfillment of the promise. It’s easy for us to get impatient and start thinking that God needs our help to do what He promised us He would do. As I look over my life, I can see a lot of Ishmael’s because I got impatient and tried to help God. And whenever I’ve birthed and Ishmael, strife, bitterness and anxiety have come with him. The answer is not religion, not doing things to help God out. No the answer is rest in what God has done!