

Galatians: Freedom In Christ

Week 9: Freedom or Slavery (Gal 4:21 – 4:31)

Look Around

Have you ever heard someone use Scripture in an unfamiliar way to teach a lesson? What was your response to hearing Scripture used differently than what you are used to?

Hearing Scripture used in new and different way can be challenging at times. But when we take the time to listen closely to new ways of hearing Scripture, we have an opportunity to be blessed by familiar passages in new ways.

Look at the Text – Key Concepts

- **Justified** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God, the judge, grants you freedom instead of condemnation. Justification is God’s declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn't make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.

- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God’s commands.

- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests,

sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.

- The Spirit** – God sent his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to transform the character of God’s people and to empower them to carry out God’s will and purpose.

Look at the Text – Context

In this section of the letter, Paul uses the story of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory to reveal a deeper meaning. An allegory is a literary tool that uses characters, places, and events to symbolize people and ideas. Paul reinterprets the story of Hagar and Sarah to make a final argument that Scripture has always supported the abolishment of The Law, leaving only the original promises of God to Abraham as the true gospel message.

Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation

Galatians 4:21 – 4:31

Observation

- Abraham had children by both Hagar ("slave woman") and Sarah ("free woman"). What is the difference between how the two sons were born?

- What does Paul say the child of Hagar (Ishmael) represents?

- What does Paul say that child of Sarah (Isaac) represents?

- Which son does Paul say the Galatians are like?

- If the rival teachers are from the "present city of Jerusalem," which son does Paul say the rival teachers are like?

- According to verse 29, how did the son born to Hagar treat the son born to Sarah?

- What does Paul say Scripture says to do with Hagar and her son and why is it to be done?

Interpretation

- According to Paul's interpretation of this story, the Galatians are like Sarah's child and the rival teachers are like Hagar's child? Why do you suppose Paul makes this comparison?

- Why does Paul make it a point to highlight that "the son born according to the flesh [rival teachers/Hagar's child] persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit [the Galatians/Sarah's child]?"

- How is Paul using the story of Hagar and Sarah to support his claim that even Scripture instructs us to do away with The Law?

Look At God

- In this passage, Paul uses the story of Hagar and Sarah to remind the Galatians that they have been adopted into the family of God and now stand to inherit the promises of God. The same is true of you! What are the benefits of being adopted into God's family?

Look At Me

- Paul has spent a great deal of time and energy making a case for doing away with The Law as means of being accepted by God. Take some time to write a summary of Paul's passionate argument for salvation through faith in Christ alone.

- What has been most striking to you about the evidence Paul used in his argument that the Law was never intended to save and now only serves to keep us enslaved?

- Many believe that Old Testament Scripture has no relevance for a New Testament church today. But Paul seems to think differently. When he asks "Are you not aware of what The Law [Old Testament Scripture] says?," Paul is letting us know that the Old Testament has significant value in our lives today. What are your views of the Old Testament?