



# GALATIANS

VERSE-BY-VERSE



SESSION 13 | GALATIANS 4:21-5:4

## GALATIANS 4:21-5:1 | THE ILLUSTRATION OF ABRAHAM'S TWO SONS

- Verse 21 –
  - Paul's question is directed toward those **that desire to be under the law** and is purposefully blunt: **do ye not hear the law?**
  - There is a presumed thought process then that causes the reader to be reminded of the curse of the law as well as its burden.
  - What follows, then, is an illustration to show that they do have an option.
- Verses 22-26 –
  - Paul uses the illustration of Ishmael and Isaac as children of the flesh versus children of promise. He tells us that the circumstances of the birth of these two boys **are an allegory**.
  - An **allegory** is from ἀλληγορέω [allegoreo], which comes from *allos* (another) and *agora* (marketplace). Because the marketplace was the “public square,” the word sometimes referred to public speech. Thus, allegory is “another way of speaking.”
  - Paul says that, allegorically speaking, Ishmael and Isaac are the offspring of **two covenants**, one from **bondage** (Hagar), and one from freedom (Sarah). It is important not to make the mistake that the Pauline message is a covenant from God (to do so would require *type* and not *allegory*). Rather, Paul is saying that Ishmael had rights that were the result of the flesh, and Isaac had rights that were the result of promise.
  - Paul says that **Agar** (Greek spelling) can be compared to **mount Sinai in Arabia** and relates to **Jerusalem which now is** and is a covenant of **bondage with her children**. It is certainly only **allegory** that could relate Hagar to the Jewish people under the Law, for Hagar's descendants are the enemy of the Jewish people.
  - Paul's point: the Hagar gives birth to children of bondage, but Sarah gives birth to children of freedom. Which mother would you be under?
- Verse 27 –
  - The quote comes from Isaiah 54:1, where the **barren** speaks of Sarah.
- Verses 28-29 –
  - Paul says that **we...are the children of promise**.
    - Is this “the church?” In verse 26 he spoke of **Jerusalem which is above** (as opposed to the earthly Jerusalem of v. 25) as **the mother of us all**, but is that “all people” or “all of us in the group under consideration?” I think the latter.
    - Here, **we** must be the same as the other first-person plural pronouns in the context. The only options are Galatians 2:15, 16, and 4:3, and 2:15 clearly defines it, saying, **we who are Jews**.
    - So, Paul's argument is not that “the church” is **the children of promise** but that the Jews are such. That is, the Jews have now been freed from the Law.
  - But, just as the descendants of Hagar (those **born after the flesh**) persecuted the Jews (those **born after the Spirit**), now the Judaizers (allegorical descendants of Hagar) were persecuting those who were living in freedom.

- Verses 30-31 –
  - Paul quotes Genesis 21:10, the words of Sarah (mother of the free). Because the **children of the bondwoman** are to be **cast out**, Paul makes a pretty strong statement: the Judaizers have no place in the church.
  - It is important to note that all of the previous section (beginning with verse 21) is an *illustration* of freedom and bondage. That which Paul illustrates cannot be “back fed” into the original account. Doing so would remove all dispensational distinction of the age of the Law (the time in which the Jewish people *were* under the Law).
- Verse 5:1 –
  - In spite of the modern chapter and verse division, Galatians 5:1 belongs to the previous section, as testified by the pronouns (Paul is speaking “in house” to **us** the Jewish brethren, just as in verse 31). In verse 2 the pronouns will be the second person plural “you.” The word **therefore** also testifies to the fact that these words belong with the previous context.
  - Paul is asking the Jewish believers to **Stand fast** in the **liberty** of Christ and encouraging them to avoid the entanglement of the **yoke of bondage** (the Law). Notice that he uses the word **again**, indicating that the audience had once been under the Law.

## GALATIANS 5:2-6 | LAW OR GRACE BUT NOTHING IN-BETWEEN

- Verse 2 –
  - Paul now moves from speaking of *us* to speaking **unto you**, the Galatians (Gal. 3:1). These Galatians are not of Jewish origin, else there would be no need to speak of their potential circumcision.
  - Paul speaks words that are unbelievably and painfully clear: **Christ shall profit you nothing** if you depend on circumcision (and, presumably, the works of the law).
    - The Gospel is one of grace and grace alone. Romans 3:28 is clear that **a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**
    - Romans 4:5 makes clear that justification is only **to him that worketh not.**
- Verse 3 –
  - As Paul has stated before, the curse of the law is that it must be taken in whole (Gal. 3:10), thus Paul says he testifies **again** that one who is **circumcised** becomes **a debtor to do the whole law.**
  - This must erase in our minds once and for all the notion that there are various kinds of law (moral, civil, and ceremonial), for the Bible does not allow it. The law is an indivisible whole.
- Verse 4 –
  - One can either be **justified by the law** or by Christ, but not by both. For the one attempting to be **justified by the law**, the results are drastic: **Christ is become of no effect unto you.**
    - The verb καταργέω [katargeo] contains the prefix *kata*, which serves to emphasize the root to which it is attached to the ultimate degree. The root is *argos* which is itself a compound of the negator *a* plus *ergon* (energy), thus *argos* is “no energy” and *kata* emphasizes it to its fullest extent.
    - There is no more powerful word that Paul could have used to say that Christ is *worthless* to one who seeks to be justified by law.
  - This person is **fallen from grace.** The verb is in the aorist tense (often translated in the past), and thus could be “you fell from grace.” This phrase does not necessarily say they “lost their salvation,” as the modern phrase would imply. That would be saying more than the text says. Rather, it says that they are not proclaiming a grace message. Compare Romans 11:6.
  - If the message of works and grace are mutually exclusive, what does that say of the “gospel” preached by Catholics, Reformed theology, the Church of Christ, and other “works required” groups? It says that they are a false, non-saving gospel.