

Galatians 4 pt. 3 v19-5:1

V.19-20 The obvious distress and pain that Paul feels addressing this issue of a turn toward a rules based religion - which Paul has characterized as equating to slavery or bondage.

He describes his state of being as a mother, laboring during child-birth.

As a Father I can describe what this may have been like from my point of view but I can't truly identify with that anxiety, distress, mixed feelings of pain and joy, all that occurs during child-birth. But Paul says he can - as inspired by the Holy Spirit - he says that he feels that way as he is dealing with the Galatians.

They were so new, his little children, so impressionable, vulnerable, and he feels this immense sense of re-birthing them into truth - desiring that Christ be formed in them.

This is the heart of all who are set apart to preach the gospel. Our hearts yearn to see Christ forming in those we care for. It is the Holy Spirit that does the work and yet our hearts labor and travail for that new life to come into being. We love seeing newborns in Christ, and Christ in them.

Paul saw himself as a spiritual parent to them. This was characteristic of Paul's relationship with the churches and with people.

We are warned not to call any man father, or any man teacher by Jesus Christ (Matt 23:8-10). That teaching is about an infatuation with presumptuous titles and wrongly standing between people and God. It is an imperative that has been largely ignored.

Paul is talking about something else far greater than titles and undue respect for the office. He is talking about relationships, about fulfilling the ministry that God placed him into.

He similarly referred to the Corinthians, as his heart was breaking over their conduct and division.

[1Co 4:14-15 NKJV] 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn [you]. 15 For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet [you do] not [have] many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Paul writes about individuals too - Paul refers to both Titus and Timothy as true sons in the faith. (1 Tim 1:2, Titus 1:4)

[Phm 1:10 NKJV] 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten [while] in my chains,

For Paul this faith community was built on family! It has been said that blood is thicker than water. That is a pithy attempt to remind us that our families are more important and deserve more consideration than non-family.

But in Paul's mind this was the great family of Jesus Christ - where we are all bound together eternally in the blood of Jesus Christ.

That is the blood that matters - Christ's blood, and by it we who believe have been brought into this great universal family of God.

And along the way God places father figures and brothers and sisters and mothers in our lives as He sees fit for our instruction and raising up - so that we might be equipped for serving in His kingdom. (Eph 4:11-13)

This idea of discipleship, growing in maturity and liberty in Christ was more than incidental to Paul. It was more than one day a week, two days a week, it was everlasting.

Now it's not all roses! See here that in this relationship Paul feels a significant amount of doubt. He is perplexed by the Galatians. He has had to employ a tone in his writing that he wishes he could have avoided - but loved them enough to shoot them straight.

Certainly we could imagine that this letter would have caused a great spectrum of reactions among the Galatian churches as well. This is part of growing in Christ with one another. To say the hard things in love when they are needed and only when we are mature enough to discern that the whole point of correction is reconciliation, AND to hear the hard things spoken or written in love being humble enough to listen without being overly defensive or just bailing out altogether because we are offended.

Have we considered that perhaps we need the correction? The Galatians certainly did! The Corinthians certainly did! Are we better, smarter, more spiritual than they? Let each one answer in his own heart.

Paul's correction of the Galatians was based on their desire to be enslaved by the Law, that body of regulations meant to show us our depravity, rather than living out their freedom purchased by Christ.

While the Galatians were developing an affinity for the Law it was an unhealthy and uninformed love.

They were being told that in order to please God they had to do all of these external things. This is dangerous because this type of thought or practice denies the efficacy of the cross. It attempts to improve upon Christ's death via external actions rather than believing by faith and receiving God's grace.

Paul challenges them, "Don't you hear the Law?" This question is more of an indictment regarding their understanding of the Law. The Law does not bring freedom or righteousness, as Paul has demonstrated over and over again.

Applicable to us is the understanding of scriptural literacy. Many people claim a more developed understanding of scripture and are quite convinced of their expertise having not examined the scriptures critically, or even at all! Short form: know God's word!

Paul demonstrates from the Law that their perception of righteousness by the Law is flawed.

He uses the book of Genesis - the first book of the Law, as his text to instruct the Galatians in their misunderstanding.

He references Abraham's sons - quite a compelling history.

Remember that the Jewish people revered the person of Abraham, they were descendants of the one man that God called out from among the nations to be the progenitor of His special people - the nation of Israel.

[Jhn 8:53, 58 NKJV] 53 "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"

So the Galatians were being deceived into thinking that they could make themselves true children of Abraham by circumcision, by following the Law, and that God would be pleased with that.

Paul takes them on a history lesson about what it means to operate in the flesh, and what it means to be a child of promise, born out of God's directive by faith.

He speaks of two sons. One the child of a slave - Hagar, and one, the child of the free woman through promise - Sarah.

A brief survey of the context that surrounds Paul's message:

Gen 15: God makes a covenant with Abraham that He Himself will be responsible for:

[Gen 15:5-6 NKJV] 5 Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

There's only one problem, Abram's wife Sarai is unable to conceive. Perhaps they can speed up the process of God's promise?

Gen 16: The flesh takes over and begets a child born into division and sin, people are wounded - this was not God's promise - but this is the result of what happens when people try to improve upon or try to capture God's promise.

[Gen 16:1-6 NKJV] 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no [children]. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing [children]. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. 3 Then

Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong [be] upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me." 6 So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid [is] in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

Gen 17: God continues to speak to Abraham about the PROMISE even in his sin, and institutes the covenant of circumcision BUT, TWIST, Ishmael the child of slavery shares in the covenant of circumcision - what then does circumcision avail the nation of in regard to their uniqueness?

[Gen 17:10-23 NKJV] 10 "This [is] My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you...15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah [shall be] her name. 16 "And I will bless her and also give you a son by her;

then I will bless her, and she shall be [a mother of] nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall [a child] be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear [a child]?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, [and] with his descendants after him. 20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." 22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

Gen 21: The son of bondage is cast out

[Gen 21:8-12 NKJV] 8 So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out

this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [namely] with Isaac." 11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

This is a heartbreaking story of the difference between God's promise and man's sinful effort - wrought in impatience, distrust, and desire.

In a grand indictment against the legalists Paul is saying here that although they claim to be sons of Abraham, Paul says those who are under the Law, in bondage are more like Ishmael than Isaac. There is more law to them than liberty.

AND, the implication is that they will be cast out!

The religious system represented in earthly Jerusalem equated with slavery, was born out of human effort, and ends in being cast out.

The heavenly kingdom, established by God's promise, came forth by Jesus Christ and offers a family to those who believe.

V.27-31 - And so it was in Sarah's old age, and Abraham's old age, nothing about them hinted that they might begin to have children. But God's promise was fulfilled in their lives. The barren woman brought forth Isaac.

We who believe are children of promise, born into God's family, with an inheritance and a family - not born of our own efforts or the efforts of our parents but born of God's promise to establish a family unto His glory.

Part of being in that family is enmity between the law and freedom. The one born in slavery persecutes, pursues, the children of promise. We should expect this. The aim? To be brought into bondage like them? Misery loves company.

iii. The persecution Christians face "will not always be by the world but also and indeed more often by their half-brothers—the unbelieving but religious people in the nominal church. This is the lesson of history ... Today the greatest enemies of the believing church are found among the members of the unbelieving church, the greatest opposition emanating from pulpits and church hierarchies." (Boice)

Guzik, D. (2013). [*Galatians*](#) (Ga 4:28–31). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

But take heart! This is such great news! We are children of promise!

How freeing would this news be to many of our loved ones? That you don't have to labor under the confines of "doing" but you are made free by Jesus Christ - the one true child of promise who brought us into His family.

God made another promise -

[Isa 7:14 NKJV] 14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

How crazy does that sound? To those who heard it perhaps like Sarah it seemed implausible, impossible. To many today that fact still presents a mighty hurdle. Can God do this?

God the Father has done this. He has established His eternal family by THE SON OF PROMISE - CHRIST. And we share in His likeness, children of promise, because that is how God builds His family - by His certain word.

[Jhn 1:12-13 NKJV] 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His

name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

5:1 So we come to the final imperative born out of our reliance on the promise. Because of everything we just examined we can only come to one conclusion - The Galatians and we are to stand firm, to remain, in the liberty delivered to us by Christ and not subject ourselves to slavery again.

[Gal 5:1 NIV] 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.