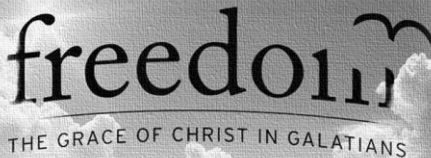


Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 28, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



freedom
THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN GALATIANS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS To Those Who Want to Be Under the Law *Galatians 4:21-31*

CASE STUDY: I was visiting with a friend of mine the other day, and we got in a conversation about church and what it really means when someone says they are a “Christian.” I shared my views and she shared hers. We didn’t exactly agree. But things got a little tense and awkward when she asked me this question, “Suppose you were to die right now, and you stood before God, and He said to you, ‘Why should I let you into my heaven?’ What would you say?” I said that I didn’t know what I would say exactly, but I would probably just tell God that I believed in Him and that I tried to live my life like I thought He would want me to and treat people right... that I was basically a good person. She pretty much condemned me to hell right there and said that God would never let me into heaven based on what I said. It was very awkward. I left that conversation feeling like now I understand why so many people are turned off by church and judgmental Christians who treat people that way. I actually feel that I am more on the right track with God than she is.

REVIEW: Just for review and to get back into our study of the book of Galatians, let’s briefly remind ourselves of some of the background material to the book. These are important background facts to keep in mind as we navigate this important and strategic book in the Bible.

4 Important Background Facts on the Book of Galatians:

(1) **Written by the Apostle Paul** – Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. This particular book/letter may have been his first letter. Also interesting to note is that some scholars believe that Paul have penned this letter himself, with his own hand (all of his other letters/writings were done through/with a personal amanuensis [scribe, secretary, recorder]).

(2) **Written as a circular letter** – Most of Paul’s letter that we have in the New Testament were written to individual churches (i.e. Ephesians, Philipians) or to individuals (i.e. Timothy, Titus).

This letter is different because it was written to a number of churches, and was meant to be passed/shared or “circulated” to each of these churches.

(3) Written to churches in the region of Galatia -Galatians is written to a number of different churches that Paul established during his first missionary journey in the region of Galatia in Asia Minor, which would be located in present day Turkey. This area was particularly important in the advance of the gospel and the New Testament church because it represented the movement of the good news/gospel further toward the west and to the rest of world, something Jesus had commanded from the very beginning of the New Testament church in Acts 1:8, “*8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*”

(4) Written to oppose and expose false teaching of the Judaizers – After Paul had left the region of Galatia, following his first missionary journey and the establishment of these new churches, false teachers came in and began to expose these churches and new believers/Christians to false teaching. These false teachers were known as “Judaizers” and they taught a “work-righteousness” system of salvation. Their teaching essentially said that in order to become a Christians you must first be circumcised and become a Jew, by obeying and following Jewish laws and customs. This was in direct contradiction to the good news/gospel Paul preached, which was salvation by grace, not by works.

3 Claims for A Salvation by Works-Righteousness: For those who may attached some type of works-righteousness for salvation, be that the Law, good works, morality, religious duty, etc., there must by necessity be some claims that must be made... if one is to be saved by “works” in any way.

1. **Salvation must be conditional** – That is, our salvation must be based on something that we do or have done. It makes... even must make... salvation conditional. Conditional on what you do or do not do... i.e. keeping the law, obeying customs and standards, being good enough, doing enough religious duty, not breaking certain codes or laws,
2. **One must maintain he or her own salvation** – If salvation is a matter of what we do (i.e. law keeping, rule following, adherence to a moral code of good) the onus (responsibility, burden, obligation, duty) fall us to keep ourselves saved and in good standing with God by adhering to the standard. Further, it may indicate that since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s required standard.
3. **Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)** – If it is conditional and up to us to maintain it, the implication must be that if we don’t live up to the condition and fail to maintain it we will no longer possess it. Therefore, a works-righteousness system of salvation automatically make salvation a losable proposition, at least possibly.

A Rebuttal of the 3 Claims for a Salvation by Works-Righteousness:

Claim 1: Salvation must be conditional –

Rebuttal: Scripture teaches that salvation is “unconditional” in nature and indeed doesn’t depend on anything that we do or have done.

Scripture:

- (1) **Ephesians 2:8-9** - *“⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.”*
- (2) **John 3:16** - *“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*
- (3) **Romans 6:23** - *“²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Claim 2: One must maintain his or her own salvation -

Rebuttal: Man could never match up or be good enough to match up to God’s Holy standard according to Scripture.

Scripture:

- (1) **Isaiah 64:6** - *“⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*
- (2) **Romans 3:10, 23** - *“¹⁰ As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one’... ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
- (3) **Matthew 7:21-23** - *“²¹ ‘Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Claim 3: Salvation must by implication become losable (capable of being lost)

Rebuttal: This claim would be in direct violation of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches that once saved it is forever and cannot be lost in the doctrine of “the eternal security of the believer.”

Scripture:

- (1) **John 10:27-30** - *“²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and My Father are one.”*
- (2) **Titus 3:5-7** - *“⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”*
- (3) **1 Peter 1:3-4** - *“³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”*
- (4) **Jude 24-25** - *“²⁴ Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. ²⁵ All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! Amen.” (NLT)*
- (5) **John 3:16** - *“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*
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Most students of the New Testament agree that the final eleven verses of Galatians 4 are the most complicated of the entire letter. Perhaps this is true... nevertheless, these words are an important part of Paul's argument. They are specifically addressed to those "who want to be under the law" (v.21)... and there are many who do? **Why, do you think this is true?** Often they are people who have never thought through this whole issue. Paul points that out, then proceeds to clarify the truth by using the Old Testament, along with an allegory, to reveal how their position breaks down. Although difficult, these words are a master stroke in convincing legalists and those who are trying to be justified before God by their works or law-keeping that the position they have adopted is not the plan of grace God has arranged for us to enjoy today.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF PAUL' CONCERN

Three statements can be lifted out to summarize Paul's argument thus far in Galatians 4 as we have seen.

3 Statements from Galatians 4 that Summarize Paul's Argument:

- 1. Christians/believers are not slaves but sons** – As Paul said in Galatians 4:7, *"Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."*
- 2. Christians/believers, once genuinely saved, will not want to turn back** - Here are Paul's words in Galatians 4:9, *"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?"* For Paul it was inconceivable that a believer would turn back to a works or law based system of righteousness. Just as it was incomprehensible to Paul, it is a surety that a genuine believer, once marvelously saved by God's grace will never go back to a system of trying in his own might to earn his way.
- 3. Christians/believer who may profess salvation, yet continue to try to earn their way cast doubt about the genuineness of their salvation** – Paul said in Galatians 4:20, *"I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you."*

AN ANALYSIS OF PAUL'S CONCLUDING ARGUMENTS (Galatians 4:21-31)

The apostle makes one more pass with his reader across the issue of salvation. Works... or faith? First, he asks a question (v.21), then he develops an argument (vv.22-31). Let's look at these.

The Question:

Paul asks the question in verse 21... it is an interesting question. One worth considering. Notice what Paul asks in verse 21, *"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?"* With skill, Paul exposes the inconsistent and illogical nature of his reader's position. The words "under the law" probably refers back to something that Paul has already stated one chapter earlier in Galatians 3:10. Paul said, *"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" This is a reference to "those" who are trying to earn salvation by keeping the law, hence good works. And Paul's words here are a direct quote from Old Testament Law in Deuteronomy 27:26, *"'Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.' 'And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"* Now here is Paul's question again in our passage in Galatians 4:21, *"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?"* If we are to "hear the law," what do we hear the law saying?*

3 Things We Have Already Seen that the Law Says to Us:

1. **The law/works shows us we are lawbreakers/sinner** – Paul said in Galatians 3:19, *“¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.”* Why? To show us that we are lawbreakers/sinners in need of a Savior. And Paul tells us in Romans 3:20, *“²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”* What does the law tell us it does? Make us knowledgeable about sin! And remember the word of James, the half-brother of Jesus, in James 2:10, *“¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”*
2. **The law/works keeps us in bondage** – This is what we are going to hear the law saying in our passage, in Galatians 4:21-31, but think of this... how does the law keep us under bondage, in chains? Because the law/works are never satisfied. It always requires more, and you can't ever let up, you can't ever do enough, you can't ever slip up, you can't even stop. Today, some refer to this as “treadmill religion.” Again it is as James said in James 2:10, *“¹⁰ For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”*
3. **The law/works condemns/curses** – Here are Paul's words again in Galatians 3:10, *“¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’”*

The Argument:

Three elements constitute the construction of Paul's argument. These may help us navigate this complicated and something difficult to decipher passage. Let's look at the 3 parts to Paul's argument.

3 Elements in Paul's Argument:

1. **History (vv.22-23)** – Notice verses 22-23 of our passage (Galatians 4:22-23), *“² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise.”* The historical sketch, when read aloud, would have picked up the ears of the Judaizers. Paul drew up an event from the life of Abraham who “had two sons.” One was “by a bondwoman”... Hagar. And “the other was by a freewoman”... Sarah. The first he explained was “according to the flesh”... and the latter (Sarah) was “through promise.” The Jews in the audience would have made a proud boast that he or she was a child of Abraham, and that he or she was, by the fact itself, the family of God. Theologian, James Montgomery Boice writes, *“On the most superficial level, Isaac and Ishmael were alike in that both were sons of Abraham. But on a more fundamental level they were entirely different.”* Boice merely expresses the thought Paul had while writing his letter. Think of the difference... Ishmael's birth was motivated by Abraham and Sarah's lack of faith in God's promise and fulfilled by sinful human means... Abraham and Sarah trying to take matters into their own hand, and “work” out the promise by their own means. Isaac, on the other hand, was an entirely different matter. God miraculously, by His own hand, enabled Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac when Sarah was well past child-bearing age and had been barren her entire life. Even in the historical account you can see the difference between “man's works” and “God's work”... what man does to try to help God out, as opposed to what God is able to do on our behalf for us.

2. **Allegory (vv.24-27)** – Notice Paul’s words in verses 24-27, “²⁴... which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷ For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.” Notice Paul describes this part of his argument as “symbolic” or an “allegory.” He wasn’t simply talking of two women and their respective sons, but was using them to depict two separate covenants affecting the relationship God and man had together. Both were radically different. Note the following comparison on the chart below:

LAW/WORKS	FAITH/GRACE
Hagar, a bondwoman: She represented the Old Covenant given at Sinai	Sarah, a free woman: She represented the New Covenant give at Calvary
Ishmael, a natural birth: He represented Judaism which is centered in Jerusalem	Isaac, a supernatural birth: He represented all who are part of Christ’ Church through faith, whose center is the heavenly Jerusalem
Legalistic Religion	Authentic Christianity

Again James Montgomery Boice writes, “...Paul argues, it is not enough merely to claim Abraham as one’s father. Both Christians and Jews did that. The question is: Who is our mother and in what way were we born?” You get what He is asking? What?

The idea is this... is our birth traceable only by human means (law/works)? If so, we are still slaves... like Ishmael. Or is our birth by the promise (faith/grace)? If so, we are free men... like Isaac.

3. **Personal Application (vv.28-31)** – Here are Paul’s words in verses 28-31, “²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰ Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.” It was time for the reminder in verse 28, “²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.” Though they had backslidden, that was the fact. However, he identified a real problem not unique to his times, but present in our day as well in verse 29, “²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.” Essentially, Paul draws two applications:

2 Applications:

- (1) We may expect persecution from half-brothers... legalists... who try to recruit us into their camps – (see verse 29)
- (2) We must recognize the absolute incompatibility of man-made religion as opposed to God’s provision – (see verses 30-31)

A RESPONSE TO WHAT WE HAVE SEEN

2 Important Responses to What We Have Seen:

1. When it comes to law and grace, everyone has to get off the fence –
2. Not until we get off the fence will we realize how incompatible the two really -