

Galatians 4:21-5:1

Introduction:

**Paul commands some of his readers to answer a question—4:21**

- 1) What defines those to whom Paul is speaking? *you<sup>pl</sup> who* (are characterized by) *are desiring* [pres. act. ptc. θέλω] *to be under the law*,
  - a) They are not under the Law yet, but they want to be.
- 2) What rhetorical question does Paul command them to answer? <sup>21</sup> *Tell me, do you<sup>pl</sup> not listen to the law?*
  - a) Embrace what the Law itself illustrates about this battle regarding the nature of true salvation from sin,

**Paul illustrates the situation with a well-known OT story—4:22-27**

- 1) Taken from the OT story of Abraham—4:22 <sup>22</sup> *For it is* (authoritatively) *written* [pf. pass. ind. γράφω] *that Abraham had two sons*,
  - a) Genesis 16:5—*one by the slave woman* [παιδίσκη]
  - b) Genesis 21:2—*and the other by the free woman* [ἐλεύθερος].
  - c) Genesis 25:1-2—Abraham fathered 6 more sons by Keturah
- 2) The origin of Abraham's first two sons—4:23
  - a) **Ishmael**—self-effort; self-dependence (Genesis 16:1-6)—<sup>23</sup> *But on the one hand* [μέν], *he of the slave woman* [παιδίσκη], *was born according to* [κατά] *the flesh*,
    - i) Their own feeble attempt at a pseudo-fulfillment of God's promise, or what one person has called "amateur providence." He was following the unbiblical advice, "The Lord helps those who help themselves."
    - b) **Isaac**—trust in God's promise; God-dependence (Genesis 18:9-15)—*and on the other hand* [δέ], *he of the free woman* [ἐλεύθερος] (was born) *through* [διά] *the promise*,
- 3) Paul uses a literal, historical event as a comparison and application—4:24-27 <sup>24</sup> *which things are used allegorically* [ἀλληγορέω] (as a comparison; not as a deeper meaning of the original), *for these are two covenants* [διαθήκη]:
  - a) The Old Covenant leads to slavery—4:24-25 *one, on the one hand* [μέν], *is from Mount Sinai which gives birth into slavery* [δουλεία], *which is Hagar*—
    - i) <sup>25</sup> *Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to* (lines up with) *present Jerusalem, being enslaved* [δουλεύω] *with her children*.—
    - ii) While Hagar experienced **social** slavery, these people desire **spiritual** slavery.
  - b) The New Covenant leads to freedom—4:26-27 <sup>26</sup> *but on the other hand* [δέ], *the Jerusalem above is free* [ἐλεύθερος], *which is the mother of all of us*.
    - i) Why is Jerusalem free? <sup>27</sup> *For it is written*, (cf. Isaiah 54:1 LXX)
      - (1) What is to happen? "*Rejoice, O barren (sterile) woman, you who have not given birth! Burst forth and shout, you who have no labor pains,*

- (2) Why? *because the children of the barren woman are more numerous than of the one who has a husband.*"
- ii) In other words, because of the sovereign grace of God.
  - c) Four uses of the OT in the NT:
    - i) Literal prophecy and literal fulfillment—most uses fit here
    - ii) Literal plus typical—Matthew 2:15 with Hosea 11:1
    - iii) Literal plus application—Matthew 2:17-18 with Jeremiah 31:15
    - iv) Synopsis/summation—Matthew 2:23
  - 4) Clearly stated conclusion as to the source of genuine believers—4:28 <sup>28</sup> *Now **we** (emphatic), brothers, like (the standard of) Isaac, are children [τέκνον] of **promise** (emphatic).*

**Practical application to the Galatians and to us—4:29-5:1** (cf. Genesis 21:9-10)

- 1) What problems were they facing?—4:29
  - a) Past pattern of behavior—<sup>29</sup> *But just as **at that time** the one born according to the flesh persecuted [impf. act. ind. διώκω] the one born according to the Spirit, (cf. Genesis 21:8-9)*
    - i) The physical descendent was harassing the spiritual descendent.
  - b) Current problem—*so it is **now** also.*
    - i) The false brothers (cf. 2:4) depending on self-effort were making life miserable for the genuine sons of God.
- 2) What was the OT solution?—4:30 <sup>30</sup> *But what does the Scripture say? “Expel the slave woman and her son, because the son of the slave woman [παιδίσκη] will not inherit along with the son of the free woman [ἐλεύθερος].” (cf. Genesis 21:10)*
  - a) This is God’s command for definitive separation.
- 3) Reminder of the main point—4:31 <sup>31</sup> *So then, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman [παιδίσκη] but of the free woman [ἐλεύθερος]. (cf. 4:28)*
- 4) What should we do because of this truth?—5:1
  - a) Key principle—5:1a <sup>1</sup> *For freedom Christ has set us free.*
    - i) A freedom characterized by trust, faithful obedience, and love
  - b) *Therefore,*
    - i) Positively—*stand firm* [pres. act. impv. στήκω],
    - ii) Negatively—*and do not be entangled* [pres. pass. impv. ἐνέχω] *again with a (legalistic) yoke (cf. Acts 15:10) of slavery [δουλεία].*
      - (1) Stop putting yourselves in a situation for possible entanglement.

**Take-home truth:** Dependence on self-effort always leads to slavery.