

v. 8-11

From Freedom to Slavery?

- Paul asks the Galatians why they would return to being slaves to things that were not God after they had become known by God.
- They had become known to the Supreme Being in all of the universe and they were abandoning this gift and returning to the slavery and bondage of the law.
- This false teaching had crept in and had taken root so much so that people were turning away from the faith.

v. 12

Become as I am

- Paul here is not speaking arrogantly.
- He is not saying “follow me because I am great” or that he is perfect.
- The end of verse 12 tells us what he is talking about.
- Paul had become like them. What does that mean? Paul had left the law of Judaism to the freedom of faith in Christ therefore putting away the customs and rules of the Jewish faith. He had become like a Gentile.
- Paul encourages the Galatian Christians to put away the works of the law for salvation and instead embrace salvation by faith as he had.

v. 13-15

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

- We hear of Paul's “thorn in the flesh” throughout his writings.
- Some say it was a sin, others say it was persecution that he endured, some even say that it was a physical wound inflicted by Satan himself.
- I believe that verse 15 gives us a hint as to what it really was.

- He was blinded when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. It only makes sense that his eyes would be permanently damaged from such an encounter. His wording of verse 15 indicates that it has something to do with his eyes.

v. 16-20

Now an Enemy?

- The people had turned against the teaching of Paul and turned to the teaching of legalism. This puts them at odds with one another essentially making them enemies.
- Paul goes on to poke holes in the legalists' theology.
- Their theology makes much of the people who follow the rules while God's salvation of grace through faith in Christ magnifies Himself not humanity.
- Salvation is a work of God for the glory of God. That's why we were created in the first place. Not fellowship but His glory. (Isaiah 43:7)
- Paul, as the planter of the Galatian church, sees the people as his children in the faith. He isn't equating himself to God as their Father but as their spiritual influence or their discipler.
- Paul's tone is one of urgency and directness.
- He wants to see them in person so that he may instruct them and change his tone concerning them.
- He is grieved over their current spiritual condition.

v. 21-23

Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar

- Genesis 15-16; 21
- In Genesis 15, we see that God promises a natural son to Abraham and Sarah even though they were old. Sarah grew impatient and devised a plan for Abraham to have his son with her slave Hagar.
- The problems with this idea are myriad but chiefly it shows a lack of faith in God's promise.

- Abraham makes Hagar his wife and she conceives a son named Ishmael. Is he the promised son from God? No.
- God proves His faithfulness by granting Sarah and Abraham a son in Genesis 21
- Isaac is the son that is from the promise of God, not Ishmael.

v. 24-31

Paul uses an allegory

- Allegory: a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

Hagar

- She is Mount Sinai
- Mount Sinai is where God gave Moses the O.T. law
- She represents modern day Jerusalem in bondage to sin

Sarah

- The free woman
- She represents the Jerusalem above

The Jerusalem above

- The Holy city
- The place where God Himself dwells
- True Jerusalem is in Heaven and will be fully realized in the new Heaven and new Earth

We who are in Christ belong to the Jerusalem above not the Jerusalem below.

Slave vs. Free

- Paul says that believers in Christ are children of the free woman, not the slave.
- The Scripture tells us in Genesis that Abraham cast out the slave woman and her child.
- We are told by Paul here that it corresponds with his example. We are to cast out the slave and keep the free.
- The old covenant is gone. The new covenant is here.

Small Group Questions

- 1) What relationship did the law have to God's people?
 - It acted as a guardian or a manager. The people of God were still people of God but they were considered children who were not ready to run the estate.
- 2) Through Jesus what relationship do we have to God the Father?
 - We have been adopted into the family of God, not only as heirs, but as sons and daughters. The wording Paul used is very important. Adoption in the Roman Empire was permanent. They could not be disowned as could a natural child. The adoption into God's family is one of permanence not to be undone.
- 3) What did Paul mean when he said "become as I am"?
 - He meant that he had abandoned the legalism of the law and turned to faith in Christ alone. They had turned from faith in Christ alone to the legalism of the law. Paul was in no way saying that he was perfect. Christ is our example. This is why context matters when dissecting Scripture.
- 4) What can we logically conclude was Paul's thorn in the flesh and where did he receive it?
- 5) Why were we created and saved?
 - A popular explanation is that we were created for fellowship with God. While this sentiment seems nice it isn't Biblical. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 43:7 that we were created for His glory. Everything He does is for that end. This is a major reason why the salvation of the legalists was so offensive to Him. It magnified the worker over the One who did the perfect work on our behalf. Salvation is by grace through faith alone and that magnifies what Christ has already done as well as the One who chose to have mercy on His people.