

**Galatians 4: 17-31** “<sup>7</sup> Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you *from us*, so that you may be zealous for them. <sup>18</sup> It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you. <sup>19</sup> My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, <sup>20</sup> how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you! <sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. <sup>23</sup> His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise. <sup>24</sup> These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. <sup>25</sup> Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. <sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>27</sup> For it is written: ‘Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.’ <sup>28</sup> Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>29</sup> At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. <sup>30</sup> But what does the Scripture say? ‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.’ <sup>31</sup> Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.”

- We’re jumping back to the book of Galatians today after a departure of about two months. If you remember, when we left off
  - Paul was saying that he was afraid that he had wasted his efforts on the Galatians.
  - He had first preached to the Galatians due to an illness, yet even though the illness might have been a reason for the Galatians to despise Paul, they had welcomed him as if he had been an angel or Christ himself.
  - They had welcomed him with great joy, and were of such a mind that they would have gouged out their eyes if it would have been helpful.
  - But that was a long time ago, and a lot of things have changed. “Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (v. 11).

<sup>7</sup> **Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you *from us*, so that you may be zealous for them.**

- Paul comes back to the issue of the Judaizers again, and notes that they, indeed, they are extremely zealous, but for terrible reasons. The real, underlying motivation behind their zeal is to put a wedge between the Galatians and Paul.
  - *Ills.* When I was away recently I watched part of the new series Battle Star Galatica. In the show, they had captured one of the Cylons. Apparently, the Cylons are now capable of making Cylons that look exactly like humans so as to infiltrate them so that they can eventually destroy them. However, the humans have captured one of them and they attempt to interrogate him to see if they can learn anything about their plans. Surprisingly, the captured Cylon provides them with some real, genuinely helpful information. They are not sure what to make of this development when the president herself decides to come and interrogate him. During their conversation the Cylon suddenly grabs the president and whispers in her ear that Commander Adama,

- the head of the military, is also a Cylon. There has already been a good deal of tension between the president and the commander, and this cylon has already given them valuable accurate information. What is she to make of this new “confession”? Naturally, the relationship between the president and the head of the military becomes worse and worse as they begin to mistrust and doubt each other more and more.
- This is precisely what the Judaizers were doing. They had come into the Galatian church and had begun to whisper and suggest certain things about Paul’s gospel. Paul wasn’t there to defend the gospel or confront the false accusations, and at least some of the charges seemed plausible. What were the Galatians to think? Connected to this, these Judaizers suggested an entirely different reading of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Old Testament), and what they taught also seemed to make sense.
  - When Paul found out he responded vigorously with this letter. He defended his apostolic credentials and the content of the gospel message.
  - Note the difference the way Paul responds in two different situations. First, in Philippians when some men were preaching the true gospel but attacking Paul personally, he says, “The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice” (Phil. 1:18).<sup>1</sup> However, in Galatians when the primary attack was on the Gospel Paul calls down the curse of God on them. There could be no alliance with these men.
  - He solemnly warns them that those who preach this false gospel will “be eternally condemned” (1:8 & 9)! He calls them “false brothers” (2:4) and accuses them of “throwing you into confusion” (2:11). He promises that the one who is doing this “will pay the penalty, whoever he may be” (2:12); and states outright, “As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves’ (2:12)! And he warns that they are only want “to make a good impression outwardly” (6:12), and that “The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ” (6:13).

<sup>18</sup> **It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always and not just when I am with you.**

- *Proverbs 19:2* says, “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.”

<sup>19</sup> **My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, <sup>20</sup> how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!**

- *Clarence Jordan’s* colloquial translation captures Paul’s meaning when he writes, “Now listen, those fellows who are giving you the rush are not on the level. They are trying to capture you so you can rush around them. Now it’s all right to make over somebody once in a while, provided it is done sincerely. I do it occasionally when I am not in the presence of you, my children, over whom I agonize again and again until Christ takes shape in you. I

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<sup>1</sup> The whole section says, “It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice” (Philippians 1: 15-18).

surely do wish I could be with you right now and change my tone of voice, because you've got me all befuddled.”<sup>2</sup>

- Have you ever had someone that was trying to sell you something use flattery? It may be at a car dealership, an insurance salesman, an “opportunity” in a multi-level marketing enterprise, or a pastor within a church trying to recruit you for something.
  - They tell you how sharply you dress, or what incisive comments you make, or how intelligent you are, etc.
  - The false teachers had used this kind of fawning flattery on the Galatians as they sought to ever widen the wedge between Paul and the Galatians.
- **Longenecker**: “The context is entirely about whom the Galatians were going to follow and have fellowship with, Paul or the Judaizers. So it seems natural to interpret the desired exclusion as being one from Paul’s leadership and fellowship.”<sup>3</sup>
- Paul’s tone becomes maternal when he likens their spiritual development to a mother giving birth.
  - Yet it is clear that Paul’s pain is emotional rather than physical.
  - However, most people who have experienced both extreme physical and extreme emotional pain will tell you that emotional pain is much worse.
    - This is not to minimize the intense pain mothers go through when giving birth, only to highlight that Paul draws upon the very intensity of childbirth pain to convey the emotional bewilderment he is experiencing over the Galatians.
  - In fact, the term that Paul uses, *ōdinein* (“to suffer the pains of childbirth”), is only used two other places in the New Testament, and “never refers to the mere fact of a birth, but always to the accompanying anguish.”<sup>4</sup>
    - The point is that Paul does not want the Galatians to “miscarry.”
  - A pastor that has been genuinely called of God feels very deeply for his people.
  - Henry Scougal’s, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* made such a deep impression upon the great evangelist George Whitefield, that after reading it Whitefield wrote, “That they who know anything of religion know it is a vital union with the Son of God—Christ formed in the heart.”<sup>5</sup>

**how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!**

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Timothy George, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (No City: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 327.

<sup>3</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians in the Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, ed., Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 194.

<sup>4</sup> B.R. Gaventa, “The Maternity of Paul: An Exegetical Study of Galatians 4:19,” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. R. T. Fortuna and B. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 192-94.

<sup>5</sup> George Whitefield, *Journals* (London: Banner of Truth, 1960), 46. Whitefield described his on conversion in this way, “One day, perceiving an uncommon drought and a disagreeable clamminess in my mouth and using things to allay my thirst, but in vain, it was suggested to me, that when Jesus Christ cried out, ‘I thirst,’ his sufferings were near at an end. Upon which I cast myself down on the bed, crying out, ‘I thirst!’ Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Savior; and, for some time, could not avoid singing Psalms wherever I was; but my joy gradually became more settled, and blessed be God, has abode and increased in my soul, saving a few casual intermissions, ever since...Now did the Spirit of God take possession of my soul, and, as I humbly hope, seal me unto the day of redemption.” See H.T. Kerr and J.M. Mulder, eds., *Conversions: The Christian Experience* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 66.

- If, as it appears, that Galatians was written on the eve of the Jerusalem Council mentioned in Acts 15, then Paul would certainly have had ample reason for not being able to drop his other responsibilities and return immediately to Galatia.
- In the following section Paul attempts to “prove” his point from the Scriptures, and this section also serves to round off his central concern for justification by faith.
- It has been suggested (I think correctly) that Paul here is responding to an interpretation of the Hagar-Sarah story that was put forth by the Judaizers’ opponents.
  - In a well-worn rabbinic text this would have lent itself to the Judaizers’ claim that only those who belong physically to the family of Abraham had any share in the promise.
  - **C.K. Barrett:** “The seed of Abraham, understood physically, issued in legitimate and illegitimate children, the Galatians were urged to legitimize themselves... Those who are not prepared to connect themselves to this community [the renewed people of God, that is, the Church whose headquarters was in Jerusalem] by the approved means (circumcision) must be cast out; they cannot hope to inherit promised made to Abraham and his seed.”<sup>6</sup>
  - So Paul sets out to re-interpret the passage in light of the Gospel.
    - All interpretations are not equal!

**<sup>21</sup> Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? <sup>22</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.**

- Technically, Abraham had 8 sons; but Paul leaves the sons of Keturah (Genesis 25:1-2) out because they were irrelevant to the point he was making.
  - It is possible when telling a story/history to be accurate without being exhaustive.

**<sup>23</sup> His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way;...**

- **Genesis 16:** “<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, ‘The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.’ Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.’ <sup>6</sup> ‘Your servant is in your hands,’ Abram said. ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, ‘Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ ‘I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,’ she answered. <sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the LORD told her, ‘Go back to your mistress and submit to her.’ <sup>10</sup> The angel added, ‘I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.’ <sup>11</sup> The angel of the LORD also said to her: ‘You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. <sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he

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<sup>6</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 154-70.

will live in hostility toward all his brothers.’<sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’<sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.<sup>15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.<sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.”

**but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.**

- **Genesis 21** “<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Sarah said, ‘God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.’ <sup>7</sup> And she added, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’

### ***Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away***

- <sup>8</sup> The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, <sup>10</sup> and she said to Abraham, ‘Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.’ <sup>11</sup> The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to him, ‘Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. <sup>13</sup> I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.’ <sup>14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. <sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, ‘I cannot watch the boy die.’ And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. <sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.’ <sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. <sup>20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. <sup>21</sup> While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.”

<sup>24</sup> **These things may be taken figuratively (*αλληγορουμενα*), for the women represent two covenants.**

- We’re given 5 sets of 2
  - Hagar Sarah
  - Ishmael, the son of slavery Isaac, the son of freedom
  - Birth “according to the flesh” Birth “through the promise”
  - Old Covenant New Covenant
  - Mount Sinai Mount Zion
  - Present Jerusalem Heavenly Jerusalem

**One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.**

<sup>25</sup> **Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of**

