

Galatians 4:24-5:6 – Christ Has Set You Free

Many people like the idea of justification by works because it puts them in control. What Paul would say to these people is that they are under constant pressure to keep all the law all the time. This overwhelming and impossible responsibility was described by Paul as a prison, enslavement and like being a child who needs constant supervision. God gives us eternal life, by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ frees us from the prison of law and sets us free to love God and love others as God has loved us. We seek to serve God, not out of fear or a superiority complex, but from a changed heart. We are now true children of God and his Spirit dwells in us. People's sinful natures are offended at hearing that freedom is freely given by God and does not depend on our feeble efforts to "be good". When we truly understand the grace of God, instead of being resentful, we are immensely and eternally thankful.

Read Galatians 4:21-31.

Last time, we covered the historical part of Paul's lesson from the Old Testament. (4:21-23) In verse 24, Paul used Hagar and Sarah as representatives of two covenants and the people who are under these covenants. What are the two covenants? Which covenant does Hagar represent? Why is Hagar associated with Mount Sinai? (4:24)

Why does Hagar correspond to the Jerusalem of Paul's time? (4:25)

Sarah is not mentioned by name but it is clear that she is the representative of the other covenant. Which covenant does Sarah represent? How does she correspond to the "Jerusalem above"? (4:26)

What scripture is quoted in verse 27? See Isaiah 54:1. What is the significance of this verse in the context of Isaiah?

In verse 28, according to Paul, were those in the Galatian churches Isaacs or Ishmaels? Were the Judaizers Isaacs or Ishmaels? What application did Paul draw from the account of Sarah, Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael? (4:29-30) What scripture was quoted by Paul in verse 30? See Genesis 21:10. What was the application for the Galatians?

In verse 31, what is the conclusion of this allegory?

Ismael	Isaac
A son of Abraham	A son of Abraham
Circumcised	Circumcised
Born of an Egyptian slave – Hagar	Born of Abraham’s wife – Sarah
Abraham’s first-born	Abraham’s second-born
A normal birth – mother was younger and not barren	A birth by the power of God – mother was 90 and had been barren
Result of human effort to try to bring about God’s promise but it was not the birth promised by God	Result of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham years earlier
Was kicked out of the family and did not receive an inheritance	Was Abraham’s heir
His descendants were Gentiles	His son, Jacob, became the namesake of the nation of Israel

Read Galatians 5:1-6.

In verse 1, Paul made a tremendous proclamation. Christ has set us free. What are we freed from? What exhortation did Paul give to the Galatians based on this proclamation of freedom? (5:1)

What harm would it do if the Gentile Christians received circumcision? What four consequences would there be for someone who received circumcision so that they could “be saved”? What does it mean that Christ would not be an advantage for them? What does it mean to be severed from Christ? Why would someone who received circumcision be obligated to keep the rest of the law? What does it mean to fall away from grace? (5:2-4)

Is Paul saying that a true Christian can lose their salvation? To draw this conclusion from verses 2-4 is to read into Paul’s words out of fear or guilt. Paul clearly is saying that there is only one way by which we can be justified. We are not justified before God by faith and works. Someone who is justified by faith alone in Christ alone is a true child of God. Anyone who seeks to be justified by works is under a curse and is subject to God’s wrath. What verses clearly speak to the eternal security of the true believer? See John 6:37-40, 10:27-29.

In verse 5, do we work for righteousness or wait for righteousness? What is the difference between our righteousness now and our righteousness after our bodily resurrection? How do we wait for this future righteousness? (4:5)

Were the Christians who were circumcised better than the Christians who were not circumcised? Why or why not? (4:6)

How did Paul characterize true saving faith in verse 6? What does a loving, working faith look like?