

Paul's Corrective of the Galatian Churches; Rebuke of Their Response to the Judaizers' Legalism; Gal 4:20-22; Allegory Using Ishmael & Isaac to Illustrate Legalism & Grace; the Promise of Isaac's Birth from Sarah, Gen 17:16-21; Fulfillment, Rom 4:17

18. Paul next expresses his desire to come back to Galatia and read them the riot act:

**Galatians 4:20** - I keep on desiring to be present with you and to change my tone of voice, for because of you I am perplexed.

1. When a pastor finds that his congregation has grown in grace, he is encouraged and uplifted. But later, when he discovers that they have moved into the cosmic systems and are held there by legalism, he becomes perplexed.
2. To be perplexed means that Paul is doubtful about these believers' spiritual condition. He knows that if he were able to return to Galatia he could go to these churches and quickly straighten them out. Once done, he could shift from stern rebuke to tranquil instruction.
3. His desire is to accomplish this by teaching doctrine so he can change his tone of voice. It was not in the decree that Paul return to Galatia for God has other assignments for him. The happy result is the inclusion of this Epistle in the canon which resulted in many Galatian believers getting straightened out as well as countless others throughout the Church Age.
4. Consequently, it was Paul's desire to return to Galatia but it was God's will for him to be elsewhere. Often our desires do not line up with God's will. The advantage a mature believer has is the wisdom to tell the difference.
5. Next we learn the desire of the Galatian believers:

**Galatians 4:21** - Tell me! You who constantly desire to be under the authority of the law, do you not hear and understand the law?

1. In this verse the verb for "desire" is the present active participle of the verb **θέλω, thelō** indicating that the desire is continuous and therefore a wheel-track of wickedness motivated by emotion.
2. Why is it a wheel-track of wickedness? Because its purpose is stated in the present infinitive of the verb **εἰμί, eimi** plus the preposition **ὑπό, hupo**, the definite article **τόν, ton**, and the noun **νόμος, nomos**: "to be under the law."
3. This means that the believers in Galatia have willingly placed themselves under the authority of the law. Paul then poses the question, "Do you not hear and understand the law?"
4. This question's verb, the present active indicative of **ἀκούω, akouō**, is preceded by the negative conjunction **μή, mē**. Paul inquires rhetorically if these believers are not hearing or understanding the law. If not they are exchanging grace for legalism.
5. Paul has verbally grabbed them by the shoulders and shaken them: "Hey, dufi! Do you not understand what you are hearing?"

6. Having heard the truth of grace these believers are now placing themselves under the authority of the law from which they were delivered. Christ is the fulfillment of the law. Having been saved by grace they are no longer under the law, yet they are now continually going back to it.
7. A believer has to be in reversionism and in numerous gates of the cosmic systems not to discern the rank contradiction. Legalism is contrary to grace. One has to be deluded or inattentive not to grasp the difference.
8. In order to illustrate the difference Paul is going to use Abraham's offspring: Ishmael from his adulterous union with Hagar, and Isaac from the union with Sarah his wife. Since these are historical figures the illustration is not a parable but an allegory.
9. Grace Doctrine Church subscribe to a system of hermeneutics that addresses biblical passages initially from the premise that it is to be taken at face value, i.e., it means what it says, ergo, literally.
10. However, if a passage reveals that it is to be interpreted otherwise, then analysis responds accordingly.
11. There are several allegorical passages in the Bible but Galatians 4:24 is the only one that is so identified in the text.

**Allegory.** Greek, ἀλληγορία [*allēgoria*], from ἄλλος (*allos*), *another*, and ἀγορεύειν (*agoreuein*), *to speak or make a speech in the agora (i.e., assembly)*.

**We have only one (allegory) which is distinctly declared to be such; and that is Galatians 4:22, 24. The modern and common usage of the word *allegoria* is thus quite different from this Scriptural definition. According to the modern sense it is taken to mean a fictitious narrative which has another deeper meaning than that which is expressed.**

**An allegory *may* sometimes be fictitious, but Galatians 4 shows us that a true history may be allegorized (i.e., be shown to have further teaching in that which actually took place) *without detracting from the truth of the history*. Here note this important fact: *Allegory* is always stated in the *past* tense, and *never in the future*. *Allegory* is thus distinguished from *Prophecy*. The *Allegory* brings other teaching out of past events, while the *prophecy* tells us events that are yet to come, and means exactly what is said.<sup>1</sup>**

12. The Judaizers were big on circumcision as a necessary act for Gentiles to be saved. This is legalism that results in a false gospel.
13. In verses 22-23, Paul cites historical events involving Abraham and his progeny as elements in an allegory that contrasts grace and legalism.

**Galatians 4:22 - For it stands written that Abraham had two sons, one [ Ishmael ] by the slave woman [ Hagar ] and one [ Isaac ] by the free woman [ Sarah ].**

1. In Genesis 17, God promises Abraham he will have a son, an idea difficult for Abraham to believe since he is 99 years of age and sexually dead while his wife, Sarah, is 90 and also sexually dead. Here is the passage of the promise:

**Genesis 17:16a - "I [ God ] will bless her [ Sarah ], and indeed, I will give you a son [ Isaac ] by her.**

<sup>1</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (London: Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), 748-49.

**v. 17** - Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old bear a child?"

**v. 18** - And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

**Genesis 17:19** - But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant for his descendants after him.

**v. 20** - "As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

**v. 21** - "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year."

2. This miracle was fulfilled by grace in recognition of Abraham's faith in the certainty of the Word of God. The impossible became possible by means of the divine omnipotence, God's love for Abraham, and His integrity that insured He would fulfill His covenant promise.
3. The New Testament passage that documents the fulfillment of the promise is found in a parenthesis in Romans 4. Verses 17-21:

**Romans 4:17** - (As it stands written [ **Genesis 17:5** ], "I have decreed you the father of many nations" in the sight of Him whom he believed, namely God. Who gave life to the sexually dead ones and designated those things which did not exist as existing.