

# (Galatians) Ch4:8-Ch5:13

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of living under grace and allowing Christ to be formed within us, rather than relying on external rituals and the law.*

**Duration:** 1:16:46

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:13-14, Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah 54:1, Galatians 4:21, Galatians 4:27-28

**Topics:** "Sonship", "Freedom In Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the concept of being a child of God and the responsibility that comes with it. He emphasizes that although we may call God our Father and live under the age of grace, if we continue to live defeated by sin, we are no better than those under the old covenant. The speaker highlights that God has made provision for us to no longer be slaves but to become grown-up sons and heirs through Him. He warns against turning our freedom into an opportunity for indulging in sinful desires and instead encourages serving one another through love. The sermon also mentions the example of the apostle Paul, who despite his physical appearance and weaknesses, was used mightily by God to bring the message of freedom from sin's power.

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## Transcript

In the letter of Paul to the Galatians, we have been seeing how Paul has this great concern to clarify what it means to be free from the law and to have come under grace. And in the earlier part of chapter 4, he says how Jesus was sent by God to be born under the law, born of a woman, verse 4, in order that he might redeem us who were under the law so that we might receive the adoption as sons, that is, to come under grace. In the earlier studies, we saw in the latter part of chapter 3, how Paul uses the illustration of a small child and a grown-up son as a picture of what it means to be under law and under grace.

And here it says in chapter 4, verse 6, Because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of His son into our hearts. Under the new covenant, God sends forth His Holy Spirit to come and indwell our hearts. This is called here the spirit of His son, Jesus.

And the purpose is that we also might come into that place of sonship. This is why God has sent the spirit of His son into our hearts, crying, Abba, father. Now this cry, Abba, father, was not something that could come forth from anyone in the old covenant.

Not even the greatest of saints could look up to God in old covenant times and call Him father. But now the spirit of His son has come into our hearts, crying, Abba, father. Therefore you are no longer a slave, you are no longer under law, but under grace, but as sons.

And if a son, then an heir through God. In the first verse of chapter 4, we saw that it's possible to be a son, to be a child of the father, and yet not have that sense of responsibility that a grown-up son should have. And then, of course, we are no better than slaves.

And the point of that is that although we may live under the age of grace and our sins may be forgiven, and like a little child we may call God father, yet if we live as those who are under law, that is, defeated by sin, then we are no better than those old covenant people, those old covenant Jews who were defeated by sin. That's the point. But God has made provision that we should no longer be slaves, and also no longer just little children, but grown-up sons, and therefore heirs through God.

And this is the whole purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Spirit, that we might grow up to sonship in the place of responsibility towards God. This is the full meaning of what it is to receive grace and to live under grace. Sin shall not have dominion over you, Romans 6.14, because you are under grace.

In Galatians 4.8-11 he speaks about some of the characteristics of those who are under law. However, at that time, he says, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. They worshiped heathen idols.

Now, we may not necessarily have been born into a heathen religion, but it's possible to worship idols like money, and honor, and pleasure, and these are as much idols as any other type of physical idols. And here he says, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. And people in the world are slaves to some form of idol or another.

But now he says that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God. The relationship that we have in the new birth is described here as knowing God. It is an intimate relationship.

It is the word used in the Old Testament to describe the relationship between a husband and a wife. Adam knew his wife Eve, it says. And it is that intimate, the most intimate of earthly relationships that is used to picture man's relationship with God.

Jesus said, this is eternal life, John 17.3, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. And here it says in Galatians 4.9, now that you have come to know God, you have come into that intimate relationship with God, and, or rather, to be known by God. It is both ways, we know Him and He knows us.

And he says, if you have come into this relationship with reality, with the true God, how is it that you have turned back again to the weak and worthless elemental things to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? Now, what are these weak and worthless elemental things? He mentions some of them in verse 10, you observe days and months and seasons and years. Now, when the Jews were given the law, they were given special days to celebrate. The Day of Atonement, for example, the Passover day, the Feast of Fresh Fruits, the Feast of Pentecost, and so on.

And there were special seasons, special years, the year of Jubilee, which was given by God, the Sabbath day, once a week, given by God, and certain offerings to be offered, which were all commanded by God.

But what happened to the Jews was that gradually these things that God had commanded became a ritual, an external form, without the inward reality. And when it came to that state, we read that God sent His prophet Isaiah to speak to them.

And in Isaiah chapter 1, God speaks to His people through Isaiah and says, verse 13 of Isaiah 1, Don't bring your worthless offerings any longer to me. That incense is an abomination to me, the new moon and the Sabbath, the calling of assemblies. Verse 14, I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts.

They have become a burden to me. I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I'll hide my eyes from you, because your hands are full of bloodshed.

Verse 16, Wash yourself, make yourself clean, remove the evil of your deeds from my sight, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan and plead for the widow. You see, they were going through this external form of giving these offerings, but their heart was not clean. But they thought God would be happy with these external observances.

We considered in an earlier study how Christians can get into the ritual of external observances, like water baptism and the Lord's table, and think that God accepts them because of their having kept these observances. But these external observances have no value at all, if our heart is not right. And, as we said earlier, it can be a form of idolatry.

Now, it is thus that Christians remain under law when they think more of the external aspects of their life, rather than the inward. You observe days and months, you can observe Christmas Day and Sunday as a special day, and Good Friday and Easter, all these things, and be under law. It is the heart that matters.

Grace is something that changes us inwardly. And God's laws are written on our hearts and our minds in the New Covenant. And if I concentrate on the external aspect of my life, then we get into the same condition that the people of Israel were in the days of Isaiah.

God has to reprove us for being back under law. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God desires truth in the inward part. And Paul says, I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Yes, Paul said, I taught you so clearly the gospel of God's grace. It's not by these external observances, it's by inward reality, through the heart being cleansed from an evil conscience, and being empowered by the spirit of grace, so that we can do the will of God from the heart in our daily life. Galatians, chapter 4, verse 11.

I fear for you that perhaps I have labored over you in vain, Paul tells the Galatian Christians. He had spent quite some time there in the region of Galatia, establishing the churches there, and teaching them the gospel of the grace of God. But they had drifted away from that gospel into another gospel, a counterfeit one, which brought them back under the law and into a defeated life.

I beg of you, brethren, he says in verse 12, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. Now Paul was born as a Jew, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, but he broke out of that Jewish straitjacket, and came into the freedom that there was in the gospel of the grace of God, that came through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he says to these brothers in Galatia, he says, be as I am, for I have become as you are. You who are Gentiles, I have become just like you. There is no difference now in the new covenant between the Jew and the non-Jew.

All are the same. You have done me no wrong, he says in verse 12. He is saying, I am not speaking so firmly to you because you have done me any wrong.

In fact, he describes how he first proclaimed the gospel to them, the circumstances that led him to proclaim the gospel in Galatia. In verse 13 of Galatians 4, you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time. Now the first time that Paul went to Galatia and preached the gospel, as far as we know, is described in Acts chapter 16 and verse 6, where it says that Paul and Silas and Timothy passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

In other words, they wanted to go into Asia, but they were hindered by the Holy Spirit, and so they had to stay on in Galatia, could not go where they wanted to go. And this was because of a physical illness that befell the Apostle Paul when he was in Galatia. That's what we read in Galatians 4.13. Sometimes God uses illness to stop us from going where he doesn't want us to go.

God's guidance does not always come by supernatural vision. We move forward depending on the Holy Spirit, and God sometimes stops us when we are going in the wrong direction if our hearts are sincere. Paul's heart was sincere, and God stopped him by giving him an illness that forced him to stay on in Galatia.

And that's what he says in Galatians 4.13. It was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time. And this bodily illness was apparently something that was probably something that affected his physical appearance. Because it says here, that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition, Galatians 4.14, you did not despise or loathe.

And the literal meaning of loathe is spit out act. He says, you didn't spit out when you saw my physical weakness and probably the infirmity. But you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus himself.

God allows his servants to be physically unattractive sometimes. He allows their earthen vessels to be seen as very earthen. So that the treasure within the earthen vessels can be given greater glory and honor.

So that God is glorified in all things. So it is folly to try and impress people with our earthen vessels, whether with our physical appearance or our intellectual cleverness. Those are all earthen vessels.

Paul, writing to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10, says this, 2 Corinthians 10, verse 10. He says that his own personal presence, the middle of verse 10, was unimpressive and his speech was contemptible. He couldn't speak too well, the apostle Paul, and his physical appearance was not all that smart and pleasant.

This is the type of servant God made into the mightiest apostle of the first century. Paul didn't look like a film star with an eloquent way of speaking. No, he was an earthen vessel.

And he was sick in Galatia. And there we read that Galatians were not disturbed by this external appearance of Paul. They received him as an angel of God, even Christ Jesus himself.

Because of the message he brought that blessed them and freed them from sin's power. Then he says, what's happened now, Galatians 4.15, where then is that sense of blessing that you had? Where is that blessing that you had then? For he says, at that time I bear you witness that if possible you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. Maybe what Paul had as a physical infirmity was some type of eye problem.

Some difficulty in the eyes, perhaps, we don't know for sure. But it's likely that it was that because he says here that the Galatians, when they saw Paul with this eye problem, which gave him perhaps a repulsive physical appearance, were willing to have their own eyes plucked out and given it to Paul, if it were possible. That's how much they loved him.

Then he says now in verse 16, have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth? Paul loved the Galatian Christians so much that he would not hold back the truth just to keep their friendship. A false friend is one who holds back the truth in order to keep your friendship. There are many preachers who say things that tickle the ears of their congregation and thus become popular.

But Paul was never one of that number. He spoke the truth because he loved the people so much that he wanted them to know the truth and to be set free. Because Jesus said when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

Paul wanted the Galatians to be in freedom, so he wanted them to know the truth. And therefore the Galatians considered him their enemy. They were so foolish that they were happy with the people who flattered them, but were upset with Paul who longed for their eternal good.

And even so today most Christians, we find, are happy with preachers who flatter them, say nice things to them, but are disturbed by those preachers who would tell them the truth, which may hurt, but which would also set them free if they responded to it. In contrast to Paul, these other false apostles who came with another gospel, Paul speaks about them in verse 17, they eagerly seek you. They come and flatter you, he says.

They seem to be very interested in having you, but not with your eternal good in view, not commendably. But they wish to shut you out in order that you may seek them. They want to cut you off from me.

They don't want you to listen to the truth I am bringing. And so they say things against me, Paul says, so that you will cut me out and so that they can have you all to themselves and keep you in bondage. Now he says it's a good thing to be eagerly sought out, that people seem to be eagerly interested in you is a good thing if it is in a commendable manner.

What is a commendable manner? When they seek your eternal welfare, when they are not interested in your money, they are not interested in your honor or your popularity, they are not interested in your having a good opinion about them, but they seek your eternal good and the glory of God. That is a commendable manner. And he says concerning himself in this connection, it's good always to be eagerly sought out in a commendable manner, not only when I am present with you.

He says you sought me so much when I was with you. Now when I am absent, you have forgotten all about it, even though I am your friend and I seek your good. But I tell you the truth, I don't flatter you like these other preachers do.

And then Paul expresses the burden of his heart. He says, my children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. Here is the heart of a true servant of God.

He agonizes in prayer and in spiritual burden, longing to teach, so that Christ may be formed in those who hear him. If you are one who preaches the word, dear friend, your aim must be not to impress people, not to please people, not to flatter them, but to see that Christ is formed in them, so that the character of Christ is produced in them. And if this is not produced, then all our labor is in vain.

He says, I labor in prayer and preaching and teaching, so that Christ may be formed in you. Those who have this as a goal for their heroes are seeking them in a commendable manner. We turn now to Galatians chapter 4, verse 19.

Paul writes to the Galatian Christians and says, my children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. As we have been looking through Paul's letter to the Galatians, we have been seeing his great burden to free the Galatians from being under law and to bring them into the liberty there is in the grace of God. And we can ask, what does the grace of God actually do for us? Here in one sentence is the answer.

It forms Christ in us, Galatians 4, verse 19. When Christ and His nature is formed in us, inside of us, then grace is accomplishing its purpose. But the law cannot form Christ in us.

It merely clears up and cleans up our life on the outside, straightens out our life in the external. The Jewish people, the God-fearing ones among them in the Old Testament, came to quite a good life externally, but they could not experience what is written here in Galatians 4, verse 19, Christ being formed inside of them. And that is the liberty into which grace brings us.

Where the nature of Christ is formed inside of us, or as it is expressed in Hebrews 8, the laws of God are written, no longer on tablets of stone like in the days of the law, but in our mind and in our heart. The laws of God express His very nature. And to write God's laws in our heart and mind means that God's nature is communicated to us so that we love to do His will and we actually do it also.

God works within us to will and to do of His good pleasure. This is Christ being formed inside of us. And Paul says as a preacher of the Gospel, my whole burden is that Christ may be formed in you.

But, verse 20, Galatians 4, I could wish to be present with you now, when you people are listening to these other people who come with another Gospel, and to change my tone. He says, I don't want to speak so harshly to you, but I love you so much that I don't want you to go astray. It's like a father who loves his children so much that he speaks firmly to them.

A father who does not correct and discipline his children is not a true father. Paul was a true father, and so he spoke sternly to the Galatian Christians. Because he says, I'm perplexed about you.

I don't know what to think. I don't know what to say. Now, in Galatians 4.19, we see the aim of all our preaching and teaching.

That Christ may be formed in others. In Colossians chapter 1, Paul expresses it like this. Verse 28 and 29 of Colossians chapter 1. And we proclaim Christ, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ.

And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power which mightily works within me. And so we see that to present every man perfect in Christ was the aim of the Apostle Paul. To see that Christ and His nature was formed in people.

But this can only come if people come under grace and realize that the inward is more important than the external. And that God is not going to be satisfied with external rituals and observances, even if it is Bible reading and going to meetings, if the heart is not right. So we are not to listen to a gospel that gives us a satisfaction with external rituals and observances.

That is to come back under law and therefore to come back into bondage. But to be under law is to be in bondage. To be under grace is to be free.

Christ cannot be formed within the heart of a man who is nearly satisfied with external rituals and observances. And then he says in verse 21, Tell me you who want to be under law. Do you not listen to the law? What does it say in the law, he says? Let's look at the Old Testament, he says.

You people are so keen on that. Listen to this. It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

That is, one by Hagar, he had a son called Ishmael, and another son by Sarah, Isaac. But the son by the bondwoman, that is, Ishmael, who was born through Hagar, Abraham's slave, was born according to the flesh. That means it was a result of Abraham's own human idea.

God had promised Abraham that you are going to have a son. And so Abraham decided to help God. And through his own human cleverness, he had a son through Hagar, his servant woman.

It was a product of Abraham's wisdom and Abraham's strength. Ishmael was the product of Abraham's wisdom and Abraham's strength. That is, born according to the flesh.

What is produced in my life through my cleverness and my strength is of the flesh, even if it is called Christian work, even if it is called preaching the gospel or pastoring a church. If it is through my cleverness and my strength, it is Ishmael born according to the flesh. But the son by the free woman, Isaac, was born according to the promise.

God said, I will give you a son. Abraham just waited. He had no way to produce Isaac.

His cleverness was of no use there and his strength was of no use because he had become incapable of having a son. And this Paul says in verse 24 of Galatians 4, contains an allegory. He says, this is a picture.

These women, Hagar and Sarah, represent two separate covenants, two completely different covenants, the old covenant and the new covenant. One covenant which proceeds from Mount Sinai, that is the law, bearing children who are going to be slaves because the law can never make a man a son. It can only make a man a slave.

Whereas God is looking for sons. And this is represented by Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia.

It is all the same, he said, what came through Moses and corresponds to the present earthly Jerusalem for she is in slavery with her children. The earthly Jerusalem and the Jews who still think of the temple of God

as being there, Paul says, they are in bondage. God is not in that temple.

They were having worship services in that temple when the son of God was being crucified outside on Calvary's hill. No, that was all slavery. That's where the law led those people.

But he says there is another Jerusalem which is above, a spiritual Jerusalem, the holy Jerusalem which is above, this is the church and she is our mother. And that is represented by Sarah and Isaac and the new covenant. Now it's important for us to see the distinction between these two covenants represented by Hagar and Sarah, first of all.

Hagar was a slave of Abraham. Sarah was a wife. An intimate relationship with Abraham.

And this is the relationship which God wants to have with us. That of a wife and not of a slave woman. And the first covenant could not bring people to that place of intimate relationship with God that Sarah had with Abraham as a wife and a partner.

And that's where the first covenant leads the person. And we also see the contrast in Ishmael and Isaac. The first covenant can produce only dead work like Ishmael, the product of human ability, human ingenuity, human cleverness which can never satisfy God.

The new covenant produces Isaac which is produced not through human cleverness or strength but by the enabling power of God's Holy Spirit like Isaac was born through God's power. The Jerusalem on earth with all its ritualistic observances is another picture of the law. The Jerusalem above which is a spiritual Jerusalem with spiritual reality within speaks of the church.

Each of us have to make a choice of living under one of these two covenants either the old covenant or the new covenant. We turn now to Galatians 4. And verse 24. This contains an allegory.

For these women, that is Hagar, the slave woman of Abraham and Sarah, the wife of Abraham are two covenants. Abraham's servant woman with whom he had a relationship and produced a son and Abraham's wife Sarah represent two covenants, Paul says. One the old covenant and the other the new covenant.

One proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves. She is Hagar. This Hagar is also represented by Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, the earthly one for she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem above which is described in Revelation 21 that is free and she is our mother. Paul had a great burden for these Galatian Christians that they should remain in freedom and therefore that they should not drift away from the gospel of the grace of God. And in verse 27 Paul says, for it is written Rejoice barren woman who does not bear break forth and shout you who are not in labor for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband and you brethren like Isaac are children of promise.

Now it is very important for us to understand this and to see from which part of the Old Testament this verse is quoted. It is written Rejoice barren woman Now who was the barren woman? It was Sarah obviously in the context of Galatians 4 Hagar was not barren she had within her the capability of producing a child and she produced one Ishmael but Sarah did not have that capability and so when she had a son it was not through her own ability and therein lies the difference between law and grace.

The law says do this and you shall live and man tries and tries by his own ability like Hagar and produces one Ishmael after another thousands of Ishmael and none of them are acceptable to God dead works every one of them our righteousness is like filthy rag but grace what does grace do?

It does what God did for Sarah Sarah is a barren woman utterly incapable of producing a child but God empowered her and brought life into that dead womb and bringing life into something dead is called resurrection power so what Sarah experienced in her womb was a touch of resurrection power into her dead womb came life and that is what grace brings resurrection power where we are spiritually dead and acknowledge our impotence we are enabled by grace not just to have a theory of sanctification but to actually produce something that pleases God for Sarah did not please God by her barrenness no this is where many Christians have misunderstood grace they have thought that grace means we don't have to obey God's commandments now it doesn't matter if we don't live a holy life this is a great

deception that is a counterfeit gospel and that's what was happening to the Galatians and that's why the letter to Galatians is a very important letter for us today to understand what it means to be free from law to be under grace to obey the commandments from the heart is what grace enables us to do the Holy Spirit is called in Hebrews 10.29 the Spirit of Grace the Spirit of Grace has been poured out upon us and grace strengthens us from within we read in Romans 8.4 so that the righteousness of the law the righteous requirement of the law might now be fulfilled inside our heart by the Spirit of Grace and just like by the supernatural enabling of God a child was actually conceived inside Sarah's womb and was born so also the supernatural enabling of grace in our life enables us to produce

works pleasing to God so herein is the difference between law and grace Ishmael or Isaac works produced by our own ability which can never be fully satisfying to God because they can only be external good works done on the outside but the heart is not clean in contrast to that to come under grace is to have a life where I produce good works again but not merely on the outside it comes from my heart the law is written in my heart and in my mind like we read in Ephesians 2 verse 8, 9 and 10 if we take the whole passage there together we understand it correctly Ephesians 2, 8 for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourself you see, this is the difference not of yourself, it is the gift of God when it is of yourself that is in Ishmael when it is the gift of God it is

in Isaac that's what we read in Ephesians 2, 8 not of yourself, it is the gift of God not as a result of works not as a result of your own ability that is Ishmael so that no one can boast Hagar could boast without God's help I had a son no one can boast in God's presence so our works can never bring us salvation never please God but we are His workmanship that is Isaac Isaac was God's workmanship not our own dead works but His works created in Christ Jesus unto good works why have we been recreated in Christ Jesus as a new creation? so that we might do good works not the works of the law which are produced by our own strength but His works which are produced in us by the power of the Holy Spirit good works, Isaac which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them when God has

prepared them we walk in them in humility in faith we live by faith and dependence upon God and these good works are produced inside our heart and come forth in goodness and purity and humility and love in our life so that under grace we can be free from lust in our heart we can have purity in our heart and in the outside we can be free from anger from getting offended from getting irritated we can be good and be merciful and kind and gentle and patient that is Isaac that is to be under grace but the vast majority of people who call themselves believers today do not have these qualities they do not have patience and freedom from anger and freedom from lust and goodness and kindness why is it? because they are still

under law they have heard a gospel which has kept them in bondage they

have been told that obedience to the commandments is not required this is another gospel it is a deception and this is what Paul is speaking of you brethren Galatians 4.28 are like Isaac children of the promise and this quotation in Galatians 4.27 rejoice barren woman who does not bear is when you look at the Old Testament it is the first verse of Isaiah chapter 54 and the whole significance of it is that it is the very next verse after that wonderful chapter about the cross in Isaiah 53 Isaiah 53 speaks about the way Jesus lived on earth he grew up like a tender shoot like a root out of a parched ground the parched ground was the flesh of David in which he came he came in our flesh in which dwells no good thing and from that came forth purity sinlessness in the flesh of man in which up

until then people had only lived in sin here came a root out of a dry ground purity and he bore the cross all through his life and finally died on it on Calvary's hill for our sins as a guilt offering for our sins and he bore our sins and he interceded for us it says in Isaiah 53 12 then in the very next verse shout for joy oh barren one because of this because of what Jesus has done because there has been a death to all that is of the flesh therefore the barren one can shout because now as we walk that way that Jesus walked of death to the flesh and receive in ourselves the benefit of all of Christ's death on the cross our old man being crucified our being dead to the world and to the lusts that are in the flesh we also can produce in our life by the spirit power Isaac's works of

righteousness that please God we turn now to Galatians and chapter 4 and verse 27 for it is written rejoice barren woman who does not bear break forth and shout you who are not in labor for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband and you brethren like Isaac are children of promise now we considered last week how Galatians 4 27 is a quotation from Isaiah 54 and verse 1 which is the verse immediately following the chapter about the cross in Isaiah 53 and so it is speaking about the fruit of Christ's death and resurrection and shows us the way by which one who is barren incapable of producing a son by our own ability can bear can bring forth now the point of the whole thing is that under the old covenant people could not bring forth a righteous life by their

own ability but under the new covenant we can under the old covenant all that people could bring forth was dead works but under the new covenant we can bring forth righteousness from within our heart and in our life rejoice barren woman who does not bear break forth and shout you who are not in labor for more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband the point is this that the one who has a husband and who glories in that and who thinks of their own ability with which they can please God is in a despised condition as far as God is concerned our righteousness is like filthy rag but the barren one the one who is poor in spirit for that's the point of this allegory the one who is incapable of pleasing God and who acknowledges her helplessness can be enabled by the

spirit to do what? it says very clearly in verse 27 to have more children than the one with the husband now the whole point of that is that under grace we can produce more righteousness than the law could produce that's the whole point of it we can produce something far more acceptable to God through the new covenant than what the law could produce under the old covenant Isaac is far more acceptable to God than Ishmael that's the point of Galatians 4 27 in other words just like Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 verse 20 unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is the righteousness of the law but he said the righteousness required in the kingdom of heaven exceeds that

righteousness of the law and he went on in the following chapters in Matthew 5 to explain what he meant the old covenant requirement was thou shalt not commit adultery the new covenant requirement is thou shalt not lust in thy heart the old covenant requirement was thou shalt not commit murder the new covenant requirement is thou shalt not despise thy brother or be angry with him or even hate him no, we are not to lose our temper at others that is the new covenant requirement and that's what it says here that the barren woman can produce more children a greater degree of righteousness because it produces the righteousness of the heart which the law could not produce at all and we brethren like Isaac are the children of the promise but verse 29 as at that time he who was born according to

the flesh that is Ishmael persecuted we read that in Genesis 21 verse 9 how Ishmael mocked Isaac who was born according to the spirit so it is now also now one would think that those who proclaim this glorious gospel that we can be righteous not only on the outside but also within the heart should be received with garland and welcomed but alas it is not so the vast majority of believers do not desire to hear this gospel they do not desire to hear a gospel which tells them that they can be completely free from sin in their heart that they can be free from lust in their heart can be free from hatred and anger and bitterness and any sin in their heart and there is a persecution that comes upon the preaching of this grace because they live under a false grace which continuously tells them we

have to be defeated we have to fall into sin we have to keep on failing we have to keep on falling and therefore they live in their sin defeated and usually in a much worse condition than the Israelites were under the old covenant and as it says in Galatians 4.29 they would persecute and hinder and obstruct and fight against and criticize and oppress those who preach the gospel of the true grace of God but what does the scripture say? verse 30 the scripture says, Genesis 21.10 cast out the bond woman and her son for the son of the bond woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman and that's what Sarah told Abraham and God told Abraham to listen to Sarah and that's what's quoted here in Galatians 4.30 that the bond woman and her son must be cast out that is the one who

preaches that which brings you into bondage, he must be cast out but what actually happens is that the one who preaches freedom through obedience to the commandments the one who preaches that the grace of God can give you a pure heart he is often the one who is cast out and that's what Jesus also said the religious world cannot accept you because they did not accept me the world hates you because you do not belong to the world if you did belong to this corrupt system that keeps people in bondage then they would love you but because you do not belong to this corrupt system but I have chosen you out of this corrupt system to bring you to freedom John 15.19 therefore the world hates you and he said the time will come John 16.2 that they will cast you out from the synagogue and even kill you

because the apostles preached freedom through the grace of God and that's why Paul got thrown out of the synagogue and even today one finds that those who preach the true grace of God are not welcomed by those who want to remain in bondage but the scripture, God's opinion is as far as he is concerned he has no place for the bond woman he has no place for those preachers who proclaim bondage through the law brethren Galatians 4.31 we are not children of a bond woman but of the free woman and he goes on to say in Galatians 5.1 it was for freedom that Christ set us free therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery to be under law is to be a slave we've seen that consistently in this passage, to be a slave to be a slave we may try to please God with external

acts but we shall remain slaves of sin, Jesus told the people who tried to keep the law meticulously, he told them in John 8.31 onward that they were slaves of sin and that if they knew the truth the truth would

set them free so this is one way by which we know whether we are living under a false grace or the true grace very clearly, Romans 6.14 is the answer if you are under the true grace of God sin does not have dominion over you that's the way we can find out if sin any sin can rule me and bring me into bondage whether it's lust or the love of money or a wild temper or bitterness or an unforgiving spirit or any sin brings me into bondage it must be because I haven't understood the true grace of God because grace frees me from sin's power it was for freedom, Paul says in Galatians 5.1

that Christ has set us free now don't get entangled again in a yoke of bondage Christ has set us free through grace don't get back into bondage that was Paul's burden don't come back under law now don't come back under a ritual of external observances and satisfy your heart with that don't come back under external acts and please your heart with that keep in that freedom of grace where your heart is pure no one can be free whose heart is not pure so seek for purity of heart that you might be free with the freedom in which Christ has set us free we turn now to Galatians 4 verse 29 as at that time he who was born according to the flesh this is referring to Ishmael persecuted him who was born according to the spirit that is Isaac so it is now also that which is born of the flesh hates that

which is born of the spirit that which is in slavery hates that which is in freedom but what does the scripture say cast out the bond woman and her son for the son of the bond woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman there can be no place for joint heirdom with those who are slaves the sons and the slaves cannot be joint heirs Jesus himself said in John chapter 8 and verse 35 when he was speaking about slavery and sonship he told the Jews if you abide in my word you'll be my disciples and the truth will make you free they said we've never been slaves and then Jesus said in John 8 34 everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin if you commit sin you are the slave of sin that's clear you don't have to keep on doing it if you are in bondage to even one sinful habit in your

life maybe to an unforgiving spirit or bitterness or a vile temper or to gossiping or to lust you are a slave of sin it says here the slave does not remain in the house forever the slave of sin cannot remain in God's house forever a day will come when the slave is cast out and that's the point of Galatians 4 30 cast out the bond woman and her son it is true that Ishmael remained in Abraham's house for quite some time but a time came when Ishmael had been cast out and so it is also with those who remain slaves of sin yes they remain for a time in God's house because God is patient with them gives them the opportunity to be free from sin to come under grace and to become a son but if they refuse the offers of grace and remain slaves of sin then the word of Jesus is the slave does not remain

in God's house forever but the son remains forever but the son of God if God can make you free then you will be free indeed John 8 36 and he is speaking about Abraham's offspring if you are Abraham's children he says in verse 39 do the deeds of Abraham John 8 39 because you seek to kill me they persecuted the son of God because he proclaimed freedom but he says you are not really the sons of Abraham you are doing the deeds of your father which is the devil verse 44 and so we find the same persecution that Jesus experienced from those who are under law those who proclaim the gospel of freedom and of the grace of God today experience the same persecution of being opposed and ridiculed and criticized and cast out but God has his prophets even today who proclaim the true gospel of the grace

of God and those who submit to that gospel come into freedom even today there are not many because Jesus said the way to life is narrow and few there be that find it but there are few who like Isaac are the children of the promise and who come to the place of a pure heart a clean heart and freedom from sins power in thought, word, deed, attitude and motive and Paul says further in Galatians 5 1 it was for freedom

that Christ has set us free therefore keep standing firm it's very important for us to keep standing firm in the liberty into which we have been called in the gospel that is liberty from sin and not to be subject again to a yoke of slavery that is the law which brings bondage and then Paul goes on to say in verse 2 behold I Paul say to you that if you receive circumcision Christ

will be of no benefit to you it is not the physical act of circumcision that Paul is speaking of but he says if you undergo it as a ritual as a religious ritual in order to please God then he says it's no use coming to Christ because you are once again trying to get back under the law and trying to please God by ritualistic observances and he says I testify again to every man who receives circumcision as a religious ritual that he is under obligation to keep the whole law can you keep the whole law and please God you are under obligation to do it to save your soul because the law says do this and you shall live and what about all your past sins the guilt of accumulated sin in your life the law cannot cleanse you from that there is no provision it is only through the shed blood of Christ

through his death on the cross that our sins can be forgiven but Christ will be no use to you if you are trying to be justified by the law verse 4 you have been severed from Christ you who are seeking to be justified by law you have fallen from grace what does it mean to fall from grace one part of its meaning is here when we seek to be justified by the law when we think we can please God by our own effort by our own righteousness and our own good work and think that God will declare us righteous because of that and in those days it involved also circumcision we may not go through circumcision but we may still think that by good works, by our own ability maybe by doing good deeds to the poor by engaging in what they call a social gospel these days, caring for the poor helping the widows

and the orphans there is nothing wrong in all this this is a part of true religion as we read in James 1, in the latter verses of James 1 but if I think that I can be justified and declared righteous before God by these things then I have fallen from grace no, we cannot be saved by the law our works are as filthy rags we have to be justified freely by the grace of God by the death of Christ on the cross we come like we sing in that song nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling nothing Lord, I am a sinner but Jesus has died for me that is how we are justified and that is how we are to live the Christian life Lord, I do not have in my hand or within me anything that can fulfill the high and holy demands of your law and so I come thirsting, hungering for the fullness of the

Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit will come within me into my impotent being like God's power came into Sarah's helpless, impotent womb and produce within me, Lord don't just produce nothing but produce within me that righteousness that will please you for what came out of Sarah's womb was not just wind but Isaac, a real son that pleased God and so comes forth from us too through grace a real righteousness that pleases God far more than any righteousness of the law that any Old Testament person could ever produce something far superior to what Moses, Elijah or John the Baptist or Paul as a Pharisee could produce now is produced through grace for we, he goes on to speak of that in Galatians 5.5 for we, through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness we don't live

without anything we are free from the law not to come under nothing that's the condition of many Christians they say they are free from the law but they are under nothing now and so they fall into greater sin than those people who were under the law it is like the man who cast out one evil spirit and kept his house empty and so ended up with eight evil spirits that's the condition of many Christians when they claim to be free from the law no we are free from law so that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit now and through the Spirit, by faith that is by dependence of our whole personality upon God wait for the hope of

righteousness righteousness will flood our whole being but the work has already begun it has already begun we have the hope that one day we shall completely be like Jesus

but we are on the way now of being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit it is through the Spirit and by faith the hope we have is described in 1 John 3.2 as being like Jesus when we see him face to face and 1 John 3.3 says everyone who has this hope purifies himself from one degree of glory through the Spirit's cooperation he is transformed into the likeness of Jesus we turn now to Galatians and chapter 5 and verse 6 for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything but faith working through love in the previous verses we considered last week how Paul says that if you go back into this religious ritualistic circumcision you are under obligation verse 3 to keep the whole law you can't just select bits and pieces out of the law that you want

there are people today for example who select the sabbath day out of the law and say we'd like to keep that well Paul's word is just the same you are under obligation to keep the whole law you have to go back to those animal sacrifices as well, not just keep the sabbath day because the law proclaimed many things the sabbath was a sign between God and the children of Israel and God gave the children of Israel many other commandments concerning many other things that you read off in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy particularly and you are under obligation to keep all of that not that you can pick and choose and this is the folly of people who just take one thing out and want to keep just that no you have been severed from Christ when you seek to be justified by the law and those who think

that they can be justified before God by keeping the sabbath day or by being circumcised or by any of this other religious ritualistic observance of the law they are severed from Christ, it's as serious as that they are cut off from Christ because Christ is the head of the body which is the church now it is possible for a person to be severed from Christ otherwise Galatians 5.4 is meaningless they were once united to Christ and then only you can be severed you can't be severed from Christ unless you were once united to him and it is foolishness to think that once I have been united to him I can never be severed from him then Galatians 5.4 inspired by the Holy Spirit is meaningless and Paul tells the Galatians you who seek to be justified by law you have been severed from Christ it is

possible to be in grace and to fall from grace according to Galatians 5.4 you have fallen from grace and Paul writes to the Colossians similar words in Colossians 2 verse 16 he says let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath day all of these are a mere shadow which is to come by the bodies of Christ he says we are now to hold fast to the head verse 19 we have died with Christ verse 20 of Colossians 2 through all these things now why are you bothered about particular foods and particular drinks that you can't eat pork and you can't drink this particular thing because it is forbidden under the law and you have to keep the sabbath day he says these things are all a shadow Colossians 2.16 and 17 now we have come into the body

of Christ he is our head and if we don't want to be in this body then we are severed from Christ and so those who seek to be justified by the law are severed from Christ and have fallen from grace they seek to please God by producing Ishmael but now we through the spirit Galatians 5.5 are waiting for the hope of righteousness something far superior to the righteousness of the law even as Isaac was superior to Ishmael in Christ Jesus he says it's not a matter of any of these external observances like circumcision they mean nothing but what does really matter is faith but not an intellectual faith or an imaginary faith like invisible clothes no but a faith which works through love a faith which works through love this is the faith which is of value James chapter 2 we read James says what is

the use of a man saying he has got faith James 2.14 if he has no work can that type of faith save him certainly not but only faith which has works what type of works? works of love James 2.15 if a brother or sister needs clothing or food then you must provide that a faith which works by love so James is not writing something contrary to Paul but they are writing exactly the same thing inspired by the same spirit Paul says the only faith which is of value Galatians 4.6 is that faith which produces works of love and love is the fulfillment of the law he goes on to say that later in verse 14 that the law is fulfilled in one word you shall love your neighbor as yourself so he doesn't speak about a faith which releases us from all obligation to obey God's commandments no that is a contrary

faith and a false grace but of a faith which works through love then he goes on to say in verse 7 you were running well now who has hindered you from obeying the truth you were running well you were on the new and living way that Jesus opened up through his flesh you were going along well then what happened how is it that you have now suddenly dropped out of the race altogether how is it you have gone away from that race looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith where you were resisting sin unto blood as we read in Hebrews 12 verses 1 to 4 what happened now how is it you have developed a casual attitude towards sin and got taken up with external rituals and observances who hindered you from obeying the truth the people who came to you and said that they were the prophets of

God were false prophets because this persuasion that has come to you has not come from him who calls you because if it were a prophet of God who came to you then your life would be more holy today than it was before the true word of God will always lead to godliness greater godliness and greater holiness this is how we can distinguish false prophets from true prophets Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 beware of false prophets verse 15 you can know them by their fruits verse 16 you can't gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles good fruit comes out of good trees verse 17 of Matthew 7 but rotten tree produces bad fruit and so if you listen to a word from a prophet or a preacher that's like a seed how do you know whether it's a good seed or bad seed clever people can convince you

that bad seed is good seed how do you know well when you receive that seed into your life what type of fruit does it produce in you is it good fruit, fruit unto holiness and love and humility and godliness then it must be good seed it is the life which proves whether we have received good seed or not and so Paul says in Galatians 5.8 this persuasion that you have received has not come from God because it hasn't produced fruit unto godliness in your life a little leaven has got into you, you have received the fruit when I came to your midst Paul says but after I left you have received this little corrupt leaven that has come into your midst and it has leavened the whole lump gradually this little bit of false doctrine corrupts your whole life, your family life gets disturbed, your church

life becomes full of strife all types of problems come because you do not want to be under grace under the true grace of God but Paul says I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment whoever he is he says I have confidence still in you that you will listen to this exhortation that I am giving you that you will not go away from that true gospel that I preached to you but the one who is disturbing you, these people who come and preach to you another gospel that take you away from grace they will bear their judgment God will judge them whoever they are if they try to turn you away from me Paul says and the gospel that I am proclaiming to you which will lead you to liberty God will bring them into judgment

whoever they may be that's clear but Paul says in verse 11 I brethren if I still preach circumcision why am I still persecuted he says if I am still preaching the gospel of God's grace then there is no need for me to be

persecuted then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished the cross brings freedom and Paul preached the cross and the preaching of the cross is contrary to the law not just the cross on which Jesus died but the cross on which we have been crucified with Christ when we proclaim that we are free and we are free from the law of being crucified with Christ we turn now to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 11 but I brethren if I still preach circumcision why am I still persecuted then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished Paul was persecuted because he

preached the cross and all who preach the cross in its fullness will be persecuted we can make the cross attractive but it wasn't attractive when Jesus carried it and there is an offense about the cross which we should not try to avoid for what is the cross symbolized what does it mean the cross means death when Jesus spoke about bearing the cross and following him the people who heard it understood it very clearly it was clear in Jerusalem and in the whole land of Israel that when a person was carrying a cross you saw someone carrying a cross followed by Roman soldiers he was going only to one place to the place of execution he was going to be executed to be killed and that's exactly what he meant when he told his disciples that they were to take up the cross and follow after him they

were to be executed they were to go into death to their own self life this is the cross that Jesus carried all through his life finally he died on a wooden cross on Calvary's hill but that was only the culmination of years of carrying the cross inwardly and we are not to separate these two aspects of the cross that Jesus carried and so when we think of the cross it's not just the place where Jesus died for us but also the place where we were crucified with him which Paul spoke of earlier in Galatians 2.20 I am crucified with Christ no longer I who live those who preach that cross they will be persecuted even today but if we avoid speaking about that cross avoid speaking about death to the self life then we can preach many other things and be acceptable before all people those preachers

who want to be acceptable who want to be famous who want to be respected who want to receive a big collection they will invariably avoid preaching the cross and this is the mark by which you can find those who are the true prophets of God and those who are not if the preaching of the cross the old man being crucified with Christ the flesh being crucified is left out he is a false prophet no matter what else he preaches and that's what Paul says he says if I am preaching circumcision if I am preaching these external rituals then I wouldn't be persecuted if I only preached about well it doesn't matter if we are circumcised and things like that then I wouldn't be persecuted but he says I am determined to keep the freedom that is in the gospel for everyone and I am determined to preach the

cross and I am not going to allow the cross to be eliminated from my preaching if I did he said then there wouldn't be any offence that offence would have been abolished he says good to God that those who are troubling you would cut themselves off completely they tell you to cut yourself in circumcision but Paul says I wish they would cut themselves off completely from you so that they would have nothing to do with you anymore because brethren Galatians 5.13 you have been called to freedom Paul was a great believer in the liberty that is in the gospel liberty for what? liberty to obey all of God's commandments liberty to love as Jesus has loved us liberty from anxiety liberty from lust liberty from anger liberty from bitterness freedom from an unforgiving spirit freedom from irritability

and impatience and every type of evil that Adam's race has inherited through the devil's poison freedom freedom Paul was a great believer in that freedom and he longed that these Galatian Christians would live in that freedom but he said only don't turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another for when we proclaim freedom it is possible for the carnally minded to think that this

means now I can live as I like and that's exactly how many people have taken it so that they descend to a lower standard of life than people had even under the old covenant and when a Christian descends to a lower standard of life for example when a Christian commits adultery which is a lower standard of life than even under the law when a Christian tells a lie or signs a

false statement or gives a false return in order to get more money when a Christian steals maybe he steals pencils or rubbers from the office, small things or cheats on his income tax return and steals money from the government or cheats the customs or steals in some way like that there are dignified ways of stealing he descends to a lower level than people lived even under the old covenant for such people this verse applies they have turned their freedom into an opportunity for the flesh and that is why these people resist the preaching of the cross, of death to self and of victory over sin they resist the preaching of the grace of God because they want to indulge their life and they want to keep on sinning brethren do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh but through

love serve one another through love serve one another again he speaks of what he spoke earlier in verse 6 that the real grace of God which brings freedom produces within us the love of God which enables us to serve others and to be their servant here is the mark of whether we have really come under grace whether we have really been gripped by God's love that makes us servants of others Paul Paul says in verse 14 the whole law is fulfilled in one word in the statement you shall love your neighbor as yourself Paul believes in the fulfilling of the law in being free from the law he speaks about being free from the law and he also speaks about fulfilling the law in verse 14 for it is through fulfilling the law that we are free from the law when I fulfill the law then I am free from it for

example if I am a thief and I have stolen something then I am afraid of the policeman I am afraid of the agents of the law because I am not free from them but if the very desire for stealing has been taken away from my heart then I do not fear the policeman or the agent of the law anymore I am free from them because it has been fulfilled in my heart and that is how fulfilling the law frees me from the law and the law is fulfilled in this one word you shall love your neighbor as yourself and love is the fulfillment of the law and this love we are told in Romans 5.5 is poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit but if you bite and devour one another Galatians 5.15 take care lest you not be consumed by one another if you Galatians spend your time gossiping and backbiting and fighting with

one another and in strife and controversy and biting and devouring one another in your anger and in your lust grabbing and wanting what others have and covetousness then you will be consumed you will be consumed and the other will be consumed both will be consumed whenever there is strife in an assembly you know that that assembly is under law it hasn't come under grace whenever there is strife among believers you know that those believers are under law they are not under grace Paul says come under grace be free from law receive the preaching of the cross and you will be free you will be really free so that you can obey God's commandments and fulfill the law of love towards one another and then you can glorify God in your life

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