

Galatians 4 -- I am a child of the promise, now.

4 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. This goal: “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female” is an incredibly audacious goal. Equal rights for women has yet to be achieved worldwide, and this is 2,000 years after Paul stated this goal. Paul was in the middle East, if you make this suggestion today you could get thrown into prison. Likewise with “neither slave nor free”. According to the Bible a “slave” is equated to an employee, whereas “free” refers to the owner of the business. Likewise with the “neither Jew nor Gentile”. Some people think the US is terrible with our racial biases. One person from Australia ridicules the US for this on a Christian forum I frequent. So, I checked. Australia has less than 0.1% of their population is black, and 0.4% of their population is hispanic. The US is the only country on this planet that is legitimately struggling with having a country in which there is “no Jew nor Gentile, no slave nor free, no Greeks or Scythians, etc” Paul knows his goal is audacious, that is why it is a goal. If you look at human history over the last 2,000 years you will see very little change in social justice in the first 1900 years and then a dramatic change after the industrial revolution. These last few revolutions (industrial, technological, and internet) have had a huge impact on society. We are now at the very beginning of the Artificial Intelligence revolution. When you are on the internet using some of these tools there truly is no “slave or free, no Jew nor Gentile, no male or female”.

2 The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. We are the heir, we are children of God destined to rule and reign with Jesus Christ. We were

subject to "guardians and trustees" for four thousand years. That is the function of the law. The law appointed priests according to Aaron and also a levitical priesthood. We were in slavery under these principals. Do not equate Paul's use of "slavery" to the Southern States in the US, rather equate it to the Old Testament definition (an adult has entered into a contract to sell his labor). If you are an employee of someone else and are told by them what to do and what not to do, then you are a slave. **4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.** This term adoption does not refer to what many think of as adoption, where a couple raises a child that is not theirs by birth as their own child. This term refers to the owner of a great business, like John Rockefeller. His son, John Jr., was his son from birth, but he doesn't take over the company until he is ready. When he becomes the CEO of the company that is what "adoption of sonship" means. You could have several sons, but one may not be suitable to run the company and never does receive the "adoption of sonship". In Genesis Reuben was the oldest son of Jacob, but he was disqualified and did not receive the "adoption of sonship". Paul has set forth an audacious goal in chapter 3 and now he is laying out the short concrete steps we need to take to receive the adoption of sonship. Jesus, is our forerunner. He was born under law just like us, He was born of a woman, He was born into a poor, weak situation where He was not the "ruler" but was no different than a slave. If you want to get out of slavery you need to be redeemed, and this is what Jesus came to do. **6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."** **7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.** This was a striking difference between Jesus and all the other leaders of the Jews. Jesus called

God His Father. When Jesus began His ministry God testified of Him "this is my beloved Son, hear Him". It is not enough to search the scriptures, we need to press on to the "hearing of faith", that is how we receive the Spirit. If you do, you will receive the Spirit of His Son which cries out "Abba Father". These are concrete steps. Ultimately being a Jew or Gentile will be trivial compared to being a son of God, calling Abba, Father. We will all be one because we all have the same God and Father. It won't matter, slave or free, neither will it matter male or female. What will matter is that God is our Father. We are all in the same family. God gave Israel the land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that was the inheritance in the Old Covenant. Keeping the law was not why God gave them the land, the law was given so they would know how to walk in the land before God. In the same way the Old Covenant has been given to us so that we know how to walk in faith. Paul is demonstrating in the book of Galatians how he uses the Old Testament as a map to walk in faith in this good land.

8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? 10 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

It isn't just circumcision. It is now observing special days. I hope this is very difficult to understand since in another place Paul says that some regard one day above another and to others every day is the same, and indicates these are minor differences. So what he is saying here is not exactly the same.

Romans 14:5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.

6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give

thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. **7** For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. **8** If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.**9** For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. In Romans Paul is saying that each person must be fully convinced in their mind that they are doing what they do unto the Lord. There is no requirement that we all must have the same opinion on what to eat and how to celebrate the Lord's day. So in Romans Paul is talking about each one of us being a servant to the Lord and if we stand or fall it is up to the Lord. Galatians is different. Here the church is observing special days, months and years. For example, the Seventh day adventists teach that you have to keep the Sabbath, and that Saturday is the Sabbath, so you must keep the Old Testament laws concerning the Sabbath on Saturday.

Christmas and Easter would be special days. Lent is a period of forty days that the Catholics observe. What happens when you subscribe to the teaching that you must keep the Sabbath? You become enslaved by those weak and beggarly forces. What happens when you keep "Christmas"? Do you buy a tree? Do you get all your Christmas gifts? You are becoming enslaved to those weak and beggarly forces that have "commercialized Christmas". If you celebrate the Lord's birth that is wonderful, but you do know that He was not born in December. You also know that the wise men giving gifts to the Lord in the manger was to pay for Him to flee to Egypt and in no way can be compared to buying your son a PlayStation. If we celebrated the Lord's birth in the Spring time by giving to the poor and homeless I could see that as being aligned to pure religion. But the way in which Christmas is celebrated is simply being enslaved by these weak and miserable forces. They are weak because there is no Biblical basis at all to celebrate Christmas, they are miserable because instead of caring for

widows and orphans they are concerned with making merchandise of you. You are being enslaved by the worldly economy. The same thing is true of Lent. Mardi Gra is a festival in New Orleans to mark the end of Lent. There is no resemblance to pure religion, rather it reeks of this evil age. These are not concrete steps towards the church being the Kingdom on Earth. **12 I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. 13 As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you,¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn.** Can you imagine the loss to the church, to human history, if they had treated Paul with scorn and contempt? He had an illness, he had his weaknesses, but he also was a gifted member that "completed the word of God". This is contrary to the whole "survival of the fittest" psychology. Celebrating Christmas, Easter, Lent, and Mardi Gra are the same as treating Paul with scorn and contempt. **Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.** Isn't this what we are taught? If the church is the Body of Christ, aren't the members of the Body "Christ Jesus Himself"? Who really laid hands on Paul so he could receive his sight, was it Ananias, or was it Jesus Christ? When we look at the members we can see weaknesses, shortcomings, and issues, or we can see messengers of God, even Christ Jesus Himself. When you give the least of these members a glass of water in the Lord's name you are giving it to the Lord. **15 Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. 16 Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?** This is the light switch. I suspect that the reason they viewed Paul as an angel of God is because he told them the truth and yet now when he tells them the truth about their keeping these special days they treat him like an enemy. What happened? **17 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 have zeal for them. If I am going to make merchandise of you, I must alienate you from Paul. For example, Witness Lee's ministry put a lot of effort into alienating the members from the rest of Christians. For example, Witness Lee taught that there had not been any books published by Christians with any spiritual value in the last fifty years. The leaders taught that if you take the Lord's table with any other Christian group other than them you will be drinking and eating judgement to yourself because all these other Christian groups are meeting in a divisive way. Witness Lee taught that all denominations were divisions, abominations in the sight of God. Only he had the "vision of the age" and all the other groups were "degraded Christianity". Members were taught they were the "recovery", those that had been called out to rebuild the temple, whereas all the other Christians had been carried off to Babylon. They were also taught that the only way we could help people in this age was to build up his ministry. That is how they justified not giving to the poor. In the same way people are told the best thing for the economy is to buy stuff for Christmas. These holidays are all about making merchandise of you and have nothing to do with pure religion. **18 It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you.** The members of Witness Lee's group were zealous, at least in the 70s and 80s. That was not their error, but sadly too many of them were zealous to build Witness Lee's ministry to the exclusion of all else. The US also has a history of being zealous. Some were zealous for "liberty for all", that was a good purpose, but what are we zealous for now? **19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,** Yes, it is true, you can be a child of God and yet be involved in this error. The civil rights movement has been episodes where again, and again we are in the "pains of childbirth". The

Civil war, separate but equal, dealing with Jim Crow laws, equal rights amendment for women, etc. **20 how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!** This is a puzzle. Think of all the puzzle pieces that have had to be put into place to get to where we are today from the days of Paul. Why would they want to be under the law? It is easier than walking by faith. One thing that Witness Lee's sect did was require members to share testimonies after each message. That is a hard thing, it requires you to experience Christ in your daily life. But Ed Marks discovered an easier way, just quote Witness Lee. Regardless of what the message was he could quote Witness Lee. It is easier. He taught the members to use Witness Lee's footnotes, that was super easy, all you had to do was buy his Bible version. This is how he advanced in that sect, he sold Witness Lee's bibles. Is that what you think the gospel is? Is that what it means to be "rescued from this evil age"? **21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.** Who do you want to be, Isaac or Ishmael? One was born as the result of Abraham trying to help God fulfill the promise he had been given with his flesh, whereas the other was born according to God's promise. The promise may seem incredible, impossible, something only God can fulfill, but that is the point of faith. That is the point of the hearing of faith. That is what makes the hearing of faith so difficult, you have to trust God to do the impossible. It is so much easier to just trust your flesh, but what is the result? Paul is asking us, "is that who you want to be"? Do you really want to be Ishmael, the son of the slave woman, in this story? Isn't it ironic that those who thought they wanted to be under the law didn't even know what

the law said? **24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.** When you get married you enter into a covenant. The marriage vows are a covenant. So it is not a big leap for Paul to say these two women represent two different covenants. God says that when a man is joined to a woman the two become one flesh. If you are joined to Hagar you become one flesh with Hagar. If you buy into Ed Marks approach to being a Christian you become one flesh with that. One covenant bears children who are to be slaves, they are told what to do. You don't even own your testimony. This is what the law is, it tells you what to do. **25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.** "Corresponds", "correlates", analogous to, these terms all indicate there is a pattern. Math and science are all about spotting patterns. If I can spot a pattern that I can apply I might be able to interpolate and extrapolate, glean more information about a situation than I personally measured and predict the future based on the past events. I am not personally familiar with Jerusalem at the time of Paul or even Mount Sinai in Arabia. However, in my experience with Witness Lee's sect I can definitely see how we were in slavery. We were told what to do, what to read, what not to read, how to spend our time, and what to say. To me now this was very clearly a slave mentality. I came into this group in Houston the same year as Ed Marks. My prayer since the day I had first prayed to the Lord a few years earlier was to be able to read the Bible. I had a vision that all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom were hidden in this word. I wanted to be able to find them. Watchman Nee's ministry helped me to do that, but Witness Lee's ministry didn't, so I focused on reading Watchman Nee's books. But Ed Marks' goal was different. He wanted to major in "Witness Lee". When he spoke he would quote from Witness Lee's ministry

and he became very adept at this. He could pull a quote from Witness Lee on any verse in the Bible. I could never understand that. Instead of getting God's word for himself he was allowing Witness Lee to do it for him. As a result he advanced in the group and became a leading elder nationwide. But he is in slavery. If you ask him a question that Witness Lee has never answered he has nothing to say. Once Witness Lee died these "leading ones" began giving messages which were simply rehashed Witness Lee messages. They were like the Japanese soldiers still fighting the war twenty years after Japan had surrendered. But here Paul is answering a question no Rabbi ever answered, because if they had they would have realized they were slaves and that they were not in the New Covenant. **26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: "Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."** Paul used the story of Abraham to correlate with his own experience and then he found a word in the prophet Isaiah to help connect the dots. This is like an artist painting a masterpiece. The focus of this painting is that Jesus Christ was portrayed crucified in great detail. The Old Testament types and figures help bring out this picture, but this isn't where it began. His focus is that the gospel is that Jesus Christ's death rescues us from this evil age. That correlates quite well with the Old Testament, and he can now find wonderful illustrations like Balaam beating his donkey to help illustrate this slavery. Only with so many pieces of the puzzle in place does he expand on God's covenant with Abraham to also include the relationship with Hagar and then compare the two geographic locations of Jerusalem and Mount Sinai. This is a masterful exposition of the Bible, the gospel, and the Old and New Testaments. Think about it, by embracing Witness Lee's ministry and selling his bibles Ed had "a husband". By comparison I was

barren. But today I shout for joy because the Lord has answered my prayer. I can read the Bible. If I have a question about Black Lives Matter, or the Mortgage Crisis, of the Pandemic, I can read the Bible and see what God says. **28 Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.** And yet wonderful exposition of the Bible was not the point. Too many preachers of the word stop with verse 28. The point is that spotting these patterns helps Paul to figure out this puzzle, to see what is happening to us now, today. Do those in the BLM realize that what is happening now is that those who are born according to the flesh are persecuting those who are born according to the promise? I suspect that some feel they need to help God fulfill these promises with their flesh. They are choosing to act, not like owners, not like the heirs, but rather like employees. The people who "told them what to do" didn't have their best interests at heart so they are rebelling. But instead of realizing the issue is the slave mentality of wanting someone else to tell you what to do, they think the solution is to just change one tyrant for another. **30 But what does 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."** If you convince the world that you are being abused by those who are telling you what to do there is no way we will agree to switch one abusive tyrant for another. We rejected King George, we weren't about to replace him with another King George. That decision by Washington is one of the main reasons he is held in such high esteem. Where in history did we see someone willing to pay such a great price that we could be free? **31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.** That is what it is to be born again and receive Jesus Christ by faith. The free woman is the woman who is walking by faith. Now imagine

what would have happened if Joseph had scorned Mary and treated her with contempt. She is poor, does not seem to have any inheritance, according to the flesh it seems easy to do. Think of the blessing that would have been lost to Joseph and all of his descendants. Did Joseph walk according to the hearing of faith or the works of the law? Jesus Christ cannot be clearly portrayed as crucified unless He is also clearly portrayed as incarnated as a man. His genealogy clearly portrays that all those responsible for ultimately bringing Jesus to us were walking by faith, not by the works of the law. All of this is our mental map of what it means to be a child of God with Jesus as our big brother. I use the Old Testament like a map to see where I am and where I want to go, it helps me in this way. However, it is my servant, I am not its servant. I am a child of God, an heir, and these things belong to me, not me to them.