

THROUGH THE BIBLE

GALATIANS 3-4

I try to exercise regularly. Most often I run. But on occasion I opt for one of the biking classes at the gym.

These classes are a weird experience. You jump on an exercise bike and watch the screens in front of you.

They create the illusion you're rolling along a rocky coastline, or through a New England countryside.

When you go uphill, you shift into high gear and create resistance. It's called "pushing." When you go downhill you shift into a low gear to reduce resistance. It's called "spinning." "Pushing" works the legs. "Spinning" keeps up the cardio. It's a good work-out.

But here's what I've learned about riding a bike... *It's all about shifting gears! And so is the Christian life...*

Under the Law you perform in high gear - there's pressure - you're "pushing" - working to be righteous.

But a Christian shifts into the grace gear. The Christian life is "spinning." The pressure to push is off.

Jesus pushed up the hill called Calvary. He *paid the price* and *did the work*. Now we

leave Calvary going downhill. The cross provides its own momentum.

Now it's all cardio - keeping our heart toward Him. Trusting Jesus!... Both Law and Grace take effort - but of a different sort - **Law is a grind. Grace is a breeze.**

And the key to success is shifting gears - **from Law to Grace - from works to faith - from the flesh to the Spirit...** That's what Paul discusses in Galatians 3-4...

We begin on an ominous note, 3:1, **"O foolish Galatians!"** The Greek word translated **"foolish"** means, **"empty headed"** - literally, *air-head*. According to Paul the Galatians were acting like *spiritual space cadets*.

Here're a few other translations of verse 1 - the NEB, **"You stupid Galatians."** The AV puts it, **"O you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians."** *The Amplified always lives up to its name.*

My favorite rendering is the Philips translation, **"You dear idiots..."** This was not *naivety*, but *stupidity*.

Paul continues, **"Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"**

This was not a situation where the Galatians had been improperly taught. The sufficiency of the cross was **"clearly portrayed."** Faith in Jesus was all they needed to be right with God - *thus, why so confused?*

Paul asks, **"who has bewitched you?"** *It's as if the legalist had come in and cast some kind of spell...*

Realize legalism is seductive. It strikes a chord in our fallen thinking. Everything

around us says it's our performance that matters. We hear it from parents, and teachers, and coaches, and bosses. "*Just do it*" is the Nike slogan - *which also is the way of the world...*

The whole notion that we can do something to earn God's favor plays on our pride. It "*bewitches*" us.

Paul's message on the other hand was liberating. It wasn't "*Just do it*" - it's "*The work is done, and you can't add to it.*" The Gospel of grace humbles us. You can't *buy or barter* for a free gift - only *believe!*

In verse 2, he asks, "*This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" The Holy Spirit is given to *believers*, not *achievers*. By faith we receive from God.

"*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" The Galatians got off to such a good start. By grace through faith the Spirit was living God's life in them.

Joy and victory flowed not because of elbow grease, and extra effort - something supernatural had occurred!

Yet they failed to shift gears. Rather than spinning in faith they geared back under Law and started pushing.

Some people want to be a muscle rather than a vessel. A *muscle* flexes and forces. It's my strength on display. But a *vessel* occupied by the Holy Spirit is all about God's power. This is *the flesh* versus *the Spirit*.

Realize the flesh is *me* - not just the evil in me - but *my* good, *my* righteousness, *my*

energy, *my* ingenuity.

After we're saved we should say *goodbye* to *my...* And rely on the Spirit to grow us and make us fruitful!

Under the Law we “conform.” We fit the mold and followed the formula. But under grace, the Holy Spirit “transforms.” The Spirit changes us from the inside out.

From the Law to Calvary it's an uphill ride. It's a lot of pushing. But after Calvary it's downhill. The power of what Jesus achieved causes us to pick up steam. It's no longer *grinding*, but *coasting*. The Spirit empowers.

But to take advantage of the change in terrain you've got to shift gears. In business, sports, education - the emphasis is on performance - *grit and grades, and very little grace*. But that's not the way we function as Christians. It's now *all about faith and grace and Spirit*.

Paul's argument is if you begin in the Spirit, don't try to progress in the flesh. **Keep it in the grace gear!**

Paul asks another question in verse 4, “**Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?**” When the Galatians received the grace of God they fell under immediate attack by law-loving Jews.

These new believers paid a price to embrace God's grace. Now, if they capitulate to the pressure and revert back - their initial sacrifices will be wasted.

Verse 5, “**Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -**” When Paul

healed the lame man in Lystra, he didn't chalk it up to his outstanding prayer life or impeccable lifestyle.

Not at all. He credited the miracle to God's grace.

Miracles and healing from God aren't doled out on the basis of merit. They don't "*go to the goodest.*"

When God works a miracle He does it by grace. *If people play any part at all it's due to their faith.* Mark Twain said it best, "*Heaven goes by favor. It it went by merit, you would stay out, and your dog would go in.*"

Did you hear about Abraham wanting to upgrade his computer? Isaac said, "*Pop, I hate to burst your bubble, but you can't run the new operating system on your old hard drive. You don't have enough memory.*"

But Abraham, a great man of faith, was unfazed. He replied calmly, "*Don't worry, God will provide the RAM.*"

When I recall Abraham I'm tempted to think, "*In a day of breakthrough technology, and computer-chip wizardry, what could we possibly learn from a man who lived 4000 years ago?*" Well, the answer is "*plenty!*"

Though the world has changed and knowledge has increased - God stays the same! And the terms by which man relates to God are the same today as they were in the days of Abraham! *Paul is about to prove it!*

Chapter 3:6 quotes Genesis 15:6, "*Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."* Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." Long before God delivered the Law to Moses - with all its rules

and rituals - 17 years before Abraham was circumcised - God declared Abraham "*right in His sight*" - and why?

Because he "*believed*" in God's promise of salvation!

This means what God did in forgiving the Galatians wasn't new. Salvation had always been by faith!

Verse 8, "*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*" The terms of God's covenant with Abraham are the same terms by which He saves today. Jews and Gentiles are saved *by faith*.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*" Paul points out the Law was not *a spiritual smorgasbord, a Bible buffet*.

You can't just pick and choose the Laws that are convenient, and you want to keep. Live by any part of the Law, then you have to keep the whole enchilada.

"But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "*the just shall live by faith.*" If it were possible to live up to the Law, why did Habakkuk prescribe a different remedy. He quotes Habakkuk 2:4.

This verse is actually quoted three times in the NT, and each time the emphasis is on a different word.

In Romans 1:17 the focus is on "just" - we're made *just* or right with God, by faith... In Hebrews 10:38 the stress is on "faith" - we've got to continue in our faith...

But here in Galatians the thrust is on "*live.*" We're not just *saved by faith*, we also *live by faith*. We stop trying to earn God's favor, and learn to rest in His promises.

Verse 12, "Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them." In other words, it's either law or faith - its toil or trust. It's either or!

On a bike you can't *push* and *spin* simultaneously.

You're in one gear at a time. And it's true in relating to God. You either *trust in your work* or you *trust in His*.

Verse 13 sums up Paul's case for grace. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), This is from Deuteronomy 21:23.

According to the Law the worse disgrace was to die on a tree. On a dead tree at Calvary - the cross - Jesus atoned for that *disgrace* to bring *God's grace* to us.

And in doing so He insured, "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." We receive the blessings of Abraham - membership in God's family - not *by Law*, but *by faith*.

Even the blessings of the Spirit are received by faith.

The rest of chapter 3 is a commentary on God's covenant with Abraham. I'm sure you've heard the phrase, "*cut a deal*," but I bet you don't know its origin?

In ancient times when covenants were sealed animals were sacrificed, and cut in cross-sections.

The pieces were aligned to form a corridor.

Both parties in the contract walked together through the animal parts – committing to their end of the deal.

After God promised to bless him, Abraham prepared to finalize the covenant. He waited all day for God to come, walk through the animal parts, and ratify the deal. Abraham almost dozed off, when suddenly God appeared as a burning torch and a smoking oven.

God walked through the carcasses by Himself.

This wasn't a tag-team effort, or a joint-venture. This wasn't *God's part* and *Abraham's part*. God walked down the corridor by Himself. The work was God's, and His alone. All Abraham did was wake up and believe.

And 4000 years later this is still the way God relates to people. Jesus has accomplished all the work for us.

Our part is to look on and believe. It's simply faith!

Paul begins to draw lessons from the Abrahamic Covenant in verse 15, "**Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.**"

In essence, if people take their promises seriously, how much more will God be faithful to His covenant?

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.”

It’s interesting, Paul saw huge theological meaning in an “S.” The covenant God made with Abraham and his family wasn’t to his **seeds** (plural) - but **seed** (singular).

The ultimate heir of the covenant wasn’t the nation that would come from Abraham’s loins, but a single descendent, Jesus. The Jews thought they were God’s salvation to the world. It wasn’t *the Jews* - it was *A Jew*.

Realize, the world's philosophy is *pluralism*, but God is into *singular-ism*. Our hope of salvation is singular. It’s found in one person. The only way is Jesus!

“And this I say, that the law, which was 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.” The faith-grace covenant God made with Abraham was firmly entrenched before the Law came along. The Mosaic Law was never intended to take the place of grace - not even for a brief season.

“For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.” Again law and grace, works and faith are mutually exclusive. You can’t ride in the same gear at the same time... *You wonder why God instituted the Law?*

Paul anticipates that question in verse 19, “What purpose then does the law serve?”

And here's his answer, "It was added because of transgressions..."

The Law exposed our sin and our need for a Savior, but it was never intended to make us right with God.

In fact, the Law was needed only "till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made..." The Law pointed us to the Savior, but once Jesus came, the Law was no longer necessary. It became obsolete.

Recently, I ran across a collection of laws that are still on the legal dockets, yet the passing of time and the changing of culture have made the laws obsolete.

Here's a sampling: "In San Jose, California sleeping in your neighbor's outhouse without permission is a violation of the Law... It's also illegal to eat peanuts in church in Massachusetts... Here in Atlanta, smelly persons are not allowed on streetcars... And singing out of tune in North Carolina is prohibited..." Perhaps the NC statute is the only one that still has any validity.

My point though is it's possible to have laws on the books that have become irrelevant and unnecessary.

This is what Paul is saying about the Law of Moses.

After the work of Jesus the Law became obsolete. The commandments are still on the books, but when you embrace the Savior they're no longer necessary.

Verse 19 makes another point about the Jewish Law, "And it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." In other words, the Law was second-hand. It came from God to Moses by angelic go-betweens.

In contrast, verse 20, “Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one.” The Law leaned on mediators, but recall the covenant with Abraham!

When God walked through the animal parts He did so by Himself. There were no mediators, no go-betweens. God's promise - grace and faith - is always firsthand. It puts us in personal touch with God.

Grace and faith are better than Law and works!

Verse 21, “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!” The Law did serve a purpose - but making us right with God was not its objective.

“For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.” *And Jesus would've never had to suffer and die.*

“But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” The Law exposed our sin - and our inability to keep it proved our need for a Savior.

“But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.” The Law also kept our noses clean. It taught us right from wrong, and kept us out of trouble - until Jesus came to save us and give us a new heart.

“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The Law was a tutor. It schooled us on sin, and our need for salvation.

“But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” The Law was like a nanny to help raise God's kids. But when a kid comes of age, you fire the nanny.

The spiritual mature - true believers - no longer need to be told to do what's right - it's their utmost desire.

Now that we know Jesus our hearts have changed. I no longer **have** to obey God - now I **want** to obey Him, and **get** to obey God. A Christian's "*want to's*" change.

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The Savior's nature beats in my breast as loudly as my own heart. I'm a miracle of God's grace and Spirit - how can I add to what He's already done? We need to rely on Jesus' finished work!

Which leads to a truth, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."**

Since salvation is no longer based on our achievements, the categories that use to define us are gone - we're all one in Christ. All that distinguishes us now is whether we're *in Christ* or *apart from Christ*.

Verse 29, **"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

Membership in Abraham's family doesn't just boil down to a Jewish pedigree. You can leap-frog that requirement by embracing the heir of Abraham, Jesus.

God accepts us by faith, through grace!

The first seven verses of Chapter 4 continue this analogy of the Law as a nanny, or tutor. In the Roman world, before a child came of age, he was under the care of a nanny - sort of a male Mary Poppins.

The son was heir to the family fortune, but in his younger years he was treated like a hired-hand. Until he developed some maturity he couldn't be trusted.

He had to *learn the ropes* before he *got the reins*.

This is the background leading into Galatians 4...

“Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” A wise dad expects a son to work in the family business before he takes it over.

Every *employer* should first be an *employee*. Employees are **graded** on results, **groomed** by rituals, **guided** by regulations. And **grounded** from ruling.

This is good training. For after the son becomes the owner nobody's there to *grade*, and *groom*, and *guide*, and *ground*. He functions off his wisdom and instinct.

All this applies to life under the Law. The Law trained us until we came to Christ. But now the Law gets written on our hearts. We love and walk in the Spirit.

Paul says in verse 3, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” The Law was a nanny religion. It was the ABCs of morality and ethics. The word “*elements*” mean *basics*. Legalism covered a version of right and wrong.

Buy here's Paul's point... **legalism is for babies!**

The Law was sucking on a pacifier. Preset standards are like playpens. Establishing boundaries are easier than walking by faith and love... *Religious formulas* are just *formula* compared to the meat of God's Word...

The false teachers who told these believers that keeping the Law was the path to true enlightenment were deceivers. Performance-based religion is kid's stuff - it's "look at me" religion. It's infantile and juvenile. Only through grace and faith do we grow up spiritually.

For a time God kept mankind under the Law...

Verse 4, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Notice, in "*the fullness of time...*" when history reached a crescendo. When God's plan crested. At that precise moment "*God sent forth His Son...*"

The *Roman peace* and *Jewish prophecies* and *God's sovereignty* all combined to make it just the right time.

And Jesus was born under the Law. He was required to meet its standards, and live up to its demands.

Once He fulfilled its righteousness and gained His freedom, He earned the position to free the rest of us. Jesus is now in the business of adopting lost sinners.

I think it's wonderful that every adopted child has one great blessing - come what may, they always know they're wanted. *If you were adopted you were wanted.*

An adopted child is no accident! This means that in adopting you Jesus loves you - and He wants you.

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” God’s adoptions are legal. He “redeems” us and satisfies our debts. He takes legal custody of us.

But His adoptions are not just on paper. There’s more to a divine adoption. He puts His Spirit in us. The instinctive cry of our heart becomes “Abba or Daddy.”

It creates the *natural intimacy* you’d expect between a Father and a child. It’s a *super-natural intimacy*.

Verse 7, “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

The Law and Legalism is for slaves, and hired-hands, and hourly workers, but in Christ we're heirs.

As sons we’re co-owners in the family business.

Wait to you reach heaven. It’ll blow your mind to see a shingle over the doorway that reads, “God and sons.”

It reminds me of a cartoon. An angel is taking some new arrivals on a tour of heaven. There’s a banner overhead than reads, “Welcome Stockholders.”

As God's kids, we’re heirs of all His blessings!

And this is why in Christ, rules are no longer the issue. Jesus knows you’re on His team. As a co-owner it’s to your advantage to work with Him, not against Him. A son has the same nature and incentives as dad.

Thus, He doesn't need to keep you under the Law.

It's said, "Religion (keeping the Law) is like a wooden leg. There is neither life nor warmth in it. And although it helps a person to hobble along, it never becomes a part of them. It has to be strapped on every morning!"

Keeping the Law is chore after chore, more after more. The Law is a *load*, whereas, Christianity is a *lift*. Its no longer up to me. In Christ, I now have a partner!

In Christ, we're forgiven, and redeemed, and adopted, and made co-heirs. The Spirit puts us on intimate terms with God. In Christ we rise to a greater level of maturity than we could achieve under the Law.

For all eternity - it's going to be "God and sons."

Verse 8, "But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?" *Here's a betrayal in Galatia.*

Some of the Galatians were previously pagans, others were Jews. Both religions chained them to impossible codes and laborious ceremonies. The grace of God was a breath of fresh air - a cup of ice-water on a hot summer day. Why return to the "*beggarlies?*"

After you've been to the mountain top of grace and felt the rarified air, why sink back into the legalistic fog?

Verse 10, "You observe days and months and seasons and years." They thought a holy God could be satisfied by filling up a calendar with appointments.

They set aside all kinds of fasts and feasts and holy days as if God is pleased with festivals - not faith.

Paul writes, **“I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”** If they continue down this path of legalism all they’ve received so far will be negated.

Legalism is not a friend of righteousness!

Legalism is not benign. Most pastors are quick to rebuke the guy who carries his freedom too far. But the legalist is tolerated. *“He may be a little overzealous, but he's still on our side.”* That's a fatal miscalculation.

I’ve heard it put, **“The more religious a man becomes the further from God he gets.”** Its true! Paul worries the legalism of the Galatians will unravel everything grace had weaved. His work among them will be **“in vain.”**

Verse 12, **“Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all.”**

Paul laid aside the Jewish Legalism with which he was so familiar, and lived like a Gentile Christian.

He worshipped on Sundays, mowed his grass on the Sabbath, ate bacon at the Men’s Prayer Meeting... And he's asking the Galatians to now mimic his example.

In verse 13 Paul begins a new thought, **“You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first...”** When Paul and Barnabas landed in Pamphylia, on the Turkish coast, he didn’t stay long.

And this is surprising. Pamphylia is a scenic spot - a vacation area. It's called **“the**

Turkish Riviera.”

I’m sure he was tempted to stay, but something moved him upwards and inland. He left the tropical coast for the dryer mountains of Galatia. And what motivated him? He tells us it was a *“physical infirmity.”*

And he recalls how the Galatians received him, *“My trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.”* The Galatians held Paul in high esteem. They treated Paul as a messenger of God.

His illness in no way lessened their respect.

“What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.” Here’s how much they loved Paul. They would’ve plucked out their eyes and given them to the Apostle if it were possible.

Here we get a clue as to the nature of Paul’s illness - it was probably some sort of infectious eye disease.

Some folks believed Paul suffered something like a *perpetual pinkeye*. This may've been what he wrote about in 2 Corinthians 12 as his *“thorn in the flesh.”*

The warm, humid tropical climate caused a flare up of his condition, and caused him to move to the cooler, dryer mountains of Galatia... Paul is remembering their sacrificial loyalty and love for him. *But what happened?*

Someone had turned the Galatians against Paul.

He says in verse 16, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” He’s referring to the legalists - rabbinical sympathizers - the Judaizers.

“They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.” The false teachers *pampered* rather than *pastored*. Paul told the truth - they built a following. All the Judaizers wanted were more followers on Twitter.

“But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.” The Galatians stood up for God’s grace when Paul was around, but once he left town they dropped their guard.

He rebukes them. They need to be more consistent.

Paul reveals His intentions for them in verse 19, **My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you...** Notice Paul’s goal for the Galatians.

It wasn’t what they could do for him that matter.

He cared about them. Paul had a passion to do more for Christians than just plant the seed in their hearts.

He wanted to see every new believer reach maturity, and live out the character of Christ. His soul travailed, *he cramped with concern* to see all believers grow!

Verse 20 **“I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.”**

He cares about what he’s hearing from Galatia.

Don’t tell Paul that legalism isn’t lethal to faith!

“Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?” He’s about to use an OT story to teach a NT lesson. “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman (or Hagar), the other by a freewoman (that would be Sarah).

Sarah was the gal who bought bikinis with her social security check. She was the ageless knock-out.

But this arrangement turned into a severe case of sibling rivalry - spearheaded by the two mothers.

“But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise...” God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. At 65 Sarah must've seen it as a far-fetched promise. When nothing happened for 25 years, and God still repeated the promise... Sarah just laughed.

It was shortly thereafter that God got the last laugh!

Amazingly at the age of 90 years old Sarah had a son. She named him “Isaac” - which means “laughter.”

But that’s only half the story. In her darkest days of barrenness, Sarah grew weary of checking her temperature, counting days, rushing home from parties to do the deed because she might be ovulating...

The ancients had a short-cut around all this family planning. You could recruit a surrogate mom. Arrange a night - let the husband have his jollies - and the baby that resulted would go the wife who tolerated it all...

That's how Hagar gave birth to her son, Ishmael.

Here's how Paul tells the story... Sarah had a son "*through promise.*" Isaac was the miracle baby. He was God's work from start to finish - *like our salvation.*

Whereas, Ishmael "*was born according to the flesh.*"

Remember, "*flesh*" is me - my efforts, my ingenuity, my ability - *just like our efforts under the legalism.*

Here's where the plot thickens, verse 24, "*which things are symbolic.*" This tale of two sons has spiritual implications. Paul will use this story as an analogy...

"*For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children...*" Hagar represents the legal code given to Moses on Mount Sinai - which was later associated with another mountain - Mount Moriah, or the Temple Mount, in the heart of Jerusalem.

The whole system of relating to God that Paul opposed in Galatia - righteousness that depends on *Law, works, flesh* - is epitomized in Hagar and Ismael.

Yet to the contrary, Paul says, "*but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.*"

The "*Jerusalem above*" is heaven. This is where the power originated that opened Sarah's womb. It's also the source of our salvation. Heaven bestows favor freely - by grace, through faith, in the Spirit's power.

Which is exactly how we relate to God under the NC.

So Hagar and earthly Jerusalem represent the Law, while Sarah and the Jerusalem above represent grace.

Verse 27, "For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband." This is Isaiah 54:1.

It speaks of *two covenants as two women*.

It predicts that a covenant that starts out barren will produce many more children than the covenant that claims to be fertile. Which means in the end Jerusalem above (or the NC) will produce many more offspring for God than the Jerusalem below (which is the Law).

Grace will prove more fruitful than Law.

In verse 28 Paul explains his analogy, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now." Abraham's *foray in the flesh* resulted in *friction at home*. Hagar needled Sarah constantly.

Every time they climbed into the mini-van Hagar assaulted Sarah with a dig - or a slight against Isaac...

She had about all she could take...

Verse 30, "Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? (Paul quotes Genesis 21 and Sarah's ultimatum)

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be

heir with the son of the freewoman." These two women were going to be in conflict as long as they lived. Honey Hagar had to go!

And the same is true of these two ways of relating to God. You can't have both. They're not compatible. **Either it's grace or Law, faith or works, Spirit or flesh!**

Paul concludes, **"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free."** And we too have to choose. Either I'm a NC person who walks by faith. Or I'm wedded to the Law and I depend on me.

We all need to shift gears from Law to grace!