

A Practical Study of

GALATIANS: You Were Running Well

"Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free"

Study #9 – Galatians 4:21-5:1

UNTIL: "Whee! I Am Free" Became, "Boy! I Am in Bondage"

Key Verse: Galatians 5:1

For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

TEXT:

v. 21 Tell me, you who are desiring to be under law, are you not hearing the law?

v. 22 For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman.

v. 23 On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.

v. 24 Which class of things is allegorical. For these are two covenants, one from Mount Sinah giving birth to bondage, which is Hagar.

v. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinah in Arabia, and is corresponding to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children.

v. 26 But the Jerusalem which is above is free which is our mother.

v. 27 For it has been written; Rejoice barren woman who is not bringing forth (bearing children). Break forth and cry you who are not experiencing the pains of birth, because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who is having a husband.

v. 28 Now you, brethren (are) after the manner of Isaac. You (are) children of promise.

v. 29 But just as then, he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so also now.

v. 30 But what is the scripture saying? Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the free woman.

v. 31 Therefore, brethren we are not children of the maidservant but of the free woman.

5:v. 1 For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

INTRODUCTION:

God Loves Drunk People Too

A man and his wife were awakened at 3:00 am by a loud pounding on the door.

The man gets up and goes to the door where a drunken stranger, standing in the pouring rain, is asking for a push.

“Not a chance,” says the husband, “it is 3:00 in the morning!”

He slams the door and returns to bed.

“Who was that?” asked his wife.

“Just some drunk guy asking for a push,” he answers.

“Did you help him?” she asks.

“No, I did not, it’s 3 am in the morning and it’s bloody pouring rain out there!”

“Well, you have a short memory,” says his wife. “Can’t you remember about three months ago when we broke down, and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him, and you should be ashamed of yourself! God loves drunk people too you know.”

The man does as he is told, gets dressed, and goes out into the pounding rain.

He calls out into the dark, “Hello, are you still there?”

“Yes,” comes back the answer.

“Do you still need a push?” calls out the husband.

“Yes, please!” comes the reply from the dark.

“Where are you?” asks the husband.

“Over here on the swing,” replied the drunk.

(Received via email from Pat Burgess, December 17, 2010)

(Christ and the Cowboy by Kenneth Wyatt) Tulia, TX: Y-8 Publishing Co.
Copyright – Y-8 Publishing Co., 1998.

Thoughts
by Kenneth Wyatt

Above the town I pause in thought
About my friends that live down there.
And in my mind is a vision caught—
A list of gifts that I would share.

I'd give them peace and daily bread,
Feed their souls and bodies all.
When sorrow comes, I'd end its dread,
And dry their tears before they fall.

I'd give them faith in double measure,
Wrapped in joy and tied with fun.
I'd give gifts of earthly treasure,
And wisdom, too, for everyone.

And in my heart, on the hill this night,
Looking down on the needs of friends,
I want the gifts to be just right,
Not just wishes that someone sends.

My spirit soars as I look down there,
And a Voice speaks quiet to me,
"Thus would Heaven care to share,
'Now, *thy God looks down on thee!*'"

p. 92

(The Wild Wild West by Sam Davis) Lubbock, TX: Fiel Productions.
Copyright – Sam Davis Publications, 1997.

I got to thinking one day how the movie makers sometimes portray the American cowboy as a wild, gambling, drinking gunfighter. But I think as a whole the cowboy was probably a rather timid and bashful person like these two that are standing on the street corner in Abilene, Kansas. They have just delivered the herd to the rail pens for shipping and are getting ready to paint the town red. I call this poem the:

End of the Drive

Well, pardner, that trail drive
was really somethin' I'll always remember.
I'm shur glad we finally made it up here
even if it is almost September.

Texas to Kansas is an awful long way
but now that we finally made it up here.
Instead of standin' here on this corner
let's go across the street for a beer.

Hey, wait just a doggone minute
look down the street at them gals.
Boy they really somethin' to look at
makes me wanna stand up an' howl.

Hey, they're a comin' in our direction
this just might be our lucky day.
Now I didn't have no sister to learn me
so I don't really know what to say.

So I'm gonna let you do all the talkin'
you never seem to have no shortage of words.
Besides you said they ain't nothing' to it
that you could tell 'em thangs that ain't never heard.

So I'll just watch you do it
you can show me how it's all done.
And when we get 'em a hangin' on our arms
we're gonna have us some fun.

Well why didn't you say somethin' pardner?
 They walked so close we nearly touched.
 Oh, that sweet smellin' perfume theys a wearin'
 made you kinda get choked up.

Oh, and one was a little plump around the middle
 and you never did like yellor hair.
 And they weren't all that friendly you say,
 Besides all I could do was stand there and stare.

Well, anyway, here comes a bunch of the boys.
 They shore look like they're havin' a good time.
 And by the looks of that bottle of whiskey they got
 they're just about at the end of the line.

Well evenin' boys doin' some celebratin'?
 Look like ya'll are tryin' to paint the town red.
 Come mornin' you'll feel like you bucked off a bad bronc
 and landed on top of your head.

Oh, what a we been doin'?
 Why, we've drunk so much we can't hardly stand.
 And we just finished winnin' big at poker
 I ain't never seen such a lucky hand.

Now we're a headin' down the street there
 to Big Mable's hotel hideaway.
 To get ourselves a bath and a shave
 if you know what I'm tryin' to say.

So we'll see y'all at camp in the mornin'
 after we've had some fun and get through.
 Then we'll fill y'all in on the details then.
 Now don't y'all do nothin' that we wouldn't do.

Pardner' instead of that beer, why don't we go down yander
 to the general store and get us a big hunk of cheese
 and a sody pop and look at them boots that they got
 in the winder with that fancy stitchin' on top.

And I may just get me a big can of peaches
 and cut out the top with my knife.
 Then I'll eat 'em all down and drink up the juice.
 Now that's what I call the good life.

Then I may buy a new bonnet for my mamma
 just to take back for a souvenir
 just to remind her that I love her
 'cause she'll probably never will make it up here.

Then let's just go on back to camp
 and call it a night. What do you say?
 'Cause we'll be headed back home tomorrow
 and Texas is an awful long way.

(Fear Not: For I Am With You Always by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN:
 Thomas Nelson. Copyright– Max Lucado, 2009.

We expect Jesus to come in the form of peaceful hymns or Easter Sundays or quiet retreats. We expect to find him in morning devotionals, church suppers, and meditation. We never expect to see him in a bear market, pink slip, lawsuit, foreclosure, or war. We never expect to see him in a storm. But it is in storms that he does his finest work, for it is in storms that he has our keenest attention.

We cannot go where God is not. Look over your shoulder; that's God following you. Look into the storm; that's Christ coming toward you.

FEARLESS
 p. 35

(Embracing Brokenness: How God Refines Us Through Life's
Disappointments by Alan E. Nelson) Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.
 Copyright – Alan E. Nelson, 2002.

So what is the goal of brokenness? How do we embrace it? When Jesus began attracting more attention, someone asked John the Baptist whether he was concerned. John gave his inquisitor an answer that fits all of us. “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. . . . He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:27-30). That is the goal of brokenness—denying oneself, becoming less—so that Christ can become more. p. 31

Samuel Logan Brengle, a commissioner of the Salvation Army, was once introduced at an engagement as “the great Dr. Brengle.” That day, Brengle penned in his diary, “If I appear great in their eyes, the Lord is most graciously helping me to see how absolutely nothing I am without Him, and helping me to keep little in my eyes. He does use me. But I am so concerned that He uses me and that it is not of me the work is done. The axe cannot boast of the trees it has cut down. It could do nothing but for the woodsman. The moment he throws it aside, it becomes only old iron. O that I may never lose sight of this.”²

2. Quoted in Clarence Hall, *Portrait of a Prophet* (1933), p. 175.
 p. 31

(A Lifetime of Wisdom: Embracing the Way God Heals You by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright—Joni Eareckson Tada, 2009.

The fact is, you acquire wisdom at the cost of long years. You gain wisdom at the price of obedience and perseverance. You buy wisdom with the currency of suffering in Christ.

If all these things are true—and I believe they are—then what I have endured in my wheelchair for over forty years was time well spent. And (I'm taking a deep breath here) *all* of the indignities, heartbreaking limitations, crushed hopes, days of sorrow, excruciating pain, and the loss of so many simple joys of life rising out of my injury and paralysis have been worthwhile.

I can say to God, "*Thank You for this chair.*"

Do I say that glibly? Do I make light of the suffering? Do I brush past the months of depression, frustration, disappointment, and sadness? If you take my word for anything, you must believe me that I do not. The apostle Paul could look back on his extreme hardships and call them "light and momentary troubles," and maybe one day I will look back and say the same thing.

But not yet. (More about that later.)

To this day my condition is difficult to bear—and perhaps even more so as my body bends and breaks under the weight of four decades of paralysis.
pp. 16-17

(Welcome To The Family by Stephen Brown). Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990.

Someone has said that discouragement is the devil's greatest tool. I haven't discussed it with him, but it wouldn't surprise me if it were true.
p. 65

(Welcome To The Family by Stephen Brown). Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990.

I do, however, believe in a devil because I have seen him. I have seen him walking down the streets of a city slum; I have watched him do his work with a needle dripping heroin; I have seen him in a bottle clutched in the hand of a drunk who had fallen asleep on a bench on Boston Common. I have read his handwriting in a suicide note. I have seen him smiling as the crowds line up to watch an “adult” movie. I have seen the work of Satan in a crushed automobile, an empty stomach, and a dead soldier. I have seen Satan in the words of a man who said he didn’t need God, and in the sneer of a woman who was asked if she knew Christ. I have seen Satan through the door of an abortion clinic. I have seen him in the hurt and emptiness and frustration of humanity. Sometimes I see him in my doubts and my anger and my fear.
pp. 97-98

Luke 22:31-32 (NASB)

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

2 Timothy 2:26 (NASB)

and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Satan seems to have one major program and that is to keep man enslaved or in bondage so that he never comes to the truth and is set free.

This program does not seem to change after one becomes a Christian other than, now, instead of being in bondage to sin, it is being in bondage to performance or the law.

Stop and think of some of the tools that Satan uses to accomplish his objective of taking away our freedom and leading us into bondage. You can see it in:

SMOKING,

DRUGS,

ALCOHOL, and

SEX.

Each of these things has a **COMMON DENOMINATOR.** They are:

TOOLS FOR ENSLAVEMENT.

How subtle of Satan to use the law as a tool to keep the believer in bondage and on a performance basis.

In Galatians 1 and 2 the Apostle Paul has been dealing with **PERSONAL ISSUES**, making a defense for his position in the faith and for his message and for his mission to the churches of Galatia.

In Galatians 3 and 4 we have seen him deal with the **DOCTRINAL ISSUES.** This particular study brings us to the conclusion of the doctrinal or teaching section.

In Galatians 5 and 6 we will be dealing with the **PRACTICAL OUTWORKING** of what he has had to say in Galatians 3 and 4.

John 8:32 (NASB)

and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 14:6 (NASB)

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

In the Lord Jesus there is liberty but at the same time we must say with Paul:

Galatians 5:13 (DAV)

. . . do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the flesh. . . .

The hymn writer says it well:

Out of my bondage, sorrow and night
 Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
 Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
 Jesus, I come to Thee.

(source unknown)

Vos says:

Paul does not deny the literal meaning of the Abrahamic narrative, but he says that the circumstances of the history have another besides the literal meaning. Whether “illustration,” “parable,” or “allegory” should be used to describe the apostle’s interpretation may be debated. Certainly Paul’s use of this Old Testament account does not give the contemporary Bible student license to allegorize a variety of Scripture passages. It should be kept in mind that what Paul says here is by the same inspiration as the original Genesis account. . . .

Paul does not go a step beyond the Scripture facts; what he does is to point out *the same nature* in both: mere flesh in Hagar’s birth, and thus slavery—the same slavery in all those whose birth is no better; divine promise in Sarah’s birth, and thus liberty—the same liberty in all whose birth is connected with promise. Thus in v. 24-28 Paul identifies: Hagar = Sinai = the mother of all who do law-works; Sarah = Jerusalem from above = the mother of all believing the promise.

“These (women) are (represent) two covenants (omit ‘thee’).” The two covenants are of course the Abrahamic and Mosaic. The one takes its origin from Mount Sinai and brings forth children unto bondage. Paul identifies the first and links it with the slave Hagar. Certainly the last half of verse 24 would make a Judaizer squirm. The reader is left to add a coordinate statement about the Abrahamic covenant at this point. The apostle wants to drive home the inferiority of Mosaic legalism.

pp. 83-84

The difference between the **TWO COVENANTS** can be seen in the fact that:

the **MOSAIC** covenant is a **CONDITIONAL** covenant—it is conditioned upon obedience, and

the **ABRAHAMIC** covenant is an **UNCONDITIONAL** covenant—Nothing we can do affects the promise which God has made.

Let's dig in now into **STUDY #9: GALATIANS 4:21-5:1**.

The Apostle, in these verses, is going to **CONCLUDE THE DOCTRINAL SECTION** of the epistle and he does this with the use of an **ALLEGORY** that will be explained in the passage.

You Were Running Well UNTIL: "Whee! I Am Free" Became, "Boy! I Am in Bondage."

Our **KEY VERSE** is going to be the last one in the study:

Galatians 5:1 (DAV)

For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

Anders says:

4:21-23. An allegory is a spiritual or symbolic interpretation of a story that also has a literal meaning. Isaac was born of the **free woman**, Sarah, and represents grace. Ishmael was born of the **slave woman**, Hagar, and represents the law. The birth of Ishmael was an ordinary birth to Abraham and his slave. The birth of Isaac was a supernatural birth because Abraham and Sarah were very old. It was a birth of **promise** in that Isaac was the child God promised to give to Abraham (Gen. 12).

p. 53

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

3. *An appeal from allegory (4:21-31)*

Commentators are sometimes embarrassed because Paul's doctrinal argument in the central two chapters of Galatians concludes with an allegory based on what many consider an unjustified use of an OT story. But such embarrassment is unnecessary, as is the thought that the allegory was somewhat of an afterthought for Paul, who had, in fact, actually concluded his argument early in the fourth chapter. In one sense, the formal argument did conclude there; vv. 8-31 are mostly an appeal to the Galatians to remain in that freedom to which God has called them.

p. 732

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Therefore, the allegory effectively ties together the doctrinal section of the letter and the appeal based on it, and it leads into chs. 5-6, the ethical section.

p. 733

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Paul introduces the facts of the story itself (vv. 21-23), develops the allegory (vv. 24-27), and then applies the allegory to the Galatians and indeed to all believers (vv. 28-31). The latter section speaks of the supernatural basis of the new life in Christ, the inevitability of persecution for those who stand by the Gospel, and the need to so stand.

p. 733

Baxter says:

Finally he expounds the allegory of Isaac and Ishmael (verses 21-31). Believers, so to speak, are Isaac, to whom the inheritance in Abraham belongs; whereas to be under the Law is to be Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, and rejected from the inheritance (verse 30). The inheritance here spoken of is that of the *promises* (iii. 14, 16-22, 29, etc.).

p. 147

Bickel & Jantz say:

Reading and studying the Bible is one of the most important things you can do in your Christian life. The Bible is God's personal, inspired message to you. It tells you about Him and His plan to bring you into a right relationship with Him. Furthermore, the Bible teaches you what is true and prepares you to do "every good work" that God wants you to do (2 Timothy 3:16).

You will get something out of Scripture every time you read it. At the same time, there is great value to using sound methods of interpretation in your Bible study. When you bring out the meaning of a Bible passage, you are engaging in interpretation. The goal of interpreting the Bible should be to apply the meaning of what you learn to your life. To do this, you first begin with the meaning of the text in its context, and then you move to the application in your present-day context.

p. 105

De Haan says:

THE question the Apostle Paul seeks to answer in Galatians was a question of law OR grace. It was not law AND grace, but law OR grace. It cannot be both. It is either one or the other. To say that we are saved by grace, and then kept by our works is to negate grace entirely, for then our final salvation depends upon our behavior and works instead of the grace of God. The desire to be kept by the works of the law is the result of a total misunderstanding of what the law really is and does. Once we understand the true purpose of the law, we would never want to be placed under it again. And so Paul asks the question, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, don't you understand what the law does?"

p. 145

Gaebelein says:

Verses 21-31 give an interesting, typical foreshadowing and contrast. As they were abandoning grace, he wants the law to speak to them. Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar, the bondmaid, born after the flesh; the other son was Isaac, the son of promise, born by Sarah, the free woman. Both illustrate the covenants of God. Mount Sinai, the law covenant, which gendereth to bondage, is represented in Hagar and her son; the other, the covenant of promise, "Jerusalem which is above"—the mother of us all—it is the true church of God viewed in her heavenly state; she is free.
p. 222

Gutzke says:

Do you have a clear picture that becoming a Christian is a choice between two different ways of seeking the blessing of God?
p. 99

Hendriksen says:

Rigid adherence to law, as if this were the way to be saved, is exposed as being in reality nothing but bondage, spiritual slavery. Faith, on the contrary, spells freedom. Accordingly, this section, too, is true to the theme of the entire epistle, namely, "The gospel of justification by faith apart from law-works defended against its detractors."
p. 179

Henry says:

Verses 21-31

The apostle illustrates the difference between believers who rested in Christ only to those Judaizers who trusted in the law, by a comparison taken from the story of Isaac and Ishmael. *Tell me*, says he, *you that desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* He sets before them the history itself (v. 22, 23): *For it is written, Abraham had two sons, &c.* The one, Ishmael, *was by a bond-maid*, and the other, Isaac, *by a free-woman*; the former *was born after the flesh*, or by the ordinary course of nature, the other *was by promise*, when in the course of nature there was no reason to expect that Sarah should have a son.

p. 1843

Hogg & Vine say:

. . . now he appeals to an episode in the family history of Abraham discerning in it an esoteric, that is to say, an inward, or mystic, significance. The Judaizers appealed to the O.T., so would he. They boasted in their descent from Abraham; he would show them how the superiority of the promise to the law, of faith to natural descent, was latent in the very foundation of Abraham's line. They claimed to have in their keeping the key to the Scriptures; he would show them once more that the true key was to be found in the gospel.

p. 216

Lightfoot says:

'Ye who vaunt your submission to law, listen while I read you a lesson out of the law. The Scripture says that Abraham had two sons, the one the child of the bond-woman, the other the child of the free. The child of the bondwoman, we are there told, came into the world in the common course of nature: the child of the free was born in fulfilment of a promise.

p. 179

Lucado says:

Under pressure from some persuasive false teachers, the church in Galatia was about to embrace an eclectic spirituality that mixed the grace of Christ with the law of Judaism. Paul used the Old Testament story of Sarah and Hagar (see Genesis 16) to illustrate the profound difference between living by law and living by grace.

p. 82

MacArthur says:

H. The Illustration from Scripture (4:21-31)

(4:21-31) Paul, continuing to contrast grace and law, faith and works, employs an OT story as an analogy or illustration of what he has been teaching.

p. 1671

MacArthur says:

In this text Paul continues to contrast grace and law, faith and works. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he employs an Old Testament story as an analogy, which serves not so much as an argument as an illustration.

p. 122

Machen says:

. . . Paul, in his perplexity, bethinks himself of one more argument. It is an argument that would appeal especially to those who were impressed by the Judaizers' method of using the Old Testament, but it also has permanent validity. The fundamental principle, says Paul, for which I am arguing, the principle of grace, can be illustrated from the story of Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael had every prospect of being the heir of Abraham. It seemed impossible for the aged Abraham to have another son. Nature was on Ishmael's side. But nature was overruled. So it is today. As far as nature is concerned, the Jews are the heirs of Abraham—they have all the outward marks of sonship. But God has willed otherwise. He has chosen to give the inheritance to the heirs according to promise.
p. 205

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

4:21–31 In this section develops an allegory to complement his argument that justification has always been by faith and that was not changed by the emergence of the law (3:6–25). Although there are other biblical examples of allegory, the giving of figurative meaning to the details of a story (Is. 5:1–7), Paul is not recommending, or even condoning, the use of allegorical interpretation. An allegory is a legitimate figure of speech for conveying a literal truth, whereas allegorization is an illegitimate distortion of historical facts in order to create a deeper, hidden spiritual meaning. Paul is drawing upon a common Jewish approach of the day, likely used by the false teachers in Galatia to attempt to support their views. Paul may be “turning the tables” by using their method to discredit their position.
p. 1525

Ridderbos says:

So far as the tone of the writing goes, the conclusion of Chapter 4 differs strikingly from what has gone before. The affecting and strongly personal quality of verses 12 to 20 gives way to a more objective argument. In it, Paul once more, and now for the last time, sheds light on the great theme: the law and the gospel.
pp. 172-3

Vos says:

From personal appeal Paul now turns to an illustration from Scripture in an effort to separate the Galatians from legalism. Those who boast of their submission to the law and claim to be sons of Abraham forget that Abraham had two sons, the one of a freewoman and the other of a bondwoman. Blessing and inheritance belong to the former. Paul declares the legalistic Galatians to be descended from the latter.
p. 82

Wuest says:

Be telling me, you that are bent upon being under law, are you not hearing the law? For it stands written, Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the freewoman. But, on the one hand, the son of the maidservant was one born in the ordinary course of nature. On the other hand, the son of the freewoman was one born through the promise, which class of things is allegorical. For these are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai, begetting bondage, which is as to its nature classed as Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our Mother. For it stands written, Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear. Break forth and cry, you who do not travail, because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband. And, as for you, brethren, after the manner of Isaac are you children of promise. But just as then, he who was born according to the flesh was constantly persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so also now. But what does the scripture say? Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the freewoman. Therefore, brethren, we are children, not of a maidservant, but of the freewoman.
p. 207

Wuest says:

VII. *The history of Hagar and Sarah illustrates the present status of law and grace. As the son of the bondwoman gave place to the son of the freewoman, so law has given place to grace (4:21-31).*
p. 132

v. 21 Tell me, you who are desiring to be under law, are you not hearing the law?

The NET Bible titles this passage and then translates verse 21:

An Appeal from Allegory

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand the law?

Peterson paraphrases verse 21:

Tell me now, you who have become so enamored with the law: Have you paid close attention to that law?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this section of Galatians and then says:

A BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATION (4:21-31).

In a masterful stroke the apostle turned to a scriptural illustration to conclude his theological defense of justification by faith. An Old Testament story from the life of Abraham enabled Paul to review what he had already declared about contrasts between the Mosaic Law and grace, between works and faith. It also provided an opportunity for him to verbalize the pointed charge to the Galatians that they should cast out the legalizers (cf. v. 30).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles verses 21-23 and then says of verse 21:

The historical facts (4:21-23).

4:21. The Galatians had not yet submitted to the bondage of **the Law** but they desired to. Paul desperately wanted to stop them and turn them back to a life under grace. As a transition to what would immediately follow, he challenged the Galatians to be **aware of** or to understand what the Law really said.

In our passage under consideration, there are going to be **THREE COMMANDS**:

1. verse 21—**“TELL ME YOU WHO ARE DESIRING TO BE UNDER THE LAW,”**
2. Galatians 5:1—**“KEEP ON STANDING FIRM,”** and
3. Galatians 5:1—**“STOP BECOMING ENTANGLED AGAIN IN A YOKE OF BONDAGE.”**

Our study begins with Paul issuing a **COMMAND**:

“TELL ME—(give me an answer)—YOU WHO ARE DESIRING TO BE UNDER THE LAW.”

There are **TWO QUESTIONS** in this particular study:

1. verse 21—**“ARE YOU NOT HEARING THE LAW?”** and
2. verse 30—**“BUT WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURE SAYING?”**

You who want to go out from your freedom in Christ, are you not hearing what the law is saying?

Paul here refers to the **LAW** in the boarder sense of the **FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES** and is speaking with a touch of irony when he says:

“are you not hearing the law read now that you are desiring to be under its bondage?”

In essence, Paul is saying:

“Let me give you an illustration of the consequences of going back into legalism after once becoming a Christian.”

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

He does not yet consider that the Galatians have actually rejected the Gospel, only that they are desiring to reject it for law.
p. 733

Bickel & Jantz say:

Before he gives a quick summary of the story, Paul asks the Galatians (who want to live under the law) a sarcastic question: “Do you know what the law actually says?” (4:21). It would be like someone telling you, “I want to live under a dictatorship,” to which you would reply, “Do you know what a dictatorship really is?”
p. 106

Calvin says:

Having given exhortations adapted to touch the feelings, he follows up his former doctrine by an illustration of great beauty. Viewed simply as an argument, it would not be very powerful; but, as a confirmation added to a most satisfactory chain of reasoning, it is not unworthy of attention.
p. 134

Eadie says:

. . . “Tell me, ye who desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” The appeal is abrupt . . .
p. 357

Gutzke says:

In chapter 4:21-27 Paul narrows the issue that confronts the Galatians when they became Christians to a simple choice of one of two ways. The Bible talks about being dead or alive. You are “in” or you are “out.” You are for or against. “There is a narrow road that leadeth unto life, few there be that find it; there is a wide road that leadeth unto destruction; many there be that go thereat” (Matt. 7:14). Two ways: a narrow road—a wide way. One man built his house on a rock, another man built his house on sand. There is no one else mentioned. Just two ways!

p. 99

Hendriksen says:

Nevertheless, so runs Paul’s argument, there is, indeed, a marked difference between the son of Hagar, the slave-woman, and the son of Sarah, the free-woman, but that difference is not of a physical but of a spiritual nature. It represents the contrast between those who live by law and those who live by faith; in other words, between those who depend on that which they themselves are able to bring about and those who rely on the effectuation of God’s gracious promise.

p. 180

Hogg & Vine say:

Then let me give you an illustration, drawn from a story with which you are familiar, of what that bondage which you desire so much will do for you’.

p. 217

Ironside says:

“**TELL** me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” We have already noticed that while the Galatians were a Gentile people who had been saved by grace, they had fallen under the influence of certain Judaizing teachers who were trying to put them under the law. They said, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1), and so in this letter the apostle Paul has taken up the great question of Law and Grace and has been expounding it, clarifying it, making clear that salvation is not by works of the law but entirely by the hearing of faith.

pp. 158-9

Ironside says:

Now he says, “You desire to be under the law; do you? Do you want to put yourself under the law of Moses? Why do you not hear the law? Why do you not carefully read the books of the law and see just what God has said?” He uses the term “law” here in two different ways. In the first instance as referring to Moses’ law, the law given at Sinai with the accompanying rules and regulations, statutes and judgments, that were linked with it, but in the second, as referring to the books of the Law. “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law (the legal covenant), do ye not hear the law (the books of the law in which God tells us of the covenants)?”

pp. 159-60

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

... **desire**—of your own accord madly courting that which must condemn and ruin you. **do ye not hear**—do ye not consider the mystic sense of Moses’ words? [GROTIUS.] The law itself sends you away from itself to Christ [ESTIUS]. After having sufficiently maintained his point by argument, the apostle confirms and illustrates it by an inspired allegorical exposition of historical facts, containing in them general laws and types. Perhaps his reason for using allegory was to confute the Judaizers with their own weapons: subtle, mystical, allegorical interpretations, unauthorized by the Spirit, were their favorite arguments, as of the Rabbins in the synagogues.

p. 1271

Lenski says:

It has been well said that, although he is at a loss because he is so far away from the Galatians, the fertile mind of Paul, in his attempt to separate them from all legalism, finds another effective mode of approach. From personal appeal he turns to a clear case that is recorded in Scripture, which is illustrative of both bondage and freedom, the account of Hagar and Ishmael and of Sarah and Isaac. To the subjective and personal Paul thus adds the Scriptural and objective.
p. 232

Lightfoot says:

... *'ye, who would be subject to law*, who must needs submit to bondage in some way or other.'
p. 179

Luther says:

Here Paul would have closed his Epistle because he did not know what else to say. He wishes he could see the Galatians in person and straighten out their difficulties. But he is not sure whether the Galatians have fully understood the difference between the Gospel and the Law. To make sure, he introduces another illustration. He knows people like illustrations and stories. He knows that Christ Himself made ample use of parables.
p. 182

MacArthur says:

Tell me, he asks, **you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?** "Since you insist on living **under law**," he was saying, "are you willing to **listen to** what **the law** really says?"

Jesus used a similar approach with the Jewish leaders on several occasions. In the Sermon on the Mount, after declaring unequivocally that He had not come to abolish God's law, He nevertheless warned that the legalistic practices of the scribes and Pharisees would never qualify a person for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:17-20).
p. 123

McGee says:

There are people who talk about the Ten Commandments or some legal system, but they don't talk about the *penalty* imposed by the Law. They don't present the Law in the full orb of its ministry of condemnation. Notice what happened when God called Moses to the mountain to give the Law: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled."
p. 180

Ridderbos says:

Tell me: the tone is still lively and penetrating, though less tender, and more commanding now. It sounds a call to responsibility. *Ye that desire to be under the law:* their conduct suggests that such is their desire (*cf.* the Exposition of verse 10). The reference is to being under the law in a demanding, prescriptive sense. There is a touch of irony here. For—such is the argument—if you wish that so much, why do you not listen more attentively to what the law says? For the Torah contains much besides stipulated commands. And whoever reads the whole of the Torah will discover that its bearing is quite different from the one the Galatians are apparently at present inclined to believe.
p. 173

Wuest says:

Verse twenty-one. The words "ye that desire to be under the law, imply that the Galatians had not adopted, but were on the point of adopting the law. The idea is, "ye who are bent on being under law." The article is absent before *law* in the Greek text. The word *law* here refers to law as a principle of life, not only to the Mosaic law. The apostle asks the Galatians who are bent on being under law, "Are ye not hearing the law?" This is a remonstrance to these Galatians who are bent on upholding the authority of the law, but who are not heeding the full significance of that law.
p. 132

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Why then do we calculate our forces, and consult with flesh and blood to our grievous wounding? Jehovah has power enough without borrowing from our puny arm. Peace, ye unbelieving thoughts, be still, and know that the Lord reigneth. Nor is there a hint concerning secondary means and causes. The Lord says nothing of friends and helpers: He undertakes the work alone, and feels no need of human arms to aid Him. Vain are all our lookings around to companions and relatives; they are broken reeds if we lean upon them—often unwilling when able, and unable when they are willing. Since the promise comes alone from God, it would be well to wait only upon Him; and when we do so, our expectation never fails us.

p. 569

v. 22 For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman.

The NET Bible translates verse 22:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

Peterson paraphrases verse 22:

Abraham, remember, had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:22. By turning again to **Abraham** (Gen., as one of the Books of Moses, was considered a part of the Law) Paul was appealing to the founder of the Jewish nation from whose physical descent the Jews traced their blessings. John the Baptist and Jesus declared that physical descent from Abraham was not enough, however, to guarantee spiritual blessing (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:37-44). Paul reminded his readers that Abraham **had two sons** (those born later are not important to his illustration), and that they should consider which of the two they were most like. One son, Isaac, was born of Sarah, **the free woman**; the other, Ishmael, was born of Hagar, **the slave woman**. According to ancient law and custom the status of a mother affected the status of her son.

Paul returns to the Old Testament record **THREE TIMES** in this passage:

1. verse 22—**“IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN THAT ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS,”**
2. verse 27—**“FOR IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN”**—he is quoting from Isaiah 54:1, and
3. verse 30—**“BUT WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURE SAYING? THROW OUT THE MAIDSERVANT AND HER SON”**—here Paul is quoting from Genesis 21:8-10.

“FOR IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN THAT ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS, ONE FROM THE MAIDSERVANT AND ONE FROM THE FREE WOMAN.”

In this passage, we are going to note together that there are:

TWO WOMEN,

TWO SONS,

TWO COVENANTS,

TWO MOUNTAINS, and

TWO CITIES.

There is:

the **LAW** as **OPPOSED** to the **PROMISE** and

the **FLESH** as **OPPOSED** to the **SPIRIT**.

The application of the whole illustration will be:

BONDAGE UNDER THE LAW or

FREEDOM IN JESUS CHRIST.

Paul has already used Abraham and his faith several times in the previous chapters and now he returns to his **BIOGRAPHY** once again to drive home his point:

Genesis 15—God made a covenant with Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of heaven.

Genesis 16—Sarah did not have any children so they grew quite impatient with God. Sarah told Abraham to go in unto her maid.

Sarah's thought after **TEN YEARS OF DELAY** was that obviously God means for us to **HELP** instead of **WAIT**.

When you are most eager to act is when you will make the most pitiful mistakes.

WAITING INVOLVES DEPENDENCE.

Psalm 27:14 (NIV)

Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

(Streams in the Desert by L. B. Cowman)

Waiting, yes, patiently waiting,
 Till next steps made plain shall be
 To hear with the inner hearing,
 The voice that will call for me.

Waiting, yes, hopefully waiting,
 With hope that need not grow dim,
 The Master has pledged to guide me
 And my eyes are unto Him.

Waiting, expectantly waiting,
 Perhaps it may be today,
 The Master will quickly open
 The gate to my future way.

Waiting, yes, waiting, still waiting.
 I know, though, I have waited long
 That while He withholds His purpose,
 His waiting cannot be wrong.

Waiting, yes, waiting, still waiting,
 The Master will not be late.
 He knoweth that I am waiting
 For Him to unlatch the gate.

—Jay Danson Smith

(May 17)

It was **SARAH'S PLAN** to have Abraham go in unto Hagar and have Hagar bear the son that God had promised.

Abraham did this and immediately following a rift came between Sarah and Hagar—Genesis 16:5.

Then Sarah deals severely with her and she fled—Genesis 16:11.

She was told by an angel to return to Sarah and to submit herself to her because she was going to have a son—Genesis 16:11.

She had the son and they named him **ISHMAEL**. Then God miraculously provided the seed that He had promised and Sarah brought forth Isaac, and this son was the son of the covenant.

Genesis 17:19 (NIV)

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

In Genesis 21 we have the account of the **BIRTH OF ISAAC** in verses 1-3. Immediately there arose a conflict between the two sons.

Genesis 21:9-10 (NIV)

But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

God spoke to Abraham and assured him that his seed was to be continued in Isaac.

Genesis 21:14 (NIV)

Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

With this background we can now lift Paul's message from the passage:

"ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS, ONE FROM THE MAIDSERVANT [HAGAR] AND ONE FROM THE FREE WOMAN [SARAH]."

Calvin says:

No man who has a choice given him will be so mad as to despise freedom, and prefer slavery. But here the apostle teaches us, that they who are under the law are slaves. Unhappy men! who willingly choose this condition, when God desires to make them free.

pp. 134-5

Eadie says:

The apostle refers to some very remarkable points in Abraham's domestic history with which they must all have been well acquainted—
p. 358

Lange says:

I must inquire: do ye not hear the Law; for if you really heard the law, you would find in it that which might convince you how unsound and dangerous it is to "desire to be under the law."

p. 113

Lovett says:

SONS. Both Ishmael and Isaac were true sons of Abraham. However, they had different mothers and were born under different conditions. God had promised Abraham a son, but Sarah was past the age of childbearing. Since she didn't see how the promised son could arrive any other way, she suggested that Abraham have a child by Hagar. Thus Hagar bore Abraham's firstborn son. But God kept His promise and Sarah herself miraculously conceived later to give birth to a freeborn son. By this, Abraham was taught to forget the ways of the flesh and live by faith in the promises of God. This is what Paul would persuade the Galatians to do, if he can.
pp. 54-55

McGee says:

Using an illustration from the life of Abraham (Gen. 16; 17; 18; 20; 21), Paul is going to make a contrast between these two boys that were born, one to Hagar and one to Sarai. One was the son of a bondwoman; the other was the son of a freewoman. The freewoman represents grace, and the bondwoman represents the Mosaic Law. He is going to point out the contrast between them in what he calls an allegory.

Paul is not saying that the story of Abraham is an allegory—some have interpreted this statement as meaning that—but Paul is saying that the incident of the two women who bore Abraham sons *contains* an allegory. It has a message for us today.

p. 181

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

4:21, 22 Once again Paul speaks of **the law** and the experience of **Abraham**, addressing the false teachers' foundational respect for Abraham (3:6–9) and the Galatians' infatuation with living **under** the law. To clinch his lengthy argument about the bondage of the law and the freedom found in Christ, Paul uses as examples the **two sons** of Abraham. These are Ishmael, who was born of the **bondwoman** Hagar (v. 24); and Isaac, who was born of Sarah, the rightful wife of Abraham and a **freewoman**. Appropriately, Paul counters the Jewish false teachers' zeal for the law with an argument based on the Law, the Pentateuch (Gen. 16:15; 21:2). He uses allegory to prove his point because it was a rhetorical technique the false teachers used. In other words, Paul was demonstrating that he could argue from the Law just as well as they could, but to prove that the Law of Moses pointed to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

p. 1525

Wiersbe says:

Paul began with the two sons, Ishmael and Isaac (Gal. 4:22-23), and explained that they illustrate our two births: the physical birth that makes us sinners and the spiritual birth that makes us the children of God.

p. 105

Wuest says:

Verse twenty-two. The word *for* connects the contents of verse 21 with those of 22. The idea is, "Your desire to be under law is not in harmony with Scripture, and here is the scripture."

p. 132

(Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)
Grand Rapids, MI.:Moody Press. Copyright – Kregel Publications,
1985.

“I have given them thy word.” The Word is the *element*, where faith, and hope, and love have their existence and their exercise. It is the field over which faith, and hope, and love are invited to range. *There* we may find everything to comfort; *there* we may find everything to supply our need; *there* we may find everything to direct us in our difficulties, to cheer us in our pilgrimage, to light up for us the valley of the shadow of death; and *there* we may learn the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and begin to sing it even ere we reach our home, beguiling the weariness of the way.

When heaven and earth shall have passed away, we shall find that Word, which has been our guide, our source of help, and comfort, and consolation, in our difficulties by the way, like a rock beneath our feet, which has sheltered and supported us in many a storm, and it will sustain us until we reach the calm sunshine, where storms can never come, and temptations can never weary us.
p. 249

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press.
Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

If you wish to know God you must know his word; if you wish to perceive his power you must see how he worketh by his word; if you wish to know his purpose before it is actually brought to pass you can only discover it by his word. 1607.377
p. 29

v. 23 On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.

The NET Bible translates verse 23:

But one, the son by the slave woman, was born by natural descent, while the other, the son by the free woman, was born through the promise.

Peterson paraphrases verse 23:

The son of the slave woman was born by human connivance; the son of the free woman was born by God's promise.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:23. A second contrast concerned the manner in which the sons were conceived. Ishmael **was born in the ordinary way**, that is, in the course of nature and requiring no miracle and no promise of God. Isaac, on the other hand, **was born as the result of a promise**. Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of childbearing, but God miraculously fulfilled His promise in bringing life out of the deadness of Sarah's womb (cf. Rom. 4:18-21).

"ON THE ONE HAND, THE SON FROM THE MAIDSERVANT HAD BEEN BORN AFTER THE FLESH."

The son from Hagar:

“HAD BEEN BORN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH.”

The apostle will speak more with regard to **“THE FLESH”** in the next chapter.

Because of the seeming delay in the fulfillment of God’s promise in giving a son, Sarah and Abraham took it upon themselves to help God out in the provision of a son through their own efforts. As a result of these efforts, Hagar the maid had a son named **ISHMAEL**.

“THE FLESH” is that old capacity to do it ourselves. It is that which produces **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

“ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SON FROM THE FREE WOMAN HAD BEEN BORN THROUGH THE PROMISE.”

The son from Sarah had been born:

“THROUGH THE PROMISE.”

Isaac was born in God’s time and in God’s way. He miraculously provided in an impossible set of circumstances the promised son—Isaac—to Sarah.

IT WAS ALL GOD’S DOING.

One of the things that we can learn about **“THE FLESH”** is its desire to run ahead of God and do things on its own. We see that same manifestation here in this verse.

Because the birth of Isaac was based on the **UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE**, nothing could change that, not even a premature act of the flesh 15 years earlier in the birth of Ishmael by the way of the Egyptian maid, Hagar.

F. B. Meyer said it well:

The flesh loves excitement. It is always ready to jump up and run somewhere. The Holy Spirit does not. Someone has said Satan rushes men, but God leads them. Never act in panic nor allow man to dictate to you; calm yourself and be still; force yourself into the quiet of your closet until the pulse beats normally and the “scare” has ceased to disturb.

When you are most eager to act is the time when you will make the most pitiable mistakes. Do not say in your heart what you will or will not do, but wait upon God until He makes known His way. So long as that way is hidden, it is clear that there is no need of action . . .

(*Our Daily Bread*, H.G.B., Tuesday, Jan. 12)

Isaiah 26:3 (NIV)

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 32:17 (NIV)

The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

Colossians 3:15 (NASB)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost points out in his book Man's Problems and God's Answers:

That which characterizes the Holy Spirit is quietness, peacableness and rest. He will never produce that which is contrary to His own character in a child of God. Thus the Holy Spirit never produces irritability in a child of God. That is the product of the flesh or the old nature. The child of God who walks in disobedience or is controlled by the flesh will manifest the irritability and restlessness of his father, the devil. If the Spirit of God is in control, he will reproduce the quietness and peacefulness of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine Christ being irritated and snapping somebody's head off? It is ludicrous to even talk about it.
(source unknown)

Ryrie points out:

The flesh then is that old capacity which all men have to live lives which exclude God. In the Christian, the flesh is that same capacity to leave God out of his life and action.
(source unknown)

Charles Wesley expressed it in this prayer:

I want the witness, Lord
That all I do is right
And according to Thy will and word,
Well pleasing in Thy sight.

I ask no higher state,
Indulge me but in this;
And sooner or later then
Translate to my eternal bliss.

(source unknown)

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

There are two main differences between these sons. (1) They were born of different mothers (vv. 22); one was a free woman, the other a slave. This, according to ancient law, also affected the sons' status. (2) In the manner of their conception, Ishmael's was entirely by natural means (Abraham was elderly at the time, but still the conception was natural), whereas Isaac's was by means of a miracle (by this time Abraham had passed the age at which it was normally possible to engender children and Sarah was long past the age of conceiving them). Isaac was brought into being "as a result of a promise" from God.

p. 733

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

This contrast lends itself well to the distinction Paul is trying to make between natural or man-made religion and supernatural or God-made religion. The religion of works and law corresponds to the natural birth of Ishmael; the religion of the Spirit, which is Christianity, corresponds to the supernatural birth of Isaac.

p. 733

Hogg & Vine say:

the son by the handmaid is born—*gennaō*.

after the flesh;—*i.e.*, in the course of nature. Abraham and Hagar were united in accordance with natural counsels and with result after the order of nature. Sarah was aware, indeed, of the promise of God to Abraham that he should have a son, but her own name had not yet been mentioned in connection therewith, and assuming that the promise was impossible of fulfilment through herself, she planned to bring it about through another, Gen. 16. 1, 2. To Sarah's device the Apostle refers.

p. 217

Hogg & Vine say:

Faith is the response of the soul to a word from God. God speaks, man accepts, submits, acts, as the word from God demands; that is faith, and to faith, in turn, God responds with the power necessary to make the word good, as it is written, “no word from God shall be void of power” . . .
p. 218

Lenski says:

First the status of the two mothers, then—still more important—the difference between the two births themselves. The one son was born in the ordinary, natural way, the other by a gracious, miraculous intervention of God.
p. 234

MacArthur says:

Ishmael’s birth was motivated by Abraham and Sarah’s lack of faith in God’s promise and fulfilled by sinful human means. *through promise*. God miraculously enabled Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac when Sarah was well post childbearing age and had been barren her entire life.
p. 1672

MacArthur says:

The birth of that son, whose name was Ishmael, was **according to the flesh**, not because it was physical but because the scheme for his conception, devised by Sarah and carried out by Abraham, was motivated by purely selfish desires and fulfilled by purely human means.
p. 124

MacArthur says:

The conception of Ishmael represents man's way, the way of **the flesh**, whereas that of Isaac represents God's way, the way of **promise**. The first is analogous to the way of religious self-effort and works righteousness; the second is analogous to the way of faith and God's imputed righteousness. The one is the way of legalism, the other the way of grace. Ishmael symbolizes those who have had only natural birth and who trust in their own works. Isaac symbolizes those who also have had spiritual birth because they have trusted in the work of Jesus Christ.

p. 124

Patrick & Lowth say:

Ver. 23. . . . *Was born after the flesh.*] i.e. By natural generation, and the strength of the flesh, before Abraham's body became dead (Rom. iv. 19); the other by virtue of the promise made to him by God, when his body and Sarah's womb were both dead (ver. 20) and only quickened by that Spirit which is the power of God.

p. 738

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

In Gen. 16, Abraham and Sarah attempted to fulfill God's **promise** through their own strength, using Hagar, **a bondwoman**. In spite of the complications caused by that "fleshly" alternative, Sarah, **a freewoman**, eventually saw the miraculous outworking of God's promise in the birth of Isaac (Gen. 12:2; 15:4).

p. 1525

v. 24 Which class of things is allegorical. For these are two covenants, one from Mount Sinah giving birth to bondage, which is Hagar.

The NET Bible translates verse 24:

These things may be treated as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar.

Peterson paraphrases verse 24:

This illustrates the very thing we are dealing with now. The two births represent two ways of being in relationship with God. One is from Mount Sinai in Arabia.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles the next section and then says:

The allegorical interpretation (4:24-27).

In order to emphasize the contrast between Law and grace Paul next used the historical events above as an allegory, that is, he treated those two mothers figuratively (allēgoroumena). He did not in any sense deny the literal meaning of the story of Abraham, but he declared that that story, especially the matters relating to the conception of the two sons, had an additional meaning. Thus he compared the narrative to the conflict between Judaism and Christianity.

(This “allegorizing” is a far cry from the practice of “allegorical interpretation”—followed by Origen, Augustine, and many others down through the ages and into the present day—in which the historical facts are relegated to a lower, less significant level and fanciful, hidden meanings unrelated to the text, are considered vastly more important.)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says on verse 24:

4:24. First, the apostle pointed to **two covenants**. One, the Mosaic, had its origin at **Mount Sinai**. Those under this legal covenant were **slaves**. As **Hagar** brought forth a slave, so does the Law. At this point the reader is expected to understand and supply the implicit reference to the Abrahamic Covenant, a gracious system represented by Sarah which through its messianic promise brought forth children who are free.

The rabbis, in their study of the law, have **FOUR MEANINGS** to the Scripture:

1. the **LITERAL**,
2. the **SUGGESTED**,
3. that which has **EVOLVED AFTER INVESTIGATION**, and
4. the **ALLEGORICAL**.

The chief one, as far as they are concerned, is the **ALLEGORICAL**.

If this is true, then Paul is really coming home hard in his argument by pointing out that in this account of Abraham in the Old Testament, we have contained an allegory for our instruction.

It would be well for us to emphasize again the point that because Paul uses an allegory here in this portion, it does not provide an excuse for those who would tend to allegorize all of the facts of Scripture.

The safest rule for Scriptural interpretation has to be the **LITERAL INTERPRETATION**—or taking it at face value for what it says.

Christ certainly took the Scriptures literally. In His attitude toward prophecy and the historical accuracy of the accounts recorded in the Old Testament, He felt the same.

Paul says "FOR THESE ARE TWO COVENANTS":

1. "[THERE IS] ONE FROM MOUNT SINAH GIVING BIRTH TO BONDAGE"—which is the LAW OF MOSES and this is represented in HAGAR.

Paul does not complete the other side of the allegory here but we can see it:

2. The second covenant is the COVENANT OF PROMISE given to Abraham and giving birth to FREEDOM represented in SARAH.

Everything has been done. What can I do to help? Not a thing!

Whereas:

the MOSAIC LAW—the first covenant—is "FROM MOUNT SINAH GIVING BIRTH TO BONDAGE,"

the second covenant was made effective in the DEATH OF CHRIST on Mount Calvary and is GIVING BIRTH TO FREEDOM.

Barclay says:

WHEN we seek to interpret a passage like this we must always remember that for the devout and scholarly Jew, and especially for the Rabbis, scripture had more than one meaning; and, it is true to say, that the literal meaning was often regarded as the least important. For the Jewish Rabbis any passage of scripture had four meanings. (i) *Peshat*, which was the simple or literal meaning. (ii) *Remaz*, which is the suggested meaning. (iii) *Derush*, which is the meaning evolved and deduced by investigation. (iv.) *Sod*, which was the allegorical meaning. The first letters of these four words—P R D S—are the consonants of the word *Paradise*—and when a man had succeeded in penetrating into these four different meanings he reached the joy of paradise! Now it is to be noted that the summit and peak of all meanings was the *allegorical* meaning.

p. 44

Barclay says:

Paul takes that simple old story and he allegorizes it. Hagar stands for the old covenant of the law, made on Mount Sinai, which is in fact in Arabia, the land of Hagar's descendants. Hagar herself was a slave and all her children were born into slavery. And that covenant whose basis is the law turns men into slaves of the law. Hagar's child was born from merely human impulses; and legalism is the best that man can do. On the other hand Sarah stands for the new covenant in Jesus Christ, God's new way of dealing with men not by law but by grace.

pp. 45-46

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The best way to understand the allegory is to carry it through in parallel columns.

Hagar, the slave woman
Ishmael, a natural birth
The old covenant
Earthly Jerusalem
Judaism

Sarah, the free woman
Isaac, a supernatural birth
The new covenant
Heavenly Jerusalem
Christianity

In this argument Hagar, the slave woman, stands for the old covenant enacted at Mount Sinai, while her son, Ishmael, stands for Judaism with her center at earthly Jerusalem. On the other hand, Sarah, the free woman, stands for the new covenant enacted on Calvary through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and her son, Isaac, stands for all who have become part of the church of the heavenly Jerusalem through faith in Christ's sacrifice.

p. 733

Bartlett says:

Typology of Grace Unveiled (4:21-31)

In the closing section of the doctrinal portion of the epistle, the apostle makes use of Isaac and Ishmael, one the son of a free woman and the other of a bondwoman, to set forth in type the relation of the law to grace. Paul by no means questions the historicity of this Old Testament story; nor does he mean to say that the allegory was designed by the narrative. But under the inspiration of the Spirit he unearths a rich typical lesson enshrined in the simple narrative.

p. 90

Bickel & Jantz say:

With the facts of the story laid out, Paul then provides an interpretation through an allegory. Paul isn't saying the original events didn't really happen. He is simply using the story to bring out the spiritual meaning of the story (that's what an allegory does). Although the two births are historical events, the two women represent two covenants, or agreements:

- *Hagar, the slave woman, represents the old covenant*—the covenant of law—that God made with Moses on Mt. Sinai. This covenant corresponds to the earthly Jerusalem, which was the home base of the Judaizers and their legalism. Spiritual children of Hagar's son, Ishmael, are obligated to the law.
- *Sarah, the free woman, represents the new covenant*—the covenant of promise—that God made through Jesus. This covenant corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the future home of all who trust in Christ alone by faith alone. Spiritual children of Sarah's son, Isaac, are acceptable to God because of faith.

p. 107

De Haan says:

So notice carefully the allegory. We have:

1. Two women—Hagar and Sarah
 2. Two sons—Ishmael and Isaac
 3. Two covenants—law and grace
 4. Two mountains—Sinai and Calvary
 5. Two cities—earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem
- p. 147

Dunnam says:

Though allegory was a popular style of teaching among Jewish rabbis, Paul used it very little. He had the highest regard, an almost sacred regard, for the actual history of his people. Therefore when he says in verse 24 that these things “*are an allegory*,” he does not mean that the story is unhistorical, but that there is a religious meaning that goes far beyond the literal account.

p. 91

Harrison says:

An allegory is defined as “figurative treatment of one subject under the guise of another.” It contains no convincing argument; rather, it pictures truth. So the allegory before us adds nothing to the doctrinal antithesis Paul has now concluded; rather, it illustrates and illuminates it. It sharpens the antithesis. One is made to see that he must choose His Side and stay on it; there can be no playing around from one side to the other.

p. 79

Henry says:

. . . it justly represents the present state of the Jews, who adhering to that covenant, are still in bondage with their children. But the other, Sarah, was intended to prefigure Jerusalem which is above, which is free both from the curse of the moral and the bondage of the ceremonial law, and *is the mother of us all*—a state into which all, both Jews and Gentiles, are admitted, upon their believing in Christ.
p. 1843

Hogg & Vine say:

The presence of an allegorical meaning does not deprive the narrative of its literal meaning. Indeed, while it is at least conceivable that any given narrative may be capable of more than one allegorical meaning, it is plain that but one literal meaning can attach to it.
p. 219

Ironside says:

The apostle now shows us that these events had a symbolic meaning. He does not mean to imply that they did not actually take place as written. They did. Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 10:11, speaking of Old Testament records, “Now all these things happened unto them for types: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Notice, “All these things happened.” Some people say they did not happen, that they were just myths, or folk-lore, or something like that, but the Holy Ghost says, “All these things happened.” And so what you read in the Word concerning different Old Testament characters, the nations, cities, and so on, all these are to be received as historic facts.
p. 161

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

. . . **are an allegory**—rather, “are allegorical,” i.e., have *another besides the literal* meaning. . . . **these are the two covenants**—“these [women] are (i.e., *mean*; omit ‘the’ with all the oldest MSS.) two covenants.” As among the Jews the bondage of the mother determined that of the child, the children of the free covenant of promise, answering to Sarah, are free; the children of the legal covenant of bondage are not so. **one from**—i.e., *taking his origin from* Mount Sinai. Hence, it appears, he is treating of the moral law (ch. 3:19) chiefly (Heb. 12:18). Paul was familiar with the district of Sinai in Arabia (ch. 1:17), having gone thither after his conversion. At the gloomy scene of the giving of the Law, he learned to appreciate, by contrast, the grace of the Gospel, and so to cast off all his past legal dependencies. **which gendereth**—i.e., *bringing forth children* unto bondage. Cf. the phrase (Acts 3:25), “*children of the covenant* which God made . . . saying unto Abraham.” **Agar** i.e., Hagar.
p. 1272

Lovett says:

ALLEGORY. An allegory is not a type. It is a means of illustrating the truth set forth in a number of facts. Whereas there can only be one type, there can be numerous allegories (illustrations) made upon a single set of facts. The allegory is designed more for the imagination than reason. Thus Paul is not arguing Scripture here, but summing, by way of illustration, what he has said about bondage under the Law. Using the figure of two mothers, Paul shows how those under the Law and those born of the Spirit are two separate families, who have nothing in common with each other. The Judaizers, therefore, have nothing to offer the Galatians except slavery. Paul concludes his legal arguing by illustrating the foolishness of trading sonship in the free family of Sarah for bondage in the enslaved family of Hagar.
p. 55

MacArthur says:

The Greek word was used of a story that conveyed a meaning beyond the literal sense of the words. In this passage, Paul uses historical people and places from the OT to illustrate spiritual truth. This is not an allegory, nor are there any allegories in Scripture. An allegory is a fictional story where real truth is the secret, mysterious, hidden meaning. The story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac is actual history and has no secret or hidden meaning. Paul uses it only as an illustration to support his contrast between law and grace.

p. 1672

MacArthur says:

two covenants. Paul uses the two mothers, their two sons, and two locations as a further illustration of two covenants. Hagar, Ishmael, and Mt. Sinai (earthly Jerusalem) represent the covenant of law; Sarah, Isaac and the heavenly Jerusalem the covenant of promise. However, Paul cannot be contrasting these two covenants as different ways of salvation, one way for OT saints, another for NT saints—a premise he has already denied (2:16; 3:10-14, 21, 22). The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was only to show all who were under its demands and condemnation their desperate need for salvation by grace alone (3:24). It was never intended to portray the way of salvation. Paul's point is that those, like the Judaizers, who attempt to earn righteousness by keeping the law receive only bondage and condemnation (3:10, 23).

p. 1672

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

symbolic: Paul was using the common Jewish allegorical method of the day to make his point. He used this approach to draw a stark contrast between **two** biblical **covenants** at odds with each other in the churches in Galatia: the Abrahamic promise (Gen. 12:1–3) and the Law of Moses that God gave Israel at **Mount Sinai**.

p. 1525

Vos says:

The son born of the bondwoman was born “after the flesh”—in the course of nature. Circumstances surrounding Ishmael’s birth were not ordained of God and were therefore natural. God would bring to fruition His own plan in His own time without the aid of men or their conniving wives (Gen 16:1-2) who try to help His plans along. Isaac was born of the freewoman “by virtue of the promise” (Gk). He could not be born as a result of any confidence in the flesh, because Abraham and Sarah were both beyond the age of childbearing. Hence the promise was miraculously fulfilled and salvation demonstrated to be a work of God from start to finish (Jon 2:9), even to the extent of providing a line in which the Redeemer was to be born.
p. 83

Vos says:

Paul does not deny the literal meaning of the Abrahamic narrative, but he says that the circumstances of the history have another besides the literal meaning. Whether “illustration,” “parable,” or “allegory” should be used to describe the apostle’s interpretation may be debated. Certainly Paul’s use of this Old Testament account does not give the contemporary Bible student license to allegorize a variety of Scripture passages. It should be kept in mind that what Paul says here is by the same inspiration as the original Genesis account.
p. 83

Wiersbe says:

Freedom in Christ

An allegory is a narrative in which people and events teach deeper lessons. John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress is a classic example. Paul used Genesis 16 to illustrate your freedom in Christ. Hagar is the law, while Sarah stands for God’s grace. Ishmael was born after the flesh (your first birth), while Isaac was born by the power of God (the new birth). Abraham represents faith, so Isaac was born “by grace [Sarah] . . . through faith [Abraham]” (Eph. 2:8). The Judaizers wanted to bring Hagar back again, but she was sent away because law and grace cannot coexist. Like Hagar, the law was a servant that had a temporary ministry. Once the Son arrived, that ministry was fulfilled.
p. 769

Wiersbe says:

The events described actually happened, but Paul used them as an allegory, which is a narrative that has a deeper meaning behind it. Perhaps the most famous allegory in the English language is John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which Bunyan traces Christian's experiences from the City of Destruction to heaven. In an allegory, persons and actions represent hidden meanings, so that the narrative can be read on two levels: the literal and the symbolic.

Paul's use of Genesis in this section does not give us license to find "hidden meanings" in all the events of the Old Testament. If we take that approach to the Bible, we can make it mean almost anything we please. This is the way many false teachings arise. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to discern the hidden meaning of the Genesis story. We must always interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, and where the New Testament gives us permission, we may search for hidden meanings. Otherwise, we must accept the plain statements of Scripture and not try to "spiritualize" everything.
pp. 103-4

Wiersbe says:

On the surface, this story appears to be nothing more than a tale of a family problem, but beneath the surface are meanings that carry tremendous spiritual power. Abraham, the two wives, and the two sons represent spiritual realities; and their relationships teach us important lessons.

The Old Covenant	The New Covenant
Law	Grace
Hagar the slave	Sarah the free-woman
Ishmael, conceived after the flesh	Isaac, conceived miraculously
Earthly Jerusalem in bondage	Heavenly Jerusalem, which is free

p. 105

Wuest says:

Paul says that the story of Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac, is an allegory. This does not mean that he is casting doubt upon the historical trustworthiness of the patriarchal narrative in Genesis. An allegory is a statement of facts which is to be understood literally, and yet requires or justly admits a moral or a figurative interpretation. Paul, while using the story as an illustration, does so in order to prove his argument to the effect that the law is superseded by grace. Then he speaks of the covenant of law that was given at Mt. Sinai. This is allegorically identified with Hagar. This covenant places its children in a condition of bondage.

p. 133

v. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinah in Arabia, and is corresponding to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children.

The NET Bible translates verse 25:

Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

Peterson paraphrases verse 25:

It corresponds with what is now going on in Jerusalem—a slave life, producing slaves as offspring. This is the way of Hagar.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:25-26. Next, Paul pointed to two Jerusalems. **Hagar** also stood for the first-century **city of Jerusalem**, a city enslaved to Rome and **in slavery** to the Law.

The **LAW EQUALS:**

PERFORMANCE,

PENALTY, and

PRISON.

“HAGAR IS MOUNT SINAH”—or the law—corresponds to the present Jerusalem where these Judaizing teachers claim to get all of their authority.

There is no law that can set a man free.

The **REASON** given in verse 25 is:

“FOR SHE IS IN SLAVERY WITH HER CHILDREN.”

In other words:

THEY ARE UNDER BONDAGE TO THE LAW.

Bartlett says:

Among the Jews the bondage of the mother determined that of her child. Hagar and Sara are identified with the two covenants, the Sinaitic and the Christian. The characteristic features of the two are slavery and freedom. The children of the old covenant are, like Ishmael, in bondage—to the Mosaic law; the children of the new covenant are, like Isaac, free—freed in Christ from the dominion and penalty of the law.

pp. 90-91

Calvin says:

But why does Paul compare the present Jerusalem with Mount Sinai? Though I was once of a different opinion, yet I agree with Chrysostom and Ambrose, who explain it as referring to the earthly Jerusalem, and who interpret the words, *which now is*, . . . as marking the slavish doctrine and worship into which it had degenerated. It ought to have been a lively image of the new Jerusalem, and a representation of its character. But such as it now is, it is rather related to Mount Sinai.

p. 140

De Haan says:

Now all this detail is to show the difference between law and grace. Hagar, Ishmael, Mount Sinai and historic Jerusalem are pictures of the law. Hagar was a slave, and the law enslaves.
p. 147

Dunnam says:

Paul emphasizes the point that Ishmael was born of the ordinary human impulses—of the flesh—while Isaac was a result of God's intervention.
p. 92

Dunnam says:

Dramatic contrasts shine through the allegory. Hagar is a slave, Sarah is free. Two covenants flow from them. Hagar represents the covenant of law and corresponds to the present Jerusalem. Sarah represents the covenant of promise and corresponds to the Jerusalem on high.
p. 92

Dunnam says:

Paul saw the present (earthly) Jerusalem as the center of a religion of bondage where God was shut up in the Temple. Worship of God had ceased to be spiritual worship and had become scrupulous observance of legal enactments. Those who acknowledge such a religion, whether they in fact trace their ancestry to Ishmael or not, are sons of Hagar. That lines continues prolifically until today, for it includes all those who seek salvation apart from the freely given grace of God through Jesus Christ.
p. 92

Hogg & Vine say:

v. 25. **Now this Hagar is**—*i.e.*, represents.

mount Sinai in Arabia,—whence the law was originally given with every circumstance of terror, suggesting not sonship but slavery; see Heb. 12. 18-21.

pp. 220-21

Hogg & Vine say:

for she is in bondage—to the Romans, literally and actually, when this letter was written. It is possible, however, that the political bondage is merely an accidental circumstance not in the Apostle's mind, and that he is thinking of the spiritual bondage only, cp. 3. 23-4. 9. The meaning is the same in either case.

pp. 221-2

Ironside says:

These two women represent the two covenants, Sarah, the Abrahamic covenant, and Hagar, the Mosaic covenant. What was the difference between these two? The Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of sovereign grace. When God said to Abraham, "In thee and in thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," He did not put in any conditions whatsoever. It was a divine promise. God said, "I am going to do it; I do not ask anything of you, Abraham, I simply tell you what I will do." That is grace. Grace does not make terms with people; grace does not ask that we do anything in order to procure merit. Many people talk about salvation by grace who do not seem to have the least conception of what grace is. They think that God gives them the grace to do the things that make them deserving of salvation. That is not it at all. We read, "Being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. 3:24), and that word "freely" literally means "gratuitously."

p. 163

MacArthur says:

The law was given at Sinai and received its highest expression in the temple worship at Jerusalem. The Jewish people were still in bondage to the law.
p. 1672

v. 26 But the Jerusalem which is above is free which is our mother.

The NET Bible translates verse 26:

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

Peterson paraphrases verse 26:

In contrast to that, there is an invisible Jerusalem, a free Jerusalem, and she is our mother—this is the way of Sarah.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Sarah, on the other hand, corresponded to the **Jerusalem . . . above, the mother** of all the children of grace. This heavenly city, which one day will come to earth (cf. Rev. 21:2), is now the “city of the living God” (cf. Heb. 12:22), the home of departed believers of all ages.

Paul is referring to the **HEAVENLY JERUSALEM** in:

Revelation 21:1-4 (NASB)

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

This is a record of the home of the redeemed throughout eternity.

Hebrews 11:16 (NASB)

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

“THE JERUSALEM WHICH IS ABOVE IS FREE WHICH IS OUR MOTHER [SARAH].”

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

It is significant that when Paul contrasts “the present city of Jerusalem” with “the Jerusalem that is above” he mixes two metaphors so as to enrich his meaning. Strictly speaking, the phrase “the present city of Jerusalem” should be matched with “the Jerusalem that is to come,” and the phrase “the Jerusalem that is above” should be matched with “earthly Jerusalem.” These connotations are more or less evident. But by not actually saying “the Jerusalem that is to come,” Paul suggests that while it is true that there is a Jerusalem to come (Rev 21:2), this Jerusalem is also now present in those born again by God’s Spirit.

p. 734

Fergusson says:

The apostle having shown that Hagar did prefigure the first or old covenant, doth now briefly describe that second or new covenant which was prefigured in Sarah: first, by declaring where that covenant did reside, or who adhered to it, to wit, “Jerusalem which is above,” . . .

p. 81

Hogg & Vine say:

But the Jerusalem that is above—the Apostle does not express all the terms of the antithesis; the complete parallel, with its double symbolism, may be thus set out: Hagar the bondwoman with her son Ishmael, born in the course of nature, points to the actual Jerusalem in Palestine with its inhabitants, in bondage, whether political or spiritual; and they in turn point to the Jewish people, whether in the land or of the Dispersion, in bondage to law, and with them all such Gentiles as put themselves under the law. Sarah the freewoman, with Isaac, born in fulfilment of a promise, point to the heavenly, the ideal Jerusalem with its inhabitants, under no control of this world; and these, in turn, point to those Jews and Gentiles who have trusted Christ and who are free from the law in Him. The different items in the allegory may be tabulated:

<i>a</i> , Hagar the bondman.	<i>a</i> , Sarah the freewoman.
<i>b</i> , Ishmael.	<i>b</i> , Isaac.
<i>c</i> , Sinai.	<i>c</i> , Zion.
<i>d</i> , Jerusalem, earthly.	<i>d</i> , Jerusalem, heavenly.
<i>e</i> , The Jewish people.	<i>e</i> , Believers in Christ.

In each column the different items are in file with, or 'answer to', one another
 . . .
 p. 222

Ironside says:

Jerusalem above is "our mother." Why? Because Christ is above. Christ has gone up yonder, and having by Himself made purification for sins He has taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens and there He sits exalted, a Prince and Saviour, and from that throne grace is flowing down to sinful men.

"Grace is flowing like a river,
 Millions there have been supplied;
 Still it flows as fresh as ever,
 From the Saviour's wounded side;
 None need parish,
 All may live since Christ has died."

p. 167

Lovett says:

MOTHER. As Hagar is called the mother of all aspiring to divine sonship by the works of the Law, so Sarah is called the mother of all those born of the promised Holy Spirit. Representing the covenant of grace, Sarah is also called “Jerusalem,” but a different Jerusalem from Hagar. Hagar is the earthly Jerusalem, while Sarah is the heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus said except a man be born “from above,” he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Thus we have two separate families, one originating in the earth, the other in heaven. Paul’s allegory has four contrasts:

Hagar, the slave woman.....	Sarah, the free woman
Ishmael, the child of flesh	Isaac, the child of promise
The old covenant, Law.....	the new covenant, grace
The earthly Jerusalem, etc.....	The heavenly Jerusalem, etc.

p. 56

MacArthur says:

Jerusalem above is free. Heaven (Heb. 12:18, 22). Those who are citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20) are free from the Mosaic Law, works, bondage, and trying endlessly and futilely to please God by the flesh. ***the mother.*** Believers are children of the heavenly Jerusalem, the “mother-city” of heaven. In contrast to the slavery of Hagar’s children, believers in Christ are free . . .

p. 1672

MacArthur says:

The spiritual descendants of Sarah through Isaac, on the other hand, live in **the Jerusalem above** and are **free**, because **she is our mother**, if we are among those who live by faith in God’s gracious promise, given to Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The Christian’s “citizenship is in heaven,” **the Jerusalem above**, “from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). Referring to Mount Sinai, the writer of Hebrews says to believers, “You have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, . . . but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:18, 22).

p. 126

McGee says:

“Jerusalem which is above” is the New Jerusalem which is presented to us in the twentieth chapter of Revelation as it comes down from God out of heaven. As old Jerusalem is the mother city of those under the law, so the New Jerusalem is the mother city of the believer under grace. The believer neither here nor hereafter has any connection with legalism.
p. 181

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

The Jerusalem above represents the Jewish hope of heaven finally coming to earth (Rev. 21; 22). Since **us all** obviously refers to those who are **free** through faith in Christ (v. 7), Paul was strongly implying that the question at hand was not allegiance to Jerusalem, but allegiance to *which* Jerusalem—the new or the old? Would the Galatians follow the short-sighted present Jerusalem and its legalism or the liberty of the heavenly Jerusalem?
p. 1525

v. 27 For it has been written: Rejoice barren woman who is not bringing forth (bearing children). Break forth and cry you who are not experiencing the pains of birth, because more are the children of the desolate than of the one who is having a husband.

The NET Bible translates verse 27:

For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear children; break forth and shout, you who have no birth pains, because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband."

Peterson paraphrases verse 27:

Remember what Isaiah wrote: Rejoice, barren woman who bears no children, shout and cry out, woman who has no birth pangs, Because the children of the barren woman now surpass the children of the chosen woman.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:27. The quotation from Isaiah 54:1 prophesied the changing fortunes of Israel, which Paul applied to Sarah's history. Israel before her Babylonian Captivity was likened to a woman with **a husband**. The **barren woman** was Israel in Captivity. The woman bearing **more . . . children** may have pictured Israel restored to the land after the Exile, but more particularly it portrays her millennial blessings. Paul applied this passage (he did not claim it was fulfilled) in this context to Sarah, who though previously barren, was later blessed with a child, and who would ultimately enjoy a greater progeny than Hagar.

This is the **SECOND OF THREE OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS** that are in this passage:

1. verse 22—“For it has been written that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman,”
2. verse 27—quoting from Isaiah 54:1, and
3. verse 30—taken from Genesis 21:8-10.

Paul here quotes from:

Isaiah 54:1 (NIV)

“Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord.

“REJOICE BARREN WOMAN” refers to **SARAH** for she was childless.

Genesis 11:30 (NIV)

Now Sarai was barren; she had no children.

“BREAK FORTH AND CRY YOU WHO ARE NOT EXPERIENCING THE PAINS OF BIRTH.”

Then the **REASON** is given:

“BECAUSE MORE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO IS HAVING A HUSBAND.”

God in His miraculous power will not only bring Isaac, but a whole host of those who by His same power are given new life in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:29 (DAV)

Now if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

Ephesians 3:20 (NASB)

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

Who can number the great host of those who by faith in Jesus Christ have entered into new life by His regenerating power, and have become those who have fulfilled the promises made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant?

Gaebelein says:

He quotes Isaiah liv:1, "Rejoice thou, barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not, for the desolate has many more children than she which hath an husband." These words are addressed to Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom, in the time of her promised restoration. Then Israel, redeemed and blessed, will look back and find that, during our age, this gospel-age, many more children were begotten by the gospel, during the time when Israel was cast off and Jerusalem trodden down by the Gentiles than at the time when Jerusalem flourished and enjoyed the favor of Jehovah.
p. 223

MacArthur says:

4:27 Paul applies the passage from Isaiah 54:1 to the Jerusalem above.
p. 1672

McGee says:

From Sarai (who was barren until the birth of Isaac) there came more descendants than ever come from Hagar. Today the Arabs are fewer than the children of Israel. In this allegory, Paul is saying that God is saving under grace more members of the human family than He ever saved under the Mosaic Law by the sacrificial system.
p. 181

(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 2009.

One husband—a huge sports fan—described to another group of men what his wife had done on the first day of March Madness (the college basketball play-offs). The husband worked an early shift. When he arrived home, his wife greeted him with a plate of his favorite treats. She then led him to his favorite chair, brought him his favorite drink, and said, “You’ve been working hard; you deserve a day of fun. Here’s the remote control, and let me know if you run out of anything.”
p. 189

If you’re a wife, you’re married to *God’s son*. Are you a servant of his joy or a proclaimer of his sin?
p. 192

(Choosing to See: A Journey of Struggle and Hope by Mary Beth Chapman with Ellen Vaughn) Grand Rapids, MI: Revell. Copyright– Mary Beth Chapman, 2010.

I leave all of you who are hurting or suffering in some way a quote from the man little Hudson was named after, James Hudson Taylor:

May this be your experience; may you feel that the Hand which inflicts the wound supplies the balm, and that He who has emptied your heart has filled the void with Himself.

Everything, including our pain, is His. I am thankful He will meet me in it.
p. 251

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

I am perfectly satisfied myself to believe what he writes to me; and if it be so written in his Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if he had actually come from heaven, and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. 2183.15
p. 30

v. 28 Now you, brethren (are) after the manner of Isaac. You (are) children of promise.

The NET Bible translates verse 28:

But you, brothers and sisters, are children of the promise like Isaac.

Peterson paraphrases verse 28:

Isn't it clear, friends, that you, like Isaac, are children of promise?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these remaining verses in chapter 4 and then says:

The personal application (4:28-31).

In applying the truth from the biblical illustration, Paul made three comparisons.

4:28. First, Paul compared the birth of **Isaac** to that of Christians. As “Isaac” experienced a supernatural birth and was a child by means of a promise, so each believer experiences a supernatural birth (John 3:3, 5) and is a recipient of the promise of salvation (Gal. 3:9, 22, 29). As **children of promise** Christians are in a distinct category and should not live as children of bondage.

As Christians, we owe our new life in Christ, not to natural sources, but we have been born again by the Spirit of God.

John 1:4 (NASB)

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:12-13 (NASB)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:7 (NASB)

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

John 10:10 (NASB)

The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

28-29 In the third section of this treatment of the Hagar and Sarah story, Paul applies the allegory to all Christians, pointing out that because they are like Isaac, who had a supernatural birth, rather than like Ishmael, their experiences will be consistently similar to that of the younger son.
p. 734

Henry says:

We Christians, who have accepted Christ and look for justification and salvation by him alone, are entitled to the promised inheritance.
p. 1843

Lightfoot says:

“So, brethren, you as Christians are children of a promise, like Isaac. Nor does the allegory end here. Just as Ishmael the child born after the flesh insulted Isaac the child born after the Spirit, so is it now. But the end shall be the same now, as then. In the language of the Scripture, the bondwoman and her offspring shall be cast out of the father’s house. The child of the slave cannot share the inheritance with the child of the free. Remember therefore, brethren, that you are not children of any slave, but of the free and wedded wife.
p. 183

MacArthur says:

Just as Isaac inherited the promises made to Abraham (Gen. 26:1–3), so also are believers the recipients of God’s redemptive promises (1 Cor. 3:21–23; Eph. 1:3), because they are spiritual heirs of Abraham . . .
p. 1672

McGee says:

Believers today are also children of promise. Our birth is a *new* birth, which comes about by our believing God’s promise: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God has said that if we trust Him, we’ll be born again. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (I Pet. 1:23).
p. 181

Wuest says:

The best texts have *ye* instead of *we*. Paul is assuring the Galatian Christians that they are not like Ishmael the son of the slave woman, but like Isaac who was born according to the promise, not in the usual course of nature but miraculously. So they are born of the Holy Spirit, and have their standing before God, not on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, but upon the promise made to Abraham which applies to all who have like faith to him.

p. 134

(Lectures to My Students by C. H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Unknown, 2008.

How horrible to be a preacher of the gospel and yet to be unconverted! Let each man here whisper to his own inmost soul, ‘What a dreadful thing it will be for me if I should be ignorant of the power of the truth which I am preparing to proclaim!’

p. 4

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications Association, 1992.

It is not that you have gotten God, but that He has gotten you. God is at work bending, breaking, molding, and doing exactly as He chooses. And why is He doing it? He is doing it for only one purpose—that He may be able to say, “This is My man, and this is My woman.”

(October 25)

(Found: God's Will: Find the Direction and Purpose God Wants for Your Life by John MacArthur) Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook. Copyright– John MacArthur, 1977.

It is God's will that men be saved. If you are stumbling around in life and tossing up some periodic prayers to God but have never come on your knees to the foot of the Cross and met Jesus Christ, then you are not even in the beginning of God's will. God has no reason to reveal to you anything particular about your life because you have not met qualification number one: Salvation.

p. 11

(199 Treasures of Wisdom on Talking with God compiled from the writings of Andrew Murray) Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour. Copyright– Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2007.

Intercession will become my glory and my joy when I give myself as a sacrifice to God for others.

(Quote 62)

(In the Arena by Isobel Kuhn) Littleton, CO: Overseas Missionary Fellowship International. Copyright– OMF International, 2006.

George Matheson had an Arena experience, and because of this impending calamity his fiancée broke their engagement. That alone would not make him a spectacle. But the comforting power of his God came down upon him at that dark hour, lifted him to spiritual vision, and caused him to write:

O Love, that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;

O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;

O Joy, that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;

O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground, there blossoms red,
Life that shall endless be.

That spectacle of the brilliant, soon-to-be sightless young man, forsaken by his earthly love, yet bathed and upheld in Christ's, has halted many a sinner in his way. George Matheson's blindness has revealed God to many another. It was not given to punish Matheson. It was allowed to manifest the power of God to bring blessing to the world.

So God taught me through the years to view my own trials as platforms in today's Arena. I thought this concept was original with me, but one day my husband found that Hudson Taylor had formed the same opinion many years ago. He said: "Difficulties afford a platform upon which He can show Himself. Without them we could never know how tender, faithful, and almighty our God is." I found it so too.
pp. vii-viii

v. 29 But just as then, he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so also now.

The NET Bible translates verse 29:

But just as at that time the one born by natural descent persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now.

Peterson paraphrases verse 29:

In the days of Hagar and Sarah, the child who came from faithless connivance (Ishmael) harassed the child who came—empowered by the Spirit—from the faithful promise (Isaac). Isn't it clear that the harassment you are now experiencing from the Jerusalem heretics follows that old pattern?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:29. Second, the apostle compared Ishmael's persecution of Isaac to the false teachers' opposition to believers. Abraham celebrated the weaning of Isaac with a banquet. On that occasion Ishmael mocked Isaac, laughing derisively at the younger boy, since Ishmael was the elder son and assumed he would be heir to his father's estate (cf. Gen. 21:8-9). That early animosity has been perpetuated in the two peoples which descended from the two sons of Abraham and is seen in the current Arab-Israel tensions. Paul likened the Judaizers to Ishmael as those who were born out of legalistic self-effort; he charged that they continued to persecute the true believers who were **born by the power of the Spirit**. With few exceptions Paul's persecution came from the Jews, the people in bondage to the Law.

As Ishmael was mocking Isaac, so now the Judaizers are persecuting the children of God.

Paul was an authority on the subject because he used to be the chief persecutor before Christ came into his life and changed his from a **PERSECUTOR** to a **PROPAGATOR** of the Gospel.

Acts 8:1 (NASB)

And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Acts 8:3 (NASB)

But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 9:1-2 (NASB)

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Back in verse 23 Paul is making the **CONTRAST** said:

“On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.”

Now, here in verse 29, he speaks of:

one being **“BORN ACCORDING TO THE FLESH”** and

the other was **“BORN ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT.”**

This is going to be the terminology that Paul is going to now use in Galatians 5 when he talks about the **CONFLICT WITHIN EACH BELIEVER** between:

the **“FLESH”** and

the **“SPIRIT.”**

Arthur says:

Add the word *flesh* to your bookmark. Read Galatians 4:21-31 and mark *flesh*. Also make sure you mark the word *covenants*.
p. 34

Barclay says:

The essence of the flesh is this. No army can invade a country from the sea unless it can obtain a bridgehead. Temptation would be powerless to affect men, unless there was some thing already in man to respond to temptation. Sin could gain no foothold in a man's mind and heart and soul and life unless there was an enemy within the gates who was willing to open the door to sin. The flesh is exactly the bridgehead through which sin invades the human personality. The flesh is like the enemy within the gates who opens the way to the enemy who is pressing in through the gates.
pp. 21-22

Barclay says:

In the old story the child of the slave girl persecuted the child of the free woman; that is re-enacted in the way in which the Jews persecute the Christians, the children of law persecuted the children of grace and promise.
p. 46

Bickel & Jantz say:

Paul introduces the topic of persecution in 4:29. He writes, "You are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law." He compares this to the persecution Ishmael dished out to Isaac. What kind of persecution is Paul talking about? When you go to the account in Genesis, you find that Ishmael made fun of Isaac (see Genesis 21:9). Keeping in mind that Ishmael was a teenager and Isaac was about three years old, it might appear that the "persecution" amounted to little more than immature teasing. Actually, it was more than that. Ishmael was probably mocking Isaac.

p. 109

MacArthur says:

4:29 he who was born according to the flesh. Ishmael. *See note on verse 23.* **persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit.** Isaac, whom Ishmael mocked at the feast celebrating Isaac's weaning (see Gen. 21:8, 9). **even so it is now.** Ishmael's descendants (Arabs) have always persecuted Isaac's (Jews).

p. 1672

(Addresses by Phillips Brooks) Philadelphia, PA.: Henry Altemus. Copyright – Unknown.

If ever anything were clear, this is the clearest. Is there the man alive who thinks that Abraham Lincoln was shot just for himself; that it was that one man for whom the plot was laid? The gentlest, kindest, most indulgent man that ever ruled a State! The man who knew not how to speak a word of harshness or how to make a foe! Was it he for whom the murderer lurked with a mere private hate? It was not he, but what he stood for. It was Law and Liberty, it was Government and Freedom, against which the hate gathered and the treacherous shot was fired.

p. 159

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

The fire of strife is a terrible evil when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied, and God was glorified, jealousy and envy do the devil's work most effectually. Where the golden grain was being housed, to reward the toil of the great Boaz, the fire of enmity comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness. Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us, for although we cannot make restitution, we shall certainly be the chief sufferers if we are the chief offenders. Those who feed the fire deserve just censure, but he who first kindles it is most to blame. Discord usually takes first hold upon the thorns; it is nurtured among the hypocrites and base professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end. O Thou Lord and giver of peace, make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among Thy people.
p. 475

(In the Arena by Isobel Kuhn) Littleton, CO: Overseas Missionary Fellowship International. Copyright– OMF International, 2006.

The flesh loves excitement. It is always ready to jump up and run somewhere! It pushes and hurries us in to action. The Holy Spirit does not. He is from the God of peace and His directions are always on time.
p. 190

(Same Kind of Different as Me: A Modern-day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together by Ron Hall, Denver Moore, and Lynn Vincent) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group. Copyright – Ron Hall, 2006.

That first Tuesday, Mister strode up to me with an aggressive, proprietary air, as though the mission dining hall was his and I was trespassing. “I don’t know who you folks are,” he growled around an unlit filter-tipped cigar, “but you think you’re doin’ us some kind of big favor. Well, tonight when you and your pretty little wife are home in your three-bedroom cottage watchin TV in your recliners thinkin you’re better than us, you just think about this: You miss a coupla paychecks and your wife leaves you and you’ll be homeless—just like us!”

Speaking for myself—on the “favor” part—he was more right than I cared to admit. I didn’t know quite what to say, but when I opened my mouth, out came, “Thank you. Thank you for helping me see homelessness your way.” Unmoved, Mister eyed me like an insect, chomped his cigar, and strode off in disgust.

p. 87

v. 30 But what is the scripture saying? Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means inherit with the son of the free woman.

The NET Bible translates verse 30:

But what does the scripture say? “Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the son” of the free woman.

Peterson paraphrases verse 30:

There is a Scripture that tells us what to do: “Expel the slave mother with her son, for the slave son will not inherit with the free son.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:30. Third, Paul compared the action of Abraham to the obligation of the Galatians. When Sarah observed Ishmael mocking Isaac, she asked Abraham to expel **the slave woman and her son** lest Ishmael become a joint heir with Isaac. And God granted Sarah’s request (cf. Gen. 21:10, 12). This reminded the readers that Law observance brought no **inheritance** in the family of God, and it also charged them to excommunicate the Judaizers and those who accepted their false doctrines. A fundamental incompatibility remains between Law and grace, between a religion based on works and a religion based on faith.

Now Paul asks his **SECOND QUESTION.**

QUESTION #1:

verse 21—“are you not hearing the law?”

QUESTION #2:

verse 30—“BUT WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURE SAYING?”

This is the **SECOND TIME** in the passage that the apostle turns to the Scripture:

1. He used the passage from Isaiah 54 back in verse 27 and now
2. He goes back to the Genesis account here when he talks about Hagar and her son and the relationship she and her son sustain with Sarah and her son here in verse 30.

“BUT WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURE SAYING?”

The Scripture commands us:

“THROW OUT THE MAIDSERVANT AND HER SON.”

Throw out Hagar and her son, Ishmael. Throw out the law and the Judaizers. The law and the Gospel cannot coexist. The law must disappear before the Gospel of the grace of God.

Why this strong command? The **REASON** is given in the latter part of verse 30:

“FOR THE SON OF THE MAIDSERVANT SHALL BY NO MEANS INHERIT WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.”

“THEY”—referring to Hagar and Ishmael, or the law-keepers and Judaizers—**“SHALL BY NO MEANS”**—absolutely, positively, in no way—**“INHERIT WITH THE SON [ISAAC] OF THE FREE WOMAN [SARAH].”**

It is with Isaac, the son of Sarah, that we who know Christ are identified.

Barclay says:

But in the end, in the old story, the child of the slave girl is cast out and has no share in the inheritance; so in the end those who are legalists will be cast out from God and cannot share in the inheritance of grace.
p. 46

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Second, the Christians at Galatia must recognize the incompatibility of man-made and God-made religion and respond by casting out the legalizers. Those born after the flesh (v. 29) will never share in the inheritance God has reserved for his true children, born after the Spirit. Therefore, Christians must reject both legalism and those who teach it.
p. 734

Eadie says:

... “Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-maid and her son, for the son of the bond-maid shall in nowise inherit with the son of the free woman.” This quotation is from the Septuagint, with a necessary alteration.
p. 373

Eadie says:

The command is precise and unambiguous. Ishmael must be sent away, that Isaac alone may inherit. Ishmael had no title.
p. 374

Ironside says:

“Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” God says, “My children are the children of promise; My children are those who are saved by grace.” Do you know the blessedness of the reality of it in your own soul?

p. 174

Lenski says:

Paul writes in order to induce the Galatians to hold to their liberty since they were born spiritually to freedom and to reject the yoke of slavery the Judaizers were trying to impose on the Galatians. That is why he adds: **Yet what says the Scripture?** What does it say to this day, present tense? What does it say in its record that we may today apply to those Ishmaelitic actions from which we are made to suffer? This is more direct than if Paul had said, “has been written,” the perfect tense with present implication which is so often used in quotation. **Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall in no way inherit together with the son of the free woman.**

p. 248

Lightfoot says:

The Law and the Gospel cannot co-exist; the Law must disappear before the Gospel. It is scarcely possible to estimate the strength of conviction and depth of prophetic insight which this declaration implies. The Apostle thus confidently sounds the death-knell of Judaism at a time when one-half of Christendom clung to the Mosaic law with a jealous affection little short of frenzy, and while the Judaic party seemed to be growing in influence and was strong enough, even in the Gentile churches of his own founding, to undermine his influence and endanger his life. The truth which to us appears a truism must then have been regarded as a paradox.

p. 184

Pinnock says:

Then Paul makes a personal appeal to the Galatians not to lapse back into bondage. If we are God's sons, he pleads, let us live like the sons we are. Having come to know God through Christ, how can we even contemplate returning to legalistic bondage again?
p. 57

Ridderbos says:

This passage of Scripture should serve to warn the Galatians not to let themselves succumb to the clutches of the Judaizers. Rather, they must avoid this contact with a slave-principle, and defend themselves against it. Else the inheritance may escape them.
p. 182

Wiersbe says:

It is impossible for law and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, to comprise and stay together. God did not ask Hagar and Ishmael to make occasional visits to the home; the break was permanent. The Judaizers in Paul's day—and in our own day—were trying to reconcile Sarah and Hagar, and Isaac and Ishmael; such reconciliation is contrary to the Word of God. It is impossible to mix law and grace faith and works, God's gift of righteousness and man's attempts to earn righteousness.
p. 109

(The Faith: What Christians Believe, Why They Believe It, and Why It Matters by Charles Colson and Harold Fickett) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— Charles W. Colson, 2008.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer had made the most important journey of his life nearly a decade before, in 1931, when he went from being a theologian and pastor to being a Christian. Reading the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, rather than as an object of intellectual inquiry, brought a decisive change.

For the first time I discovered the Bible I had often preached, I had seen a great deal of the church, spoken and preached about it—but I had not yet become a Christian I turned the doctrine of Jesus Christ into something of personal advantage to myself I pray that will never happen again. Also I had never prayed or prayed only very little. For all my loneliness, I was quite pleased with myself. Then the Bible, in particular, the Sermon on the Mount, freed me from that It became clear to me that the life of a servant of Jesus Christ must belong to the church, and step by step it became clearer to me how far that must go.⁶

6. Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 204–205.
pp. 118-19

(The Treasures of Fanny Crosby by Fanny Crosby) Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour. Copyright— Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Lord, at Thy mercy seat, humbly I fall;
Pleading Thy promise sweet, Lord, hear my call;
Now let Thy work begin, oh,
make me pure within,
Cleanse me from every sin, Jesus, my all.

p. 62

(Finish Strong: Amazing Stories of Courage and Inspiration by Dan Green)
 Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, LLC. Copyright– Simple Truths, LLC,
 2008.

I remind myself of my commitment to finish strong and to focus on my true priorities in life. Because as the quote says: “To the world you may be just one person . . . but to one person you may be the world.”
 p. 73

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press.
 Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

I confess that the words of Scripture thrill my soul as nothing else ever can; they bear me aloft or dash me down, they tear me in pieces or they build me up after an unrivalled fashion. The words of God have more power over me than ever David’s fingers had over his harp strings. Is it not so with you?
 1431.487
 p. 40

v. 31 Therefore, brethren we are not children of the maidservant but of the free woman.

The NET Bible translates verse 31:

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

Peterson paraphrases verse 31:

Isn't that conclusive? We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

4:31. In conclusion, Paul affirmed that he and the Galatian believers were **not children of the slave woman** who was driven away and was denied a share in the inheritance. Rather all believers are children **of the free woman**, "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

With the word **"THEREFORE"** we come to the whole point of the argument.

He addresses them once again as **"BRETHREN,"** even as he had done back in verse 28 and several times previously in the epistle:

NEGATIVELY—"THEREFORE, BRETHREN WE ARE NOT CHILDREN OF THE MAIDSERVANT, BUT"

POSITIVELY—" [WE ARE CHILDREN] OF THE FREE WOMAN."

The apostle uses this potent illustration as a **CONCLUSION TO HIS TEACHING SECTION.**

The conclusion to the allegory is that we are children, not identified with Hagar and the law, but with Sarah and Christ. They are identified with bondage but we with freedom.

LAW AND GRACE ARE LIKE OIL AND WATER. You can not mix the two of them.

Bartlett says:

Christians, both Jew and Gentile, are children of the promise, as Isaac was. Even as Ishmael is reputed in Jewish tradition to have shot arrows at Isaac, so, the apostle implies, the Jews in bondage to the law are persecuting the true children of Abraham who have found freedom from such bondage through acceptance of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thus Paul sums up his teaching in the doctrinal portion of the Epistle to the Galatians.
p. 91

Calvin says:

He now exhorts the Galatians to prefer the condition of the children of Sarah to that of the children of Hagar; and having reminded them that, by the grace of Christ, they were born to freedom, he desires them to continue in the same condition.
p. 145

De Haan says:

Hagar—Ishmael—Sinai—the law—earthly Jerusalem, are all pictures of the law. It could not make Hagar free or make Ishmael the heir of promise. Sinai had no message of hope for Israel. God's covenant of works offered no salvation to Israel, but only condemnation, bondage and judgment.
p. 148

De Haan says:

The perfect law can only show the nature of sin. The law condemns and says, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10).

1. The law prohibits—Grace invites and gives.
2. The law condemns the sinner—Grace redeems the sinner.
3. The law says DO—Grace says IT IS DONE.
4. The law says, Continue to be holy—Grace says, It is finished.
5. The law curses—Grace blesses.
6. The law slays the sinner—Grace makes the sinner alive.
7. The law shuts every mouth before God—Grace opens the mouth to praise God.
8. The law condemns the best man—Grace saves the worst man.
9. The law says, pay what you owe—Grace says, I freely forgive you all.
10. The law says “the wages of sin is death”—Grace says, “the gift of God is eternal life.”
11. The law says, “the soul that sinneth it shall die”—Grace says, Believe and live.
12. The law reveals sin—Grace atones for sin.
13. By the law is the knowledge of sin—By grace is redemption from sin.
14. The law was given by Moses—Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
15. The law demands obedience—Grace bestows and gives power to obey.
16. The law was written on stone—Grace is written on the tables of the heart.
17. The law was done away in Christ—Grace abides forever.
18. The law puts us under bondage—Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.

pp. 151-2

Dunnam says:

Those who acknowledge Christ as Lord, who by faith receive His grace, claim the Jerusalem above. Like Isaac, the believing recipients of grace are the children of promise, whether any trace of Isaac’s blood flows through them or not. It is grace, all grace!

p. 92

Eadie says:

... “Wherefore, brethren, we are children not of a bond-woman, but of the free woman.”
p. 375

Gaebelein says:

“So then, therefore, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” It would be impossible to be children of both. Equally impossible is it to be under law and under grace. The two cannot exist together. We are children of the free woman and of her only and have nothing whatever to do with the law-covenant. We belong to a risen Christ, with whom we have died, who has borne the curse for us and bestowed upon us life and righteousness, and, therefore, we are free from the law, from its service and ceremonies.
p. 223

Hogg & Vine say:

Wherefore,—The Apostle, having fully established the difference between law and grace, flesh and spirit, bondage and freedom, and their incompatibility one with another, now makes direst application of the inference to be drawn from the allegory, which is that the inheritance is given by promise to faith, and cannot be obtained by works done in obedience to law.

brethren,—addressing all the Galatians believers, whether Jew or Gentile by birth.

we are not children of a handmaid,—the article is absent; hence the idea is ‘not of any person in a state of bondage’.

but of the freewoman.—here the article appears, for though there may be many slaves there is but one true wife, one freewoman. So there are many ways along which men seek acceptance with God, there is but one of His appointment, and by it alone men may draw near to Him.
pp. 230-31

Ironside says:

“So then, brethren,” the apostle concludes, “we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” In other words, we have nothing to do with the legal covenant but we are the children of the covenant of grace.

“Grace is the sweetest sound
That ever reached our ears,
When conscience charged and justice frowned,
’Twas grace removed our fears.”

p. 174

Lenski says:

Paul draws the conclusion from his entire discussion, the conclusion at which he and the Galatians ought to arrive: no slave mother for us (no article; no mother of this kind) but only the one free mother (the article specifying her). While the same thought is expressed in v. 26 and 28, we here have the negative and the positive side by side and in the simplest form. This befits the final statement. This is what we (Paul and the Galatians) are; now you Galatians stand firm as you are.

p. 249

Lightfoot says:

. . . ‘*wherefore*,’ as the inference from this allegorical lesson. The particle is chosen rather with a view to the obligation involved in the statement, than to the statement itself; ‘*wherefore* let us remember that we are not sons of a bondwoman, let us not act as bondslaves.’

p. 184

McGee says:

Abraham could not have both the son of Hagar and the son of Sarai. He had to make a choice. Paul is saying that you can't be saved by law and grace. You have to make a choice. If you try to be saved by Christ and also by law, you are not saved.

Let me ask you, have you really trusted Christ, or are you carrying a spare tire on your little omnibus; that is, do you feel that you are *doing* something or *being* something or trying to *attain* to something which adds to what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross? If you do, forget it and look to Christ alone; receive everything from Him. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. He is to receive all praise and glory.

p. 182

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

So then represents the conclusion of the previous section, while **therefore** signals that Paul is going to apply this spiritual truth to the lives of the Galatian believers. To be **children of the bondwoman** is to be enslaved to the covenant from Mount Sinai (4:24, 25), the Law of Moses. To be **of the free** is to follow Abraham's example of faith (3:6–9), to be "born according to the Spirit" (3:2; 4:29), and to be destined for the "Jerusalem above" (4:26). Understanding such realities, the believer in **Christ** must continually **stand fast** in the **liberty** of not having to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. The Galatians were on the verge of becoming enslaved to the law again.

pp. 1525-6

Vos says:

In verse 31 Paul draws his argument to a conclusion: "Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman." *Wherefore* is a deduction from the preceding verses (21-30). The definite article does not appear before bondwoman but does before free woman, calling attention to the superiority of the later. It is established then, that we (Paul and the Galatians) are not children of a bondwoman who was cast out from the presence of her lord and denied any share in the inheritance. But we are children of the free woman, children of the promise and according to Scripture heirs in the family of God.

p. 89

Wuest says:

This verse brings to a climax the argument that believers are not a community or nation in bondage to legal statutes, but members of the community of believers whose relation to God is that of sons, and who do not have the spirit of bondage but the Spirit of sonship. It also serves as the basis upon which Paul builds the practical instruction which follows in chapters five and six.

p. 135

(The Treasures of Fanny Crosby by Fanny Crosby) Uhrichsville, OH:
Barbour. Copyright– Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Closer let Thine arms enfold me,
closer to Thy breast
Draw my weary, trembling spirit,
calm its doubts to rest;
Give me strength for every burden
Thou hast borne for me;
Lord, Thy tender mercy pleading,
let me lean on Thee.

p. 77

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI:
Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications
Association, 1992.

THE HABIT OF RISING TO THE OCCASION

**“ . . . that you may know what is the hope of His calling . . . ”
(Ephesians 1:18).**

Remember that you have been saved so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in your body (see 2 Corinthians 4:10). Direct the total energy of your powers so that you may achieve everything your election as a child of God provides; rise every time to whatever occasion may come your way.

You did not do anything to achieve your salvation, but you must do something to exhibit it. You must “work *out* your own salvation” which God has worked *in* you already (Philippians 2:12). Are your speech, your thinking, and your emotions evidence that you are working it “out”. If you are still the same miserable, grouchy person, set on having your own way, then it is a lie to say that God has saved and sanctified you.

God is the Master Designer, and He allows adversities into your life to see if you can jump over them properly—“Be my God I can leap over a wall” (Psalm 18:29). God will never shield you from the requirements of being His son or daughter. First Peter 4:12 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you . . .” Rise to the occasion—do what the trial demands of you. It does not matter how much it hurts as long as it gives God the opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus in your body.

May God not find complaints in us anymore, but spiritual vitality—a readiness to face anything He brings our way. The only proper goal of life is that we manifest the Son of God; and when this occurs, all of our dictating of our demands to God disappears. Our Lord never dictates demands to His Father, and neither are we to make demands on God. We are here to submit to His will so that He may work through us what He wants. Once we realize this, He will make us broken bread and poured-out wine with which to feed and nourish others.

(May 15)

5:v. 1 For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

The NET Bible titles this next section and then translates verse 1:

Freedom of the Believer

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.

Peterson titles this next section and then paraphrases verse 1:

The Life of Freedom

Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this next section and then says:

Practical: A Defense of Christian Liberty (5:1-6:10).

Having defended both his authority as an apostle and the doctrine of justification by faith, Paul turned to defend the life of Christian freedom. Would the apostle's teaching lead the Galatians into lawlessness or into godliness? The Christian life is described as a life apart from Law, a life apart from license, a life according to the Spirit, and a life of service.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this next section and then says of verse 1:

A life apart from Law (5:1-12).

TURNING TO LAW RUINS GRACE (5:1-2).

5:1. This verse summarizes chapter 4, where the theme is bondage and freedom. It also serves to introduce chapter 5. Paul declared that **Christ** was the great Liberator who **set** believers **free** from bondage. The apostle then appealed to the Galatians to **stand firm** (cf. 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thes. 3:8; 2 Thes. 2:15) in that liberty, for having been delivered from **slavery** to heathenism, they were in danger of becoming entangled in slavery to the Mosaic Law.

There are **TWO COMMANDS** here in Galatians 5:1. They are in the **PRESENT TENSE**:

COMMAND #1:

“KEEP ON STANDING FIRM.”

COMMAND #2:

“STOP BEING HELD IN AGAIN BY A YOKE OF BONDAGE.”

I have chosen this as the **KEY VERSE** for:

You Were Running Well UNTIL: “Whee! I Am Free” Became, “Boy! I Am in Bondage.”

The plea of the Apostle Paul here is to **STAY FREE** since:

“CHRIST SET US FREE.”

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NASB)

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NASB)

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

The apostle begins with the words:

“FOR THIS FREEDOM.”

What **“FREEDOM”** is he talking about?

The **“FREEDOM”** that is back in:

Galatians 1:4 (DAV)

who gave himself in behalf of our sins so that He might rescue us out from this present evil age according to the will of our God and father.

Galatians 2:20 (DAV)

With Christ I have been crucified and I no longer am living but Christ is living in me and that life which now I am living in the flesh I am living by faith, which faith is in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself on my behalf.

I am not only:

“rescued out of this present evil age” and

saved from what I am by nature, but

I am also redeemed from the curse of the law.

Galatians 3:13 (DAV)

Christ delivered us by the payment of a ransom from the curse of the law. Having become a curse in behalf of us because it is written cursed is everyone who is suspended upon a tree.

And from the very law itself:

Galatians 4:4-5 (DAV)

But when the fullness of the time came. God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under law in order that he might deliver out by the payment of a ransom those under law, in order that we might receive the adoption.

This verse forms the **EPITOME OF THE WHOLE LETTER.**

The Galatians were not **“STANDING FIRM”** and were being held **“AGAIN IN A YOKE OF BONDAGE,”** whereas Christ has set us free.

I can remember my oldest son got bigger and bigger. I found that I was not nearly so free in the roughhouse wrestling matches that we were having. He would often say, “You don’t mess around with this boy. You got your hands on trouble.” And before I knew it he was bending me in ways that I do not bend. It is a miracle I did not break but I found myself in bondage.

How easy it is to take for granted and to fail to appropriate the freedom which we have. We can note this in great civilizations of days gone by who drifted from freedom back into bondage or slavery simply because they took their freedom for granted.

June Hunt in her book Above All Else, illustrates this when she says:

Just before we were to leave West Berlin, we had an opportunity to climb a scaffold overlooking the Berlin Wall. I noticed a man on the platform frantically waving a white handkerchief. Looking past the rows of barbed wire and the steel barriers in the field, we saw a woman on the street about 150 yards away. From time to time she would hold up her baby for the man to see and then wave a handkerchief back at him. Our small group watched in hushed reverence. Tears streamed from the man's eyes as he watched the woman and child reluctantly back away and slowly disappear out of sight. He had stood and watched the two of them until he was staring at an empty street. What total emptiness we all felt in that moment. What did we personally know about freedom or the lack of it? Through the brief experience of a nameless man from another country, the value I placed on freedom multiplied before my eyes.
(source unknown)

Just as it is possible to lose one's freedom through complacency and indifference in the country in which we live, so it is possible, likewise, to lose the freedom that ought to be ours in Jesus Christ through putting ourselves back into legal bondage. It is the desire of Christ, through His gracious act, to set us free from the bondage of sin and death and as His free sons to enjoy life more abundantly.

"KEEP ON STANDING FIRM THEREFORE AND STOP BECOMING ENTANGLED AGAIN IN A YOKE OF BONDAGE."

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NASB)

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

It is awfully easy to forget our freedom in Christ and get ourselves entangled in all sorts of frustrating circumstances, through putting ourselves on a performance basis with our Lord, or through feeling that the keeping of laws will make one spiritual.

The word admonishes us:

“FOR THIS FREEDOM CHRIST SET US FREE. KEEP ON STANDING FIRM THEREFORE AND STOP BECOMING ENTANGLED AGAIN IN A YOKE OF BONDAGE.”

If we are looking for a **“YOKE”** we would do well to accept the invitation of the Lord Jesus who said:

Matthew 11:29-30 (NASB)

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”

In answer to that invitation, the Apostle Paul’s heart-cry was:

Philippians 3:10 (NASB)

that I may know Him, [Christ]”—that is, by personal experience—“and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”

Gutzke points out:

This is what happens when a person becomes a Christian. Paul was anxious that Christians should realize this freedom. Believers are set free, by “being raised in the newness of life” in Christ Jesus.

To place this freedom that they have in Christ Jesus under rules is to stifle it. Rules were designed for the old human nature. When I become a Christian, I have the Ruler in my heart. I do not need a set of instructions; I have the Great Instructor in my soul. I am no longer responsible to keep regulations; I have the Regulator Himself inside me.

p. 108

The second and third commands are here in Galatians 5:1:

COMMAND #1:

Galatians 4:21—“Tell me, you who are desiring to be under law.”

COMMAND #2:

Galatians 5:1—“KEEP ON STANDING FIRM.”

COMMAND #3:

Galatians 5:1—“STOP BEING HELD IN AGAIN BY A YOKE OF BONDAGE.”

1 Peter 5:7-9 (NASB)

casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB)

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”

Barclay says:

It may be said that for Paul the spirit of a man is the indwelling power of God in that man, or, to put it in another way, it is the risen Christ resident within him. The spirit of a man is that part of a man which has kinship with God, and which therefore gives a man fellowship with God and power to win the victory in the warfare of the soul.

p. 16

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

1 Before plunging into this third section of his letter, Paul interjects a verse that both summarizes all that has gone before and serves as a transition to what follows. It is, in fact, the key verse of the entire letter. Because of the nature of the true Gospel and of the work of Christ on their behalf, believers must now turn away from anything that smacks of legalism and instead rest in Christ's triumphant work for them and live in the power of the Spirit.

p. 735

Bartlett says:

The very fact that men are saved by grace, justified by faith alone, lays upon the Christian an imperative and inescapable obligation to live in such a way as to justify the faith that justifies the soul.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." An understanding of what it cost God to make available for us that freedom which we enjoy in Christ should result in a higher evaluation of it. We shall prize it too highly to sell it for a song at the bidding of those who offer us a substitute gospel of works. Furthermore, the fuller use we make of it, the greater worth shall we find in it. Enjoyment of freedom stiffens resistance to bondage and sharpens perception of the subtlest infringements upon it. Deepening communion with Jesus will make us increasingly intolerant of hindrances to such blessed fellowship.

pp. 92-93

Baxter says:

In the last two chapters we have Paul's *exhortation* to the Galatians. What is the gist of it? The opening verse tells us: "Stand fast, therefore, in *the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*"

p. 148

Calvin says:

After having told them that they are the *children of the free woman*, he now reminds them that they ought not lightly to despise a freedom so precious. And certainly it is an invaluable blessing, in defence of which it is our duty to fight, even to death; since not only the highest temporal considerations, but our eternal interests also, animate us to the contest.

p. 146

De Haan says:

Notice the last word of the doctrinal section of Galatians, **FREE!** **FREE!** The believer is free, set at liberty, delivered. Salvation by grace means deliverance and freedom. There is no bondage for those who are in Christ. Now as we shall see, liberty does not mean license to sin; freedom does not mean we are not accountable for our conduct.

p. 154

Dunnam says:

Paul was pleading with the Galatians to accept the freedom that was theirs, and not be reshackled in the bondage of law.

p. 93

Eadie says:

VER. 1. This verse is closely connected with the immediately preceding one, and is, as we have just said, the prime inferential and practical lesson.

p. 377

Fergusson says:

IN the first part of this chapter, he exhorteth them to persist in their Christian liberty, from the bondage of the Mosaical yoke, and chiefly, that they would not seek after justification by these ceremonial observances. In order to which, the observation of the ceremonial law was mainly urged by the false apostles.

p. 84

Fergusson says:

The apostle first exhorteth them stedfastly, constantly, and against all contrary opposition, to maintain both in judgment and practice the former doctrine of the church's freedom, especially from the Levitical ceremonies.

p. 84

Gaebelein says:

The first exhortation is to maintain, by faith, the liberty which is found in Christ, to stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made the believer free and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. The believer has perfect liberty in Christ; he is absolutely dead to the law and the law is not to be used by him in any way.

p. 224

Henry says:

Since it appeared by what had been said that we can be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ, and that the law of Moses was no longer in force, he would have them to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage*. Under the gospel we are enfranchised, we are brought into a state of liberty. We owe this liberty to Jesus Christ. It is he who *has made us free*. It is therefore our duty to *stand fast in this liberty, and not to suffer ourselves to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage*.

p. 1843

Ironside says:

... “Stand fast therefore.” Wherefore? Because of the finished work of Christ through which all who believe have been not only delivered from the judgment due to their sins, not only delivered from the penalty of the broken law, but delivered from the law itself and en-lawed to Christ. The believer now walks in a place that was never known before. He is down here in this world, it is true, but he is neither without law, nor yet under law, but is subject to the Lord Jesus Christ, . . .
p. 175

Lenski says:

Thus we have the ringing declaration: **For freedom Christ did set us free.** For nothing less.
p. 250

Lightfoot says:

... ‘*stand firm, stand upright*, do not bow your necks to the yoke of slavery’ . . .
p. 185

Lucado says:

With the glorious freedom offered under God’s *new* covenant, why would anyone prefer the old? It’s a good question with a complex answer. Some don’t like grace because it’s too wild and risky. Others cringe because it’s too vast and hard to measure. Still others bristle at grace because it’s “unfair.” Really bad people forgiven? Completely? Without *doing* anything? Opposite of grace stands the law. Hard and fast rules. Concrete formulas. Clear, measurable goals for which a person can strive. The law is a system that caters to human pride by promising to reward the hardest working, the most competitive. But the true reward? Bondage, a pervading sense of obligation, fear, and guilt. And—in fine print—the guarantee of ultimate failure. No wonder Paul says, “We have freedom now, because Christ made us free. So stand strong. Do not change and go back into the slavery of the law” (Gal. 5:1 NCV).
p. 89

Luther says:

“Be steadfast, not careless. Lie not down and sleep, but stand up. Be watchful. Hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free.” Those who loll cannot keep this liberty. Satan hates the light of the Gospel. When it begins to shine a little he fights against it with might and main.
p. 194

MacArthur says:

5:1 *Stand fast.* Stay where you are, Paul asserts, because of the benefit of being free from law and the flesh as a way of salvation and the fullness of blessing by grace. ***free.*** Deliverance from the curse that the law pronounces on the sinner who has been striving unsuccessfully to achieve his own righteousness (3:13, 22–26; 4:1–7), but who has now embraced Christ and the salvation granted to him by grace (*see notes on 2:4; 4:26; cf. Rom. 7:3; 8:2*). ***entangled again.*** Better translated “to be burdened by,” to be oppressed by,” or “to be subject to,” because of its connection with a yoke. ***yoke of bondage.*** Yoke refers to the apparatus used to control a domesticated animal. The Jews referred to the “yoke of the law” as a good thing, the essence of true religion. Paul argued that for those who pursued it as a way of salvation, the law was a yoke of slavery.
p. 1673

McGee says:

He is saying here that not only are we saved by faith rather than by law, but law is not to be the rule of life for the believer. We are not to live by law at all. The law principle is not the rule for Christian living. Paul is saying that since we have been saved by grace we are to continue on in this way of living. Grace supplies the indwelling and filling of the Spirit to enable us to live on a higher plane than law demanded. This all is our portion when we trust Christ as Savior. It is in Christ that we receive everything—salvation and sanctification. Don’t tell me I need to seek a second blessing. When I came to Christ, I got everything I needed. Paul tells me that I have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Let’s believe Him and start trusting. Let’s stop trying some legal system or rote of rules.

We have liberty in Christ. He does not put us under some little legal system.
p. 183

Ridderbos says:

1. Very emphatically the freedom of the believers is placed in the foreground here as the purpose of Christ's redemptive work. There is an antithetical drift in the argument, which comes to expression in a very richly pregnant, almost ironical, way. The self-evident quality of the utterance ought to make it superfluous: Christ did not set us free for slavery but for freedom! By this freedom is meant dismissal from subservience to the law . . .
p. 186

Simpson says:

That is, it comes not through the act of struggling against evil, but rather through the receiving of the good and letting this displace the evil. This is a very profound and practical principle. The old familiar illustration of letting in the light instead of sweeping out the darkness, tells the whole story. Dr. Chalmers found his great sermon on the expulsive power of a new affection in the simple incident of hearing the coachman tell that when his shying horse came near a certain turn in the road where he usually became frightened, he gave him a sharp cut with his whip just beforehand, which so preoccupied him that he dashed by the critical point without noticing it. As the driver put it, he "gave him something to think about." When God would save us from the consciousness and pressure of temptation and sin, He preoccupies our mind and fills our heart with something stronger and higher, and thus by the expulsive power of a stronger influence, the evil is banished, and the soul is purified and preserved in the abiding life of Christ.
p. 21

Vos says:

Verse 1 is a ringing exhortation to maintain Christian freedom. “For freedom Christ set us free” is a proper rendering of the first part of the verse, which links closely to 4:31 and the preceding illustration, or allegory. Freedom from bondage in Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac would be impossible without the work of Christ. Christ is the great liberator; He freed us from bondage unto a life of Christian liberty. While we cannot set ourselves free from bondage, there is a sense in which we must cooperate with divine power in living the Christian life. Although Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:2), nevertheless I live; my will must determine to keep standing firm in the hand-won liberty which Christ has made available.
pp. 90-91

Wiersbe says:

Are you standing free (1)? Your freedom in Christ is a costly thing, for it cost Jesus His life. In Him, you stand free; the yoke of the law has been removed (Acts 15:6-11).
p. 769

Wuest says:

For this aforementioned freedom Christ set you free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop being held in again by a yoke of bondage.
p. 208

Wuest says:

Verse one. We can best approach the study of this verse by offering the translation at the start. *For this aforementioned freedom, Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore, and stop being held again by a yoke of bondage.* The word *free* of 4:31 is the translation of the same Greek word rendered *liberty* in this verse.
p. 136

(The Loveliness Of Christ: Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford selected by Ellen S. Lister) Carlisle, PA.: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright – Banner of Truth, 2007.

Temptations will come, but if they be not made welcome by you, ye have the best of it; be jealous over yourself, and your own heart, and keep touches with God; let him not have a faint and feeble soldier of you; fear not to back Christ, for he will conquer and over more; . . .
p. 49

Venture through the thick of all things after Christ, and lose not your Master, Christ, in the throng of this great market.
p. 59

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

We can scarcely calculate how much we owe to those “holy men of God” who, under the Spirit’s guidance, planted this vineyard from which we are continually gathering such rich clusters. Think too how much we are indebted, under God, to those who were the means of preserving this record, and handing it down to us, often at the cost of their own lives. Every page of the Bible is, as it were, bespattered with the blood of the martyrs, yet we have not had to pay that price for it; we draw the life-giving water out of wells that we did not dig; and eat the fruit of the sacred trees that we did not plant. 3248.210
p. 45

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright—Brees Company, Inc., 2010.

FOOTBALL IS ALL ABOUT TIMING. There's the timing of the snap count. The speed and depth of the receiver running his route. The pause of the running back before he explodes toward the line.

When I was lying on a gurney in the training room during the last game of 2005, my shoulder shredded and my career in jeopardy, I couldn't imagine how anything good could come out of something so awful. But as I would soon learn, sometimes the way God works is all about timing too. I had to wait. I had to work. But in the end, he had a clear purpose in everything that happened.

I'll admit, his timing often felt slow—especially while I was going through rehab. *When will I feel back to normal? When will I be able to play again? When will the right opportunity come my way?* But no one ever said the Christian faith is about living according to your own terms or timetable. It's about dropping anchor even when you're in an unpredictable place. It's about *knowing* that though things may not make sense on paper, you have to trust God to see the bigger picture. You have to choose to live from the heart and trust what you cannot see.

Less than a year after my shoulder injury, I was already starting to experience the unexpected good that can come out of adversity. That event took me to new places in my faith, as I knew God was sharpening me for a significant task down the road. It marked a new place of vulnerability and openness in my relationship with Brittany. It was a time of growing closer to my parents while I lived with them in Alabama during rehab. And in terms of my career, this incident allowed me to discover the people who were really on my team. In a strange way, I'm grateful for it, because it was a catalyst to change that needed to happen.

One of the most significant lessons I learned during that dark period of injury and rehab is this: If God leads you to it, he will lead you through it. Everything happens for a reason, and everything is part of his master plan. If you let adversity do its work in you, it will make you stronger. When you come out on the other side, you just may be amazed at the things God has allowed you to accomplish—things you might not have believed were possible.

God's refining process is never easy. It's kind of like a blacksmith creating a sword. The metal is strengthened when it is repeatedly put in the fire and then pounded with a hammer. But the end result is perfection. All the heat and pounding created a strength and beauty, not only on the outside, but especially on the inside. God sometimes puts us in the fire, and it's going to hurt, but it will mold and shape us into the people he intends for us to be. When I went through that fire, I didn't know what was ahead for

me, and I didn't know what the end result would be. I had to trust and believe that there was a purpose for all this and take things one day at a time.

pp. 89-90

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers) Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House. Copyright– Oswald Chambers Publications Association, 1992.

If I want to maintain a strong and active mental life, I have to fight. This struggle produces the mental balance called thought.
(December 4)

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Oh! let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Jesus; follow hard after Him, and He will never fail thee.

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesu's blood and righteousness:
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesu's name.”

p. 360

(A Love Worth Giving: Living in the Overflow of God's Love by Max Lucado)
Nashville, TN: W Publishing / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Max
Lucado, 2002.

Loves goes the distance . . . and Christ traveled from limitless eternity to be confined by time in order to become one of us. He didn't have to. He could have given up. At any step along the way he could have called it quits.

When he saw the size of the womb, he could have stopped.

When he saw how tiny his hand would be, how soft his voice would be, how hungry his tummy would be, he could have stopped. At the first whiff of the stinky stable, at the first gust of cold air. The first time he scraped his knee or blew his nose or tasted burnt bagels, he could have turned and walked out.

When he saw the dirt floor of his Nazareth house. When Joseph gave him a chore to do. When his fellow students were dozing off during the reading of the Torah, his Torah. When the neighborhood took his name in vain. When the lazy farmer blamed his poor crop on God. At any point Jesus could have said, "That's it! That's enough! I'm going home." But he didn't.

He didn't, because he is love. And "love . . . endures all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7 NKJV). He endured the distance. What's more, he endured the resistance.

p. 153

(Signs of Life: Back to the Basics of Authentic Christianity by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– David Jeremiah, 2007.

Recently in Charleston, West Virginia, Mike Overton was driving across a bridge to get a haircut. Seeing a woman throw her leg over the guard railing, he slammed on his brakes, jumped out of his car, and managed to hold on to her. She was crying, and her steady refrain was that no one loved her. Ironically, while he was holding her, the woman's cell phone rang twice: one call was from her daughter and the other from her husband, both of whom were worried about her. Yet in her depression and grief, the woman felt utterly alone.²

2. "Woman Tries to Jump Off Bridge," *The Sunday Gazette*, October 10, 2004, B7, at <http://library.cnpapers.com>.

p. 231

(The Great Gain Of Godliness: Practical Notes On Malachi 3:16–18 by Thomas Watson) Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright – Banner of Truth Trust, 2006.

I. *Begin the day with holy thoughts:* ‘When I awake, I am still with thee’ (*Psa.* 139:18). God should have the first buddings of our thoughts. In the law, the Lord would have the first fruits offered him. Give God your virgin-thoughts in the morning. What the vessel is first seasoned with, it keeps the relish of a long time after. The mind seasoned with good thoughts in the morning will keep the heart in a better state all the day after.
pp. 91-92

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson) San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

My goal, Savior Christ, is to believe in you so deeply and thoroughly that my first response in every crisis is faith in what you will do, trust in how you will bless. But I have a long way to go. Lead me from my fearful midget-faith to mature adulthood. Amen.
p. 95

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Be careful to consider the content and consequences before you sign-off in making a decision.

LESSON #2: The safest thing we can do when God's promise is left unfulfilled is to wait.

LESSON #3: Abraham and Sarah tried to help God fulfill His promise to them and that created the problem.

LESSON #4: God does not need our help in fulfilling His promises to us.

LESSON #5: The law gives birth to bondage, the promise gives birth to freedom.

LESSON #6: When we come to know Jesus Christ as Savior we become children of promise.

LESSON #7: The flesh and the Spirit will always be in conflict.

LESSON #8: Are you in bondage to anyone or anything at this time?

LESSON #9: Have you been set free in Jesus Christ?

LESSON #10: The yoke of the law leads to bondage. The yoke of the Lord is easy.

LESSON #11: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

LESSON #12: “Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

Barclay says:

Strange as all this may seem to us, there remains in it the one great fact. The man who makes law the principle of his life is in the position of a slave; all his life he is seeking to satisfy his master the law. Whereas the man who makes grace the principle of his life has made love his dominant principle. He is the free man, for, as a great saint put it, the Christian principle is, "Love God and do what you like"; and it will be the power of that love, and not the constraint of law, that keeps us right; and love is always more powerful than law.

p. 46

Lucado says:

Father, today when I am tormented by the ruthless demands and perfect standards of the law, remind me that I am, by virtue of Christ, free. I am a true spiritual child of Abraham and Sarah. Give me the wisdom and strength to cast away all such legalistic thoughts.

p. 89

(Experiencing God Day-By-Day: The Devotional and Journal by Henry T.

Blackaby and Richard Blackaby) Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

Copyright – Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, 1997.

As you read the accounts of God's miraculous work through men and women in the Bible, you may wonder if God still performs such miracles today. Be assured that the same God who walked with Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Peter, James, John, and Paul now lives within you. No power can defeat the God who guides you. The God who blessed them is just as capable for working out His purposes through your life. The same God who gave them victory over seemingly invincible enemies, who provided for them when their own resources were insufficient, and who guided them in their decisions, is prepared to work as powerfully in your life today. The heroes of the faith had one thing in common. They were all ordinary people with no power of their own. The difference is the mighty presence of God. Times may change, but the effect of God's presence remains the same.

p. 213

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)
 San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson,
 2006.

Jesus, I know that you will not leave me empty or orphaned. I thank you for the promise of your presence. Invade, invigorate, inspire by your Spirit. Amen.
 p. 336

Dear Jesus, you have showed me how to love you; you have commanded me to love; you are in and with me to love. Develop in me a deep, consistent and mature love for others. Amen.
 p. 323

New Pastor

(True Story—submitted by Pastor Rob Reid)

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry, to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve.

They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc, and on December 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

On December 19 a terrible tempest—a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days.

On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later.

She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. “Pastor,” she asked, “where did you get that tablecloth?” The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten “The Tablecloth”. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria.

When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. He was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home. That was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the Spirit were great. At the end of the service, the Pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn’t leaving.

The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike?

He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier.

He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman’s apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas Reunion he could ever imagine.

Who says God does work in mysterious ways. I asked the Lord to bless you as I prayed for you today, to guide you and protect you as you go along your way. His love is always with you. His promises are true, and when we give Him all our cares we know He will see us through.

(Received via email from Eric Logsdon, December 17, 2010)